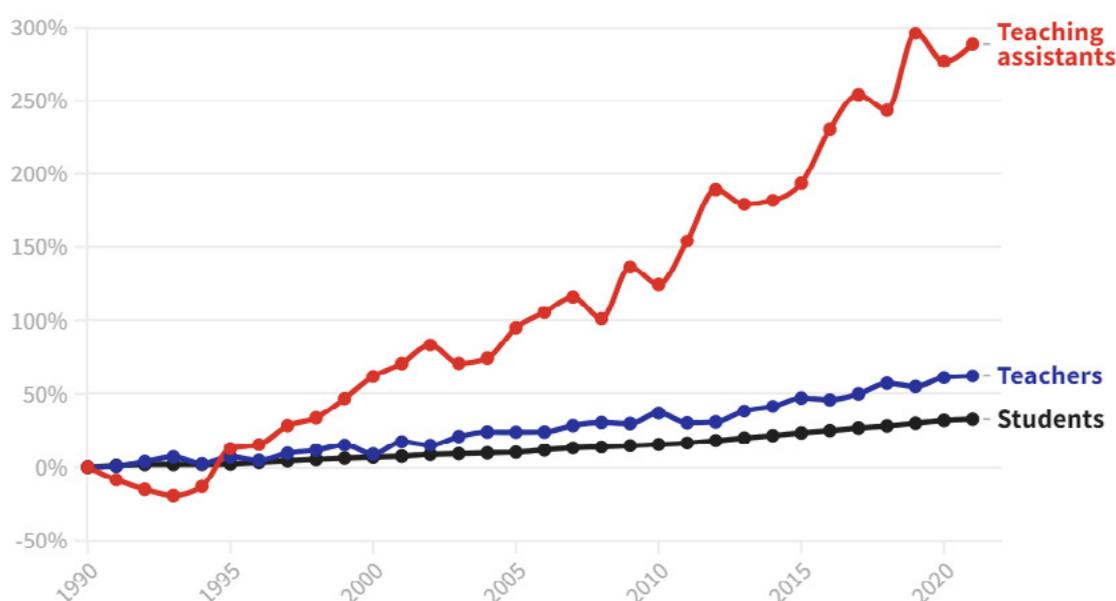


B. What are the main drivers of increased shortages of teachers?

COVID is often blamed for resignations and the movement between occupations. But there are many drivers of the current supply problems; they existed long before COVID, but unless we appreciate the impact of the major drivers the demand for teachers will not reverse. Consider the many drivers of the current supply problems:

- a. The staff-student ratio is now 13.4 students to every teacher in 2022, down from 14.2 in 2006. Based on 2022 numbers, an extra 17,000 teachers (or 5.5% more) are required across Australia to feed this reduction.
- b. The staffing problems of early childhood add much to the current problems, with major growth in early childhood provision, which engages registered teachers in 4-5-year settings. There are 162,000+ educators in ECE today, of which almost 50,000 are degree qualified, and there is an expected 21% increase in student numbers over the next five years. These teachers can choose to move into primary schools, often with greater salaries, better conditions, and more career prospects. A major revolution is needed to solve this as more of the same is not working (perhaps changing ECE from 2-8 to 0-5, reducing the entry requirement, but then they cannot be called or part of the teaching profession until they meet the current One-teacher requirements).
- c. The number of adults in schools is increasing at a much faster pace than the increase in the number of students.
 - i. Over the past year, school enrollment and teachers' enrollment has increased by 0.6% and teachers by 2.4%.
 - ii. Student enrolment growth is slowing from 1.5% in 2018 to 1.3% in 2030, compounded with major reductions in the birthrate. The demand for increased numbers is likely to decrease post-COVID, but like many of our neighbors the concern should be the dropping birthrate.
 - iii. In 2021, there were 303,539 full-time equivalents (FTE) teaching staff and 144,436 non-teaching staff spread across 9,581 schools throughout Australia (ACARA, 2021). The non-teaching staff comprised 114,252 FTE administrative and clerical staff (including teacher aides and teacher assistants), 15,506 FTE specialist support staff, and 14,678 building operations, general maintenance, and other staff.
 - iv. There has been a 129% increase in special support staff, a 115% increase in teacher aides, and a 79% increase in building and maintenance staff between 2001-2021. That is triple the growth of student growth.

Change relative to 1990 baseline, FTE in all sectors, 1990 to 2021, Australia.



Source: Grattan Institute, with ABS Labor Force Survey 2021, ABS Schools from ACARA 2021. •

Notes: Teaching assistants refers to the ABS category 'education aides' who assist with general classroom and teaching activities. Teachers includes primary, secondary, middle, and special education categories. Students include those enrolled, full-time and part-time, across all school sectors.

- v. Compared to the OECD average of 14.4, Australia has 8.1 teachers for every pedagogy support personnel (teacher assistant, teacher aide, etc.). Compared to the OECD average of 5.3, Australia has 4.4 teachers for every administrative or management personnel.

B. What are the main drivers of increased shortages of teachers?

We are throwing adults into schools, oftentimes to support teachers without realising that these adults can take extra time and responsibility by teachers. The evidence of their impact is not forthcoming (Blatchford, 200x claims teacher aides overall have a zero to a negative impact on students).

- d. In some states (e.g., Victoria), supply will exceed demand in the near future. For example, Fahey (2021) reports that in 2025 Victoria will need 103,410 teachers with a projected supply of 150,634 registered teachers at this time; and that the surplus for primary teachers will increase, not decrease.
- e. Graduates from Initial teacher Education are aplenty. There are 92,000 ITE commencements, about 50-60% of graduates do not complete (78% of post-graduate and 51% of undergraduate), and half of these graduates get full-time jobs in schools. Tinkering with the dropout and employment rate of graduates could significantly affect supply numbers.

The number of adults in schools has increased much more than that of students (2.4/.06 = 400% from 2000-2021 compared to a 24% increase in student enrolments). Further, the number of teachers not staying in the classroom but moving to middle leadership positions is large. For example, in NSW, it is estimated that 1 in 5 teachers (18% in NSW) are now middle leaders – and a further 1000+ FT teachers are employed by the state but not based in any school. Although 91% of middle leaders undertake some teaching, the increasing numbers of these positions are being used for pay increases but have a negative effect on the demands for teachers.

While there are many good reasons to increase the number of adults in schools relative to the number of students, it is hard to find evidence that this has improved students' achievement or learning experiences, nor has it reduced the workload and burnout levels of adults. Indeed, the Productivity Commission (2022) noted that burnout increases more as teachers take on additional non-teaching roles. Teachers develop expertise within the class, and most enter the profession to impact students. However, the current promotion and salary structure is premised on removing them from the class to lead others, take on middle and senior leadership, and oversee other adults who work with their students.

Discussions about shortages need to question the increased number of teachers and other adults relative to increases in the student school population. The increased demands on teachers and schools with little recognition of the extra expertise and responsibilities, the continual tweaking of curricula with consequential demands, and the plethora of policy imperatives added to schools.

We know much about supply, but too little is known about demand. We are reactive, not predictive. Much better data about staffing demand is needed across Australian schools. Serious questions need to be raised about the value proposition of the major increase in the number of adults in schools. Care is required to create non-classroom pay incentives that then remove so many teachers from the greatest-in-school source of excellence we know about. There should be full costing in terms of teacher numbers in any industrial and policy initiatives.

The current situation has been long coming. For example, the costs of teacher supply from industrial agreements are finally hitting the teacher supply. The focus on pay and conditions highlights the flatlining of teacher salaries, the image of a noble profession full of Florence Nightingales distorts the problem and solution, and the drying up of relief teachers due to COVID initiatives has exacerbated the current situation. The ways systems are finding to pay teachers more is enticing them out of the classrooms.