



Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE)

Submission

Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

November 2022

Introduction

The Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) is a network of professional teacher associations that aims to represent the individual educators from our member associations. AAAE is a constituted body with the purpose of representing and speaking on behalf of Australian national professional teacher associations. It was established as a company limited by guarantee in 2013, following on from 25 years as the National Education Forum (NEF). AAAE members are national professional teacher associations that are largely funded by membership fees, the production of teaching resources and the provision of professional learning for teachers.

AAAE welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan and we applaud the Commonwealth Minister for Education, the Hon Jason Clare MP, for initiating this essential inquiry.

Critical to successfully pursuing any and all aspects of the Draft Action Plan are the voices of teachers. Thus, our first questions are: To what extent have teachers been engaged in the development of this Draft Action Plan? Which professional teaching associations have been consulted and informed the proposals?

As the peak national teacher association, AAAE works collaboratively with a wide network of teachers and other key stakeholders. With a network that extends to every state and territory, and reaches

teachers in urban, regional and remote areas; whose membership includes teachers of every cohort of students, AAAE is in a key position to provide informed comment on the teacher shortage. Professional Associations have an important yet too often overlooked role to play in the advising of policy development and implementation in the current educational landscape. These organisations have a deep understanding of the intricate details of all aspects of the school education processes.

Opening Remarks

AAAE is concerned that there is no framing document outlining the data about the supply and demand of teachers, nor is there information about the retention of teachers currently working in schools, information about why 50% of Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students are not completing their studies, projected figures of teachers leaving the profession (retirement or other reasons), and why teachers are leaving the profession. There is a lack of rigour in terms of data and subsequent analysis of what is causing the current teacher shortage situation.

For AAAE, the Draft Action Plan does not adequately address the three most important issues about why teachers leave the profession, and perhaps why 'high performing' students decide not to become teachers: pay, workload/time, and societal value. To increase the supply of teachers (both people entering the profession and teachers returning to the profession) these critical issues need to be addressed first.

AAAE's member associations are consistently reporting that the teachers they are working for are feeling the challenges in terms of workload, wellbeing, and attrition - and so our associations are highly attuned to the needs and concerns, but also supports and approaches that are working to make things easier for teachers. Across all our members' organisations, tens of thousands of teachers are being supported - as such, they present a significant opportunity to meet the objectives of this plan. How can they be more deeply consulted around the formulation of this plan and then work in partnership (with a range of other key stakeholders) to support its implementation, so that we may have a consistent and effective whole-sector response.

The next section provides feedback on each section and objective of the Draft Action Plan.

Elevating the profession

Objective: To recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.

Actions:

1. A targeted National campaign to raise the status and value of the role of teachers.
2. Creation of new Australian Teacher of the Year Awards.
3. Encourage members of the public to nominate teachers for Medals of the Order of Australia.
4. Targets to increase the number of classroom teachers recognised as high achieving and highly accomplished.

AAAE Comments:

To increase the status and value of teachers, teachers must first **be** valued. Society's value will only come after teachers are adequately remunerated.

Regarding the concept of a national campaign, AAAE raises the question about why some subject areas are privileged, and others are not included. This can create a tiered value of specific learning areas within education.

Regarding the raise the status and role of teachers, we must flag our concerns, and the concerns of our members, with a number of other initiatives and statements of the government that directly contradict and interfere with this objective. These include dominant narratives about the seemingly urgent need to improve 'teacher quality' - we highly recommend the work of Associate Professor Nicole Mockler (Mockler, 2022), who provides a clear synthesis of the media reporting, including statements by the government, that contribute to this narrative. Additionally, government initiatives - including those with the agreeable outcome of reducing teacher workload - can reinforce teachers' feelings of their professionalism and work being devalued. The recent release of the Grattan Institute's report, *Ending the Lesson Lottery* (see Hunter, Haywood, & Parkinson, 2022), is a pertinent example of this. The report and the subsequent discussion in the media, including by the Minister and Shadow Minister, made clear suggestions that planning lessons were something that could be taken off teachers' workloads, both as a support and as a way to decrease unacceptable variability in lesson

quality. The response from our members is that while easier and more consistent access to high-quality curriculum materials would be a support, it would not be in place of their own planning to tailor these materials to the learning needs, interests, and contexts of their students. To suggest otherwise has been seen as dismissing this critical component of teachers' work.

Action 3 - Professional Teaching Associations play a key role in nominating members of the education community who have made a significant contribution to be considered for a Medal of the Order of Australia. However, the criteria for these awards rightly acknowledges significant service. This service is beyond a normal contribution to a job, it's about acknowledging the extraordinary service to a community. Each year teachers, particularly through their volunteer work with professional teaching associations, are recognised through the Order of Australia awards and we will continue to encourage our member associations to do this.

Action 4 – State and Territory Governments must consider the costs associated with applying for HALT status. In some states/territories, there is a significant cost to teachers wishing to apply for HALT. In Queensland, for example, Assessment Stages 1 and 2 cost a total of \$1,500 per applicant.

AAAE also raises the question about why specialisation areas of mathematics and classroom management are included. Why not each subject area?

Improving teacher supply

Objective: to increase the number of students entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE), number of students completing ITE and the number of teachers staying in and/or returning to the profession.

Actions:

5. More teaching places at universities in the right subjects and specialisations.
6. 5,000 bursaries worth up to \$40,000 each to help attract our best and brightest to the teaching profession.
7. 1,500 more places in the High Achieving Teachers program to encourage more professionals to switch careers to teaching.
8. Trial new ways of attracting and keeping teachers in the school that need them the most.
9. Prioritise visa processing for qualified teachers and prioritise teachers from State and Territory nominated visa allocations.

AAAE Comments:

Improving teacher supply, the two key issues of teacher remuneration and teacher time/release are critical and must be addressed. AAAE is concerned about the language around “more teaching places at universities in the right subjects.” What are the “right subjects”? This language devalues a range of subject areas within education. We advise the Government not to create a hierarchy of subjects or learning areas within Education. We are also concerned about the language around “best and brightest” as this suggests that those already in the profession or wishing to study teaching are not the best and brightest. In addition, how is the government defining ‘best and brightest’ teachers? Are these teachers with the highest ATAR score, for example?

AAAE suggests that rather than bursaries for high academic achieving students to study education, all ITE students could receive an honorarium for each professional experience period, as this a full-time placement at a school can prevent ITE students from engaging in other employment during these times.

Improving teacher supply must strongly focus on supporting teachers to stay in the profession. Recent reports indicate that around 50% of ITE students complete their qualifications (Department of Education, Skills and Employment, 2021), and between 30-50% of Australian teachers leave within their first five years (Weldon, 2018). Research into the reasons why ITE students do not complete their study, and why such large numbers of early career teachers are leaving the profession is desperately needed. AAAE suggests a federally funded research project to explore this (perhaps in partnership with organisations such as the Australian Research Council, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Australian Association of Research in Education, and AAAE).

Supporting teachers to return to the classroom is an area within this review that AAAE and our member associations are particularly well-placed to support. Professional Teaching Associations deliver high-quality professional development and mentoring to both early career and returning teachers. With funding from the Government, this could be even stronger. Professional associations also play an important role in supporting teachers who are trained outside Australia to become familiar with and confident in delivering state-specific curriculum.

Regarding Action 8, the Draft suggests that STEM is the main area of need for teachers, however, AITSL's *Building a sustainable teaching workforce* report (2022) indicates that the subject areas with the highest 'no appointment' rate in secondary government schools in Victoria were digital technology, design technology, and languages (AITSL, 2022).

Strengthening initial teacher education

Objective: to ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom ready graduates.

Actions:

- 10.** The Teacher Education Expert Panel, led by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, Professor Mark Scott, is reviewing initial teacher education and will recommend ways to boost graduation rates, and broadly ensure graduating teachers are better prepared for the classroom.
- 11.** Recognise previous study, work experience and skills that may be transferable to teaching.
- 12.** Co-design actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers.
- 13.** All teaching students will undergo initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills in their first year to ensure they can receive targeted support if they need it.

AAAE Comments:

A paid internship or honorarium for **all** professional experience placements (not just mid-career entrants) is worthy of exploration. As mentioned previously, professional experience placements can place financial pressure on ITE students.

ITE is a hugely complex area and needs a nuanced discussion and consideration of enrolments and dropout trends between early childhood, primary and secondary, and between undergraduate and postgraduate courses. In addition, the increasing demands on even becoming a teacher, such as pre-requisite school subjects, written entry, unpaid placements during a cost of living crisis, LANTITE, and the TPA all need consideration.

The move away from a one-year Diploma of Education (DipEd) to a Master of Teaching (MTeach) two-year course may have had a negative impact on enrolments and attracting people into teaching. AAAE suggests that this is reviewed.

AAAE also argues that post-graduate qualifications such as Masters and Doctoral degrees could be eligible for a higher level of remuneration.

Action 11 – The subject areas listed are not consistent with AITSL’s research referenced earlier.

Action 12 – AAAE commends the Government on proposed Action 12 and the co-design of actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers in schools.

Action 13 – The Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) needs to be reviewed. There is already a range of entry requirements for different ITE courses.

Maximising the time to teach

Objective: To improve retention and free up teachers to focus on teaching and collaboration.

Actions:

- 14.** Pilot new approaches to reduce teacher workload through a Workload Reduction Fund to maximise the value of a teacher's time.
- 15.** Build on work already underway to maximise teachers' time to teach, plan and collaborate and independently evaluate the effectiveness of these measures on teachers' time.
- 16.** Examine how to support implementation of the national curriculum and literacy and numeracy progressions
- 17.** Each initiative in the next National School Reform Agreement will be subject to a Teacher Workload Impact Assessment.
- 18.** Identify the most effective use of initial teacher education students, teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff.

AAAE Comments:

AAAE notes the recent publication of the *Interim Report on the National School Reform Agreement* which contained Draft Recommendation 5.2 that reducing teacher workload should be a focus of the next Agreement. The Draft document proposed a number of strategies. AAAE strongly supported this initiative in its submission to the Productivity Commission. We emphasise the importance of collaborative action and coherence in any strategy. As such, AAAE supports the concept of identifying how principals and teachers spend their time and whether their time is spent on low-value or high-value tasks. We strongly suggest that any starting point for the classification of tasks and the rating value must be collaboratively determined. It may need to be an iterative process to allow for maximum flexibility (acknowledging that a task that may be high value in one context and low value in another), yet appropriately consistent. Further, the process that specifies how to remove low-value tasks must be flexible in application. A process may be consistent across contexts, but whether it needs to be applied in all contexts needs consideration. The specification of how teaching assistants can be best used needs to commence with a shared understanding of the work that TAs do.

Professional Teaching Associations play an important role in practically supporting teachers in planning for and delivering curriculum reform. The implementation of the Australian Curriculum: V9.0

will again trigger schools to review curriculum and develop or revise existing work programs. Professional teaching associations will continue to develop resources and deliver professional learning to support our members, however, greater support is needed.

Action 14 – There are a range of studies including AITSL’s *Shifting the balance: Increasing the focus on teaching and learning by reducing the burden of compliance and administration – Review to reduce red tape for teachers and school leaders* (2020) and the Grattan Institute’s recent report *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help* (Hunter & Sonnemann, 2022) both contain recommendations for schools and systems to reduce teacher workload, however, to our knowledge, these have not been adopted widely. More detail is required about the \$25 million being spent on selected pilot initiatives.

Action 15 – See comments above regarding Action 14.

Better understanding of the future teacher workforce needs

Objective: improve the information available for teacher workforce planning.

Actions:

- 19.** Develop and publish nationally consistent teacher workforce projections based on consistent standards, disaggregated at a regional level and by subject specialisation, to ensure a national understanding of teacher demand.
- 20.** Develop and publish nationally consistent ITE graduate supply data, including disaggregated by subject specialisation and participation in ITE at the regional level, to enable a national understanding of teacher supply.
- 21.** Establish a National Quality Framework to guide Teacher Regulatory Authorities in teacher accreditation and ensure nationally consistent standards for initial teacher education.
- 22.** Prioritise conditional provisional registration to increase the supply of teachers.
- 23.** Develop and publish comprehensive data about why teachers leave the profession and what careers they move into and what would improve retention, as well as why other career leavers choose teaching.

AAAE Comments:

Action 20 – much more research needs to be undertaken investigating the reasons why ITE students are not completing their qualifications. There is a presumption from some that early experience in schools through professional placements is essential, however, AAAE is unaware of data supporting these claims.

Action 22 – Regulatory authorities need to make it easier for teachers to return to teaching. Once teacher registration has been relinquished, it can be challenging and time-consuming for registration to be reinstated. A more streamlined process is recommended. Teachers also face challenges when moving across state/territory jurisdictions as each state/territory has its own teacher registration process. AAAE suggests that either a federal teacher registration system or easier transfer from one jurisdiction to another be a focus moving forward.

Better career pathways to support and retain teachers in the profession

Objective: to improve career pathways, including through streamlining the process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation, and providing better professional support for teachers to retain them in the profession.

Actions:

- 24.** Develop and support career pathways which value teachers and reflect transitions in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.
- 25.** Develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders including mentoring and induction.
- 26.** Improve access to high-quality First nations' cultural competency resources to ensure teachers are better prepared to teach First nations peoples in culturally safe ways.
- 27.** Streamline HALT accreditation processes to make it less burdensome for teachers to be accredited and incorporate recognition of equivalent qualification and certification processes.
- 28.** Develop micro-credentials and expand the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) to enhance teachers' access to quality professional development.

AAAE Comments:

Action 24 – Professional Teaching Associations should be considered as providers of short courses and professional learning to retrain into teaching areas.

Action 26 – AAAE commends the Government on this action. Many professional associations have worked in partnership with First Nations peoples and educators to develop guidelines around teaching First Nations content and concepts in specific subjects in appropriate ways. More resources, professional learning and support is required.

Action 28 – While micro-credentialing is worthy of exploration, currently post-graduate qualifications in teaching/education do not attract any additional remuneration. Perhaps this may be an incentive for teachers to consider further study.

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