



Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE)

Pre-Federal Election Statement 2025

7 April 2025

The [Australian Alliance of Associations in Education](http://www.aaae.edu.au) (AAAE) is a network of 20 professional teacher associations that aims to represent the individual educators from our member associations. AAEE is a constituted body with the purpose of representing and speaking on behalf of Australian national professional teacher associations. As an alliance of national professional teacher associations, we represent tens of thousands of educators working across early childhood, primary, secondary, tertiary and community contexts. Each year, our member associations engage thousands of educators through professional development, resources, publications, and events.

Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) is calling for all political parties to endorse the following policy imperatives in the lead-up to the Federal election in 2025.

1. Increasing Teacher Voice in Education Policy Development:

- Education policies are created without meaningful teacher and teacher professional association involvement, leading to ineffective and impractical 'reforms.' The distinctive and important role of national professional teacher associations is also neglected, sidelining an important wealth of knowledge, expertise, and insight that is critical to education policy discussions.
- Think tanks have a place in education policy discourse. However, it should not be at the expense of teacher voice. An overemphasis on a small number of voices in any conversation leads to limiting outcomes. We are concerned that the voices of a select group of organizations are being privileged over the voices of educators, national professional teaching associations, and educational researchers, leading to education policy decisions that may be partial and do not meet the real needs of students, teachers, and schools. We are especially concerned that there appears to be an overreliance on a small number of think tanks and that these organisations are having a significant influence on policy development within education. The dominance of a small number of think tanks in education policy leads to a narrow, highly selective interpretation of research and evidence, which does not reflect the teaching profession. The research of Australian academics and the wealth of experiential knowledge of Australian teachers is all too often ignored, in favour of specific 'evidence' and non-research-based reports from international jurisdictions that do not reflect Australian society and culture.
- **Call to Action:** Broader consultation with diverse education researchers, national professional teacher associations, and classroom educators must be prioritised at all phases of education policy development. The voice of teachers is central to developing impactful education policy. Policy development must be co-designed with educators, including national professional teacher associations, incorporating research, evidence, and the lived experience of teachers. National professional teacher associations represent the voice of teachers, and act on their behalf, and they should have a central role in education policy development.

2. Restoring Teacher Agency is Key to Teacher Retention:

- Record numbers of teachers are leaving the profession due to workload, burnout, and dissatisfaction. Teachers feeling a lack of agency in their profession is a driving factor in teachers leaving the profession. A lack of professional agency is largely a result of accountability-focused actions of government at both state and federal levels. This lack of agency reduces professional satisfaction for teachers.
- **Call to Action:** All political parties must commit to policies that address teacher workload, improve working conditions, and restore teacher agency in decision-making. In many states in Australia, release from face-to-face teaching, for planning, data analysis, professional collaboration, professional learning, parent/carer meetings, etc., has not changed for decades. Yet the expectations of teachers continue to increase. This must be addressed. Meaningful engagement from governments with professional teaching associations is one way of addressing teacher agency.
- An overemphasis on teacher recruitment and the reliance on final-year pre-service teachers as a stopgap for teacher shortages is a short-term fix that fails to address systemic issues, particularly teacher retention
- **Call to Action:** The government must invest in research on teacher attrition and develop long-term strategies to retain and re-engage experienced educators who have left the profession.

3. Nuanced and contextual approaches to pedagogical repertoire:

- Increasingly, state and federal governments and education systems and sectors are focusing on approaches to pedagogy. A focus on pedagogical approaches can be very powerful and positive, including strengthening the use of education research. However, some schools, systems, and sectors are being directed to adopt a single pedagogical approach across the entire curriculum. These sometimes-blunt directions neglect a nuanced approach to pedagogy that draws on teachers' professional knowledge and skills to use a repertoire of appropriate and evidence-informed pedagogical practices for the content, subject, and phase of learning, and critically respond to the learning needs of the students themselves. The value of a pedagogical repertoire, drawing upon a rich evidence base, is that teachers are equipped to respond to the diverse needs of the students in their classrooms.
- **Call to Action:** AAAE asserts that pedagogical decisions should be left to experienced educators in classrooms. Teachers and schools are best placed to make decisions about which pedagogical approaches are most appropriate and effective within each subject in their unique context, and responsive to the needs of their students. Each subject area has distinctive pedagogical practices that are effective and appropriate to that discipline and must be respected. Context-appropriate pedagogy engages students, promotes critical thinking, supports diverse learning needs, builds strong teacher-student relationships, and fosters skill development. It encourages students' independence and aligns teaching strategies with learning goals, creating an effective and inclusive learning environment.

4. Non-Educators in Leadership Roles:

- Non-teachers and bureaucrats bring important experience and knowledge to government education authorities, agencies, and departments with a focus on

Education, however, we are concerned about the increasing numbers of non-educators being appointed to key leadership roles within government education authorities, agencies, and departments. This not only implies a lack of respect for the profession, it negates the expertise that an experienced educationalist would bring to these roles.

- **Call to Action:** Individuals with teaching qualifications and teaching experience should hold key leadership positions in government education authorities, agencies, and departments.

5. The role of the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO):

- The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) has a role to play in supporting governments, sectors, systems, schools, and teachers to make informed decisions. AERO views its role as an ‘evidence intermediary’ as they “generate high-quality evidence, present the evidence in ways that are relevant and accessible, [and] encourage adoption and effective implementation of evidence in practice and policy.” (AERO, 2025). However, we are concerned about the way AERO is approaching this role, and that they are taking a narrow and exclusionary approach to ‘evidence’ that is causing unnecessary conflict within the education field. In our view, AERO is disregarding important ‘evidence’ developed by Australian and international researchers. Yet, one form of research is being prioritised over others. We value and acknowledge the benefits of a range of academically rigorous methodologies in research in education.
- **Call to Action:** We call on the incoming federal government to work with the broad education field in Australia to ensure AERO’s approach to evidence is inclusive, useful, and impactful for **all** educators in Australia and improve outcomes for all students. Research and evidence need to acknowledge the importance of context and the complexity of Australian classrooms.

6. Closing the Gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Students:

- Closing the Gap data indicates the enormous amount of work needed to bring equity to education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people are not receiving adequate support, and this is reflected in concerning data in the Closing the Gap report across early childhood education, school readiness, school completion, tertiary education participation, and employment opportunities.
- **Call to Action:** The Federal and State/Territory Governments must work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, leaders, educators, and organisations to reduce adverse education outcomes and improve participation rates of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children and young people. We also call on the incoming government to work with First Nation educators to help develop non-First Nation teachers in continuing to build knowledge, skills, and understandings to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

7. Improving access and equity in Australian Education:

- Our education system is increasingly inequitable, leading to access challenges for students from low socio-economic advantage. The divide between well-funded and

poorly funded schools across Australia is of concern and needs to be addressed. Students from disadvantaged backgrounds often have lower reading levels, are less likely to complete school, have a lower sense of school belonging, and are less likely to engage in tertiary education.

- **Call to Action:** The incoming federal government needs to work with States and Territories to ensure all Australian schools are fully funded in as timely a manner as possible, to increase access and equity, and ensure that all Australian students, regardless of socio-economic background, geographic location, or cultural heritage, have equal access to the highest quality education and are provided with every opportunity to succeed.

8. Concerns About Teacher Education:

- The recommendations from **Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel (TEEP Report)** do not reflect the realities of the teaching profession or current initial teacher education programs. Again, some of the evidence base cited in this report is highly contentious and recommendations are applied beyond the scope of the original research and indeed the review. This review was a recommendation from the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, and yet it does nothing to address the teacher workforce and the issues of teacher attrition. It is alarming that only one current teacher educator and one school leader were on the six-person panel.
- **Call to Action:** The report should be replaced with policies developed in collaboration with teachers, teacher professional associations, and those working and researching in initial teacher education.
- The **Job Ready Graduates Scheme** is undervaluing disciplines like Creative Arts, Social Sciences, and Languages, leading to declining specialist teacher numbers. Secondary teachers often complete an undergraduate degree in their teaching area, before completing a Master of Teaching. The Job Ready Graduates Scheme has deliberately increased student contributions to these courses, making them expensive and unattainable. As a result, universities have discontinued courses in these areas, reducing the available pathways for students to become teachers in the arts, social sciences, and languages subject areas.
- **Call to Action:** The incoming government must urgently review and revise the **Job Ready Graduates Scheme** to ensure the sustainability of specialist pre-service teacher education.
- Increase in **out-of-field teaching**, due to teacher shortage, which also has implications within initial teacher education, with an increase in 'generalist' approaches in education degrees, rather than specialist training.
- **Call to Action:** Funded initiatives are needed to support out-of-field teachers to become in-field teachers. This can be achieved through partnerships with national professional teacher associations that deliver subject-specific professional learning.
- A growing trend toward **generalist teacher training** is reducing the number of specialists in key subject areas.
- **Call to Action:** Specialist training pathways must be strengthened within ITE to ensure high-quality education in all subject areas.

9. Lack of Education Research Funding:

- There is no dedicated funding stream from the Australian Research Council (ARC) for education research, limiting Australian universities' ability to contribute to evidence-based practice in comparison to other areas which receive prioritisation from the commonwealth government.
- **Call to Action:** The federal government must establish targeted funding for education research through the ARC.

10. Funding for National Professional Teacher Associations:

- Professional teacher associations are providing high-quality professional development, mentoring, journals and publications, and much more to teachers across Australia. These not-for-profit associations are generally membership-funded and rely heavily on volunteer educators to deliver services. Unlike the principals' associations, they generally do not receive Commonwealth Government funding.
- **Call to Action:** We call on all political parties to fund national professional teacher associations. This would have an enormous positive impact on the teaching profession and education system and on our students, as well as assisting the Commonwealth Government in addressing many of the critical issues discussed above.

Contact details:

Dr John Nicholas Saunders
President, Australian Alliance of Associations in Education
president@aaae.edu.au