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Australian Government response to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee report:

Teaching and learning – maximising our investment in Australian schools

September 2014

**Australian Government response to *Teaching and learning - maximising our investment in Australian schools***

The Australian Government welcomes the report by the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations References Committee, *Teaching and Learning - maximising our investment in Australian schools.* The contributions made by individuals and organisations to the Inquiry through evidence and submissions are acknowledged.

The Government believes the first step to achieving a quality education, which is so critical for the future of young Australians and our nation, is to lift the quality, professionalism and status of the teaching profession.

For this reason, the Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom. The Advisory Group will identify those components regarded as world’s best practice in teacher education, with a particular focus on:

* pedagogical approaches – the ways teachers teach their students, and the different ways teaching and learning can occur
* subject content – how well teachers understand the content of the subjects they are teaching
* professional experience – the opportunity for pre-service teachers to put theory into practice through quality in-school learning experiences.

While the Government is committed to improving teacher quality, we also respect the role of state and territory governments and non-government school authorities in relation to the provision of school education in Australia.

It is appropriate, therefore, that many of the Committee’s recommendations are for consideration by all governments via the Council of Australian Governments’ Education Council (formerly the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood).

In support of these recommendations, the Government will refer the Committee’s report to the Chair of the Education Council for consideration.

The Government thanks the Committee, and all contributors to the Inquiry, for their efforts in developing this report.

# Detailed response to recommendations

The Australian Government has considered the 23 recommendations made in the Senate Committee’s report and provides the following responses.

## Recommendation 1

*3.17 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Commonwealth Government, provide teachers with training on how to use and interpret evaluative data.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to its Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group and the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**As the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are implemented, the Government expects all teachers will have the ability to assess, provide feedback and report on student learning. Interpreting student data is one of the necessary skills identified in the standards, which require proficient teachers to be able to use student assessment data to analyse and evaluate student understanding of subject/content, identifying interventions and modifying teaching practice.**

**The provision of in-service professional development and training for teachers remains the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

**The Australian Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom.**

## Recommendation 2

*3.39 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Close the Gap program and identify further measures to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, particularly for Indigenous students in very remote areas.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan 2010–2014* (the Action Plan), endorsed by COAG in 2011, outlines how governments will work together to achieve the Closing the Gap targets in early childhood and school education.**

**The Australian Government and state, territory and non-government education authorities have been working closely together to progress actions under the Action Plan.**

**Education Ministers report annually on progress under the Action Plan and reports are published on the COAG Education Council website.**

**On 2 May 2014, COAG agreed the new five-year target of Closing the Gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous school attendance. COAG agreed that a joint report on progress in improving Indigenous students’ school attendance be provided to COAG in early 2015, including an assessment of the effectiveness of Commonwealth, State and Territory strategies.**

## Recommendation 3

*3.63 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood Development and the Catholic and Independent school sectors work to ensure continued investment in programs with proven effectiveness that assist parents and guardians to support the education of their child, beginning in early childhood.*

The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.

The Australian Government recognises that learning starts at home, with parents being the first and most important influence on a child’s learning. Strengthening and valuing parental engagement in education is the foundation of the Government’s reform agenda for schooling.

The Australian Government has committed more than $100 million to support parental engagement in vulnerable communities through the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters. The Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters is currently being expanded from 50 sites across Australia into 50 new Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander focussed communities – with the first 25 communities commencing delivery in 2014 and community selection for the next 25 Indigenous focussed communities now underway.

## Recommendation 4

*3.74 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, urgently work to identify measures to close the gap between educational outcomes for rural and remote students and metropolitan students. Funding measures may be required to ensure that each student is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**From 1 January 2014, Australian Government funding for all schools has been determined under the *Australian Education Act 2013*. Under the Act funding includes a base payment for each student plus a number of loadings that address disadvantage including for students in regional and remote areas.**

## Recommendation 5

*3.75 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors review the current incentives arrangements for hard-to-staff positions in metropolitan, regional, remote and rural schools, to ensure that these are appropriate.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The employment and remuneration of teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendation 6

*3.94 The committee recommends that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership ensure that university teaching programs provide appropriate practical and theoretical training to pre-service teachers in effective behavioural management.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom.**

## Recommendation 7

*3.95 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, consider initiatives to better support teachers and principals effectively manage behaviour in Australian schools.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The Australian Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom.**

**The provision of in-service professional development and training for teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendation 8

*3.103 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work with the Catholic and Independent School sectors to further develop programs to ensure that parents and guardians have the highest expectations for each child, regardless of socio economic status.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The Australian Government recognises that learning starts at home, with parents being the first and most important influence on a child’s attitudes and values toward school and learning.**

**Strengthening and valuing parental engagement in education is the foundation of the Government’s reform agenda for schooling. This includes moving beyond traditional practices of parent involvement to encompass the attitudes and behaviours that have been shown to help students succeed.**

## Recommendation 9

*3.113 The committee recommends that Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors to ensure that adequate funding for support is provided to all students with a disability, to ensure that each student with a disability is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their potential in a safe and appropriate environment.*

**The Australian Government supports the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Government is committed to better support for school students with disability and learning difficulties. This includes:**

* **the commencement in 2014 of a funding loading for school students with disability that applies to eligible students with disability no matter where they live or the type of school they attend**
* **the $300 million More Support for Students with Disability initiative extended into 2014 to provide additional support for teachers and schools.**

**The Government is also committed to continuing to refine the funding loading based on levels of student need from the Nationally Consistent Collection of Data on School Students with Disability (NCCD). Work is occurring in close collaboration with states and territories and the Catholic and Independent school sectors.**

## Recommendation 10

*4.69 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood conduct research into whether public schools participating in school autonomy programs have improved student results.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The Australian Government is working with states and territories to support a transition to more autonomous and independent models of schooling through its Independent Public Schools initiative.**

## Recommendations 11 and 12

*4.7 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education consider the research conducted by Incept Labs and the conclusion that multiple methods should be used to select entrants to teaching programs. These methods may include: academic ability; psychometric testing; behavioural based interviews;
role-plays; teaching practice.*

*4.71 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education work to ensure that adequate funding is directed to schools to provide quality mentoring and support programs for pre-service teachers during practicum.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The Australian Government will work to improve admission standards for initial teacher education programmes by establishing best-practice guidelines to encourage universities to base admission standards not just on academic achievement, but also on the personal qualities that make good teachers.**

**The Australian Government has also established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom. Professional experience (practicum) is one of the three focus areas of the work of the group.**

## Recommendation 13

*4.71 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work to ensure that demand for quality teachers is high and consider:*

* *restricting the number of places available to pre-service teachers for practical training;*
* *capping the number of graduates who can register as teachers (any cap imposed should be reviewed each year and reflect the expected demand for teachers in particular disciplines); and*
* *introducing a registration exam to be used in conjunction with the current registration standards to assess graduate suitability.*

**The Australian Government notes the Committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The Australian Government will work to improve admission standards for initial teacher education programmes by establishing best-practice guidelines to encourage universities to base admission standards not just on academic achievement, but also on the personal qualities that make good teachers.**

## Recommendation 14 and 15

*4.72 The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency conduct an audit of literacy teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers have an appropriate level of literacy and are equipped to teach the English language. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.*

*4.73 The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, in consultation with the Australian Mathematic Sciences Institute, conduct an audit of mathematics teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers are equipped to teach mathematics and numeracy to students. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom. This work includes a focus on pedagogical approaches and knowledge of subject content to be taught.**

## Recommendation 16

*4.74 The committee recommends that the Australian Council of Deans of Education liaises with the relevant Deans of Sciences and Mathematics to ensure that students in those disciplines receive timely and accurate advice about the pre-requisites required to become secondary mathematics and/or science teachers.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Government’s Enhancing the Training of Mathematics and Science Teachers Programme is providing $12 million, over three calendar years 2014 to 2016, for collaborative university-led projects to drive a major improvement in the quality of pre-service training for mathematics and science teachers. Five multi-institution projects supported by a formative evaluation commenced in 2013. The projects bring together faculties of mathematics and science and faculties of education to collaborate on new
pre-service teacher course design and delivery.**

## Recommendation 17

*5.22 The committee recommends that state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider rewarding Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers with meaningful remuneration and an improved salary structure under the new national certification process (consistent with initiatives already undertaken in some jurisdictions).*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The employment and remuneration of teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendation 18

*5.65 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood commission research into the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation and will refer the report to the COAG Education Council for consideration.**

**The employment of teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendation 19

*5.66 The committee recommends the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, in consultation with the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, develop guidelines on how best to support first year teachers.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Government has established a Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group to provide advice on how teacher education programmes could be improved to better prepare new teachers with the practical skills needed for the classroom.**

**The provision of in-service professional development and training for teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendations 20 and 21

*5.107 The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider ways to support in-house professional learning and development (including mentoring), with an associated reduction in teaching loads.*

*5.108 The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations investigates the potential use of online tools for delivery of professional learning for teachers.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The provision of in-service professional development and training for teachers is the responsibility of state and territory governments and non-government school employers.**

## Recommendation 22

*5.109 The committee recommends that the state and territory governments consider creating pathways (for example scholarships) for teachers teaching 'out of field' in mathematics and science to become qualified in these disciplines. The Commonwealth Government should also consider increasing the number of postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places in these disciplines. As an interim solution, the committee recommends that programs which assist teachers teaching 'out of field' be expanded.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation and notes that as part of its Terms of Reference, the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group has been asked to examine world’s best practice to inform an evidence-based approach to teaching mathematics and science subjects.**

**The Government is committed to exploring alternative pathways into teaching to ensure high-quality entrants are attracted to the profession, and to respond to areas of workforce shortage, such as the need for specialised mathematics and science teachers or teachers in remote locations. The Government will continue to support the Teach for Australia programme which provides an employment-based pathway into teaching for high-calibre non-teaching graduates who may not otherwise have considered a career in teaching.**

**The Government announced landmark reforms to higher education in the 2014–15 Budget. The reforms will expand opportunities for students and provide additional financial support to over
80 000 students each year by 2018. Government subsidies will be extended to students studying at any registered Australian higher education provider and to students undertaking any accredited undergraduate course including higher education diplomas, advanced diplomas, associate degrees and bachelor level degrees.**

**The Government’s immediate priority is to implement these reforms. The Government intends to review policy settings for funding Commonwealth supported postgraduate places in the near future.**

## Recommendation 23

*5.110 The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations commission a study in 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives being undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.*

**The Australian Government notes the committee’s recommendation.**

**The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers were the first major product developed by AITSL. They were endorsed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (now the Education Council) in December 2010 for implementation from 2013.**

**The University of Melbourne is undertaking an evaluation of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, planned to conclude in December 2015. The purpose of the evaluation is to determine the usefulness and effectiveness of implementation and the impact of the Standards on improving teacher quality.**