



New South Wales Teachers Federation
a branch of the Australian Education Union
AEU NSW Teachers Federation Branch ABN 86 600 150 697



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NSW PRESIDENT: Maurie Mulheron • NSW GENERAL SECRETARY: John Dixon

NSW Teachers Federation Media Release

SCHOOL COUNSELLORS MUST BE TRAINED AS TEACHERS

01 March 2016

The NSW Teachers Federation has taken action in the NSW Industrial Relations Commission over the recruitment of school counsellors.

School counsellors are required to have dual qualifications in teaching and psychology which support both their specific learning needs of students and their wellbeing. This means that school counsellors are best placed to identify student learning needs and work with their teacher colleagues to support those students' needs.

However, the Education Department is intending to downgrade the requirements for school counsellors and is now advertising for "School psychologists," without teaching qualifications, with the aim of recruiting them to fill positions equivalent to school counsellors.

"We do not believe it is in the best interests of students to recruit psychologists who do not hold teaching qualifications to go into schools as counsellors," said NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron.

"The Baird Government announced 236 new school counsellor positions as part of its "Supported Students, Successful Students" program in March 2015 and we expect the Government to honour this important election commitment," Mr Mulheron said.

"To now begin recruiting psychologists and expect them to have the deep understanding of children that teachers develop through their training and classroom experience will mean those children most in need of help will be missing out."



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The NSW Teachers Federation believes that the Department's decision to recruit "school psychologists" into the 236 full time equivalent school counsellor positions is in breach of the (*Teachers in Schools and Related Employees*) *Salaries and Conditions Award 2014*.

The NSW IRC has been notified of a dispute.

The Federation has met with the Department to negotiate a resolution to this matter but the Department indicated that the recruitment process for school psychologists would continue.

"Teachers oppose this decision because we don't believe it is in the best interests of students or public schools," Mr Mulheron said.

"School counsellors perform an extremely important role in our schools and are an integral part of a school's teaching staff. Allowing new recruits to enter the ranks of counsellors without teacher training and holding inferior qualifications is something no parent or teacher should stand for," he said.

"Trying to fill school counsellor positions with less qualified people contradicts the state government's aim to protect teaching standards. We want qualified teacher-counsellors, not psychologists who will struggle to meet children's needs because they lack the right qualifications and experience in the classroom."

"While psychologists might be capable of making a range of psychological assessments about a child, they are not trained to help children with the vast range of issues that children present with that affect their ability to learn."

"Many children in our schools who school counsellors support have learning difficulties, or problems with literacy and numeracy, and we believe only dual qualified school counsellors, with both teaching and psychology qualifications, can deliver the high level of help that these children need."

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