Michael Coutts-Trotter (Director-General, Department of Education and Training)
I’ve now had a chance to talk with a whole lot of principals, teachers, students and parents about the staffing of public schools. That’s why we are making the modest change that we are. Many schools, in the city and in the bush, have told me, ‘Look, we’d like a further option on top of the state-wide transfer mechanism to give us a chance to select a teacher that is the best fit for our school. Equally, many experienced and new teachers have said, ‘Look, I’d like more opportunities to apply for work in a school that I want to teach in.’

There have been a few misconceptions about our changes. Let me challenge three of them.

Teachers award rights are not affected. Priority transfers remain. And the department will continue to ensure that there is a qualified teacher in every classroom across NSW.

Now, a few principals are going to join this broadcast, from schools right around NSW offering their views on the staffing changes and dealing with some of the issues that come out of it.

Thanks you very much.

Dorothy Hoddinott (Principal Holroyd High School)
I have looked very closely at the new staffing procedures and I’m reassured that the department has maintained things such as incentives to go to isolated schools and priority transfers at the end of a period of appointment to one of those schools. People need to understand that they can move around from school to school within our system. The department has made it quite clear also that their obligation is their obligation to staff every school in our system with qualified teaching staff. The balance is, I think, very good so that we can ensure that there’s movement that you need in schools that we can employ, for example, newly graduated teachers. Many of whom just mark time now and a great many of whom are lured into the private school system because they can’t get jobs in our system. I want to be able to employ more of these people. We are going to have to employ them in the future when the baby boomers start retiring. That’s not going to be very long down the track.

Don Harvey (Principal Brewarrina Central School)
I already have people coming to Brewarrina because they want to be at Brewarrina. There is some fantastic staff arriving to teach in my school and other schools in our region. I think these new proposals won’t detract from that at all in fact I think we may see some enhanced attractions for staff to come out and work in the schools that they choose to work in. Well I have no doubt that those processes have been very successful for Brewarrina, we have some extremely high quality teaching staff, teachers at Brewarrina Central School, who have come to us via a variety of processes that have been now proposed for the schools across our state.

Karen Doyle (Westdale Public School)
Priority transfers will certainly be the number one process that all NSW public schools will be staffed by and that’s a must – it will stay there. I think teachers need to be very reassured – that is going to stay.

But down the track then, once the priority transfer list has been exhausted, there are no more priority transfers to be placed, say at Westdale school, we have the flexibility then to look at a whole suite of options how we can staff our school. Under the new staffing arrangements, teachers do not really have a lot to be concerned about because if they read the material presented by the department, they’ll actually see that the new innovations they’ve put into the staffing arrangement will benefit so many people.

With the procedures, I’ve suggested very strongly that they read the material that has been presented by the department, so it sets it out very clearly what are the old staffing arrangements, what are the new staffing arrangements, how it will affect them. Put themselves in a position, ‘If I want to move on, if I want to apply for a position, how will I go about doing it?’
Jason Miezis (Rouse Hill Public School)
After priority transfers are placed, I would ensure that we get a good balance of staff, I would look at accessing the graduate program staff, so teachers who have graduated from university. I’d also want to look at employment lists for teachers who have had experience working as casual and temporary teachers in our schools. But also looking at transfers as well. So I would ensure we get a good balance of early career right through to experienced teachers accessing all the different employment avenues.

Vicki Brewer (Principal Seven Hills High School)
It’s most important for schools to find the best fit. It’s most important for schools to find teachers to fit the vision, if you like, it’s mutually beneficial. Beneficial for the teacher, beneficial for the school.

I don’t think there’s any need for any staff member to be worried. In fact, I think the reverse, I think that there is opportunity in this new staffing system for teachers to build on their skills and to use those skills to go to other schools, that they best fit.

Mike Willis (Principal Calare Public School)
I’m really encouraged by the new staffing procedures. I think that they appear to me to be heading in the right direction. I think that the changes that have been happening in education over a long period of time have required schools to have more say in the way their staff is appointed and I think our school will benefit greatly.

Vicki Brewer (Principal Seven Hills High School)
I think the benefits with the new system are that teachers can work in a school for 4 or 5 years, explore their abilities, expand their repertoire and use these skills to go to another school where they best fit. That for me is advantageous for teachers, for young teachers and advantageous for schools.