



# Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System: Consultation Paper

University of Tasmania Submission

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UNIVERSITY of  
**TASMANIA** 



## **Acknowledgment of Country**

The University of Tasmania pays its respects to elders past, present and emerging to the many Aboriginal people that did not make elder status and to the Tasmanian Aboriginal community that continues to care for Country. We acknowledge the profound effect of climate change on this Country and seek to work alongside Tasmanian Aboriginal communities, with their deep wisdom and knowledge, to address climate change and its impacts.

The Palawa people belong to one of the world's oldest living cultures, continually resident on this Country for over 40,000 years. They have survived and adapted to significant changes in climate over this time, such as sea-level rise and extreme rainfall variability, and as such embody thousands of generations of intimate place-based knowledge.

We acknowledge with deep respect that this knowledge represents a range of cultural practices, wisdom, traditions, and ways of knowing the world.

The University of Tasmania recognises a history based on truth that acknowledges the impacts of invasion and colonisation upon Aboriginal people, resulting in forcible removal from their lands.

Our island is deeply unique, with cities and towns surrounded by spectacular landscapes of bushland, waterways, mountain ranges, and coasts.

The University of Tasmania stands for a future that profoundly respects and acknowledges Aboriginal perspectives, culture, language, and history, and a continued effort to fight for Aboriginal justice and rights paving the way for a strong future.

## Introductory Statement

Central to the challenges facing education in Australia is inequality. Whilst not solely the responsibility of the education sector to address these societal challenges, the current structure and provision of schooling does not adequately address the impacts of inequality within our community. It is incumbent on leaders to enact change in the sector to help reduce inequality and to change the way in which inequality is exacerbated via education. Currently, Australia has been identified as one of the least equitable education systems (ranking 30<sup>th</sup> out of 38) in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)<sup>1</sup>. To meet the challenges brought about by inequality in society, we must prioritise educational attainment for everyone, and address the inequalities within our education system. We must establish an ecosystem in which students who come to our schools with various forms of disadvantage are supported to succeed within that system at the same rate and to the same level as those without disadvantage.

National reform addressing the whole-of-institution and whole-of-system redevelopments to lift success for all students should, in the view of the University of Tasmania, include:

- Adopting Universal Design for Learning (Universal Design in Education) curriculum and delivery to be accessible to all so that adjustments required for the needs of individual students is lessened.
- Leveraging student data and analytics to drive a whole-of-systems reform with scalable interventions that improve outcomes for all students and have a differential outcome for disadvantaged students; and implementing early intervention initiatives for all students.
- An integration of strategies which help to address complex community issues in the immediate and longer term through expanded scope of learning priorities, increased educational attainment, improved community cohesion, trauma-informed practice through a social justice lens, and reforms which reduce current inequities.

The end-state of reform for a system that is aiming for increased attainment and reduced inequality would see these approaches being integral to education delivery in Australia.

The following section provides University of Tasmania's responses to questions raised in the Consultation Paper.

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF. An unfair start: Inequality in children's education in rich countries. United Nations, 2019

## Chapter 2: Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind.

*Consultation paper question: What are the most important student outcomes for Australian school students that should be measured in the next NSRA? Should these go beyond academic performance (for example, attendance and engagement)?*

Student outcomes measured in the NSRA need to extend beyond academic performance, which alone can represent a narrow perception of individual educational needs. Measuring broader outcomes supports an inclusive approach to education of the ‘whole person’ which can lead to increased education equity.

The additional outcomes that we would recommend be measured are engagement; student wellbeing; student agency; and essential/life skills. Each of these are not just important in themselves but they also have strong links to improved student outcomes.

### Engagement

Engagement is an important predictor of academic success and is particularly relevant for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds<sup>2</sup>, with school participation improving their chances of positive life outcomes. Further, with COVID-19 leading to a significant drop in attendance of Australian disadvantaged students<sup>3</sup>, engaging disengaged students is essential to improve student outcomes for the current school-aged population.

The current measures of engagement<sup>4,5</sup> need to be broadened to include attendance (including reasons for absences such as school-sanctions, part-time enrolment/shortened days); perceived connectedness to school; social inclusion or isolation; and strength of teacher/student relationships.

### Student Wellbeing

With strong evidence that student learning outcomes are directly related to student wellbeing<sup>6</sup>, the environment in which children and young people develop and learn needs to change to support improved wellbeing outcomes. Current national mental health survey data for children and young people within Australia indicates a concerning situation<sup>7</sup>, with suicide the leading cause of death for people aged 15-24. The suicide rate for this age group has increased from 10 to 14 per 100,000 (between 2010 and 2019)<sup>8</sup>, strongly suggesting the mental health and wellbeing of our young people is in decline.

Student wellbeing measures should be adopted within the NSRA to enable a more holistic view of student outcomes in addition to academic performance. Measurement of student wellbeing outcomes was recommended in the 2020 Productivity Commission Inquiry Report on Mental Health<sup>9</sup>, and Australian guidelines for measuring student wellbeing are already available<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>2</sup> McLachlan, R., Gillfillan, G. and Gordon, J. (2013). *Deep and persistent disadvantage in Australia*. Australian Government. Canberra: Productivity Commission Staff Working Paper.

<sup>3</sup> Tomaszewski, W., Zajac, T., Rudling, E., Te Riele, K., McDaid, L. & Western, M. (2022). Uneven impacts of COVID-19 on the attendance rates of secondary school students from different socioeconomic backgrounds in Australia. *Australian Journal of Social Issues* (online) doi:10.1002/ajs4.219

<sup>4</sup> Thoars, C. (2022). "They never asked why" The lived experiences of education and its role in the transition from youth incarceration: adult male recidivist perspectives.

<sup>5</sup> Walker, S., & Graham, L. (2019). At Risk Students and teacher-student relationships: Student characteristics, Attitudes to School and Classroom Climate. *International Journal of Inclusive Education*, 25(8), 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13603116.2019.1588925>

<sup>6</sup> Durlak JA, Weissberg RP, Dymnicki AB, et al. The impact of enhancing students' social and emotional learning: A meta-analysis of school-based universal interventions. *Child development* 2011; 82: 405-432.

<sup>7</sup> Lawrence D JS, Hafekost J, Boterhoven De Haan K, Sawyer M, Ainley J, Zubrick SR The Mental Health of Children and Adolescents. In: Australian Government, (ed.). Report on the second Australian Child and Adolescent Survey of Mental Health and Wellbeing. Canberra: Department of Health, 2015.

<sup>8</sup> Australia's youth: Mental illness - Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (aihw.gov.au)

<sup>9</sup> Productivity Commission 2020, Mental Health, Report no. 95, Canberra

<sup>10</sup> [https://research.acer.edu.au/well\\_being/8/](https://research.acer.edu.au/well_being/8/)

## Student Agency

Student agency refers to the concept that students can develop ‘the ability and the will to positively influence their own lives and the world around them’, and involves developing individual capacity in setting goals, reflecting, and acting responsibly<sup>11</sup>. Foundational capabilities also need to be developed early to cultivate student agency – for example by encouraging and teaching goals setting in primary schools, students are more likely to achieve more success in secondary schooling<sup>12</sup>.

Student agency is a crucial factor in improving educational outcomes, as the development of agency increases important individual capabilities such as critical thinking and problem-solving skills<sup>13</sup>. The measurement of student agency in the NSRA would enable identification of areas where early intervention and educational support may be required.

## Life Skills

Essential life skills including time management, collaborative skills, approach to learning, critical and independent thinking are not currently measured within the NSRA. These transferable skills are highly valued in the labour market<sup>14</sup> and underpin success in further education and training<sup>15</sup>, demonstrating the value of specifically measuring these skills in the NSRA.

A joint effort of UNICEF and The World Bank provided a standardised approach for assessing life skills proficiency and distribution across school-based population, to inform education decision makers and practitioners on useful education interventions to enhance life skills. A similar approach is suggested for adoption within the NSRA.

*Consultation paper question: What are the evidence-based practices that teachers, schools, systems and sectors can put in place to improve student outcomes, particularly for those most at risk of falling behind? Are different approaches required for different at-risk cohorts?*

Student outcomes are impacted by educational and environmental factors which interact to support or detract from learning, and the implementation of evidence-based practices can improve these outcomes. Many current policies and practice do not align with evidence – such as use of suspension punishments which are applied more frequently to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and students who have experienced domestic violence<sup>16</sup>.

It is well established that powerful interventions and programs that assist disadvantaged students will also improve outcomes for all students. In the Australian education setting these practices should include:

- Enabling teachers to build positive relationships with students<sup>17</sup>, rather than focusing on ‘managing’ classrooms and poor behaviour<sup>18</sup>. By building positive teacher/student relationships, student engagement and attendance, sense of belonging and feeling of support will be enhanced.

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<sup>11</sup> Student\_Agency\_for\_2030\_concept\_note.pdf (oecd.org)

<sup>12</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10964-023-01813-7>

<sup>13</sup> Student\_Agency\_for\_2030\_concept\_note.pdf (oecd.org)

<sup>14</sup> Measuring Life Skills | UNICEF Middle East and North Africa

<sup>15</sup> <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0927537112000577>

<sup>16</sup> Orr, C., C. Fisher, M. Bell, M. O'Donnell, K. Martin, R. Glauert and D. Preen (2022). "Exposure to family and domestic violence is associated with lower attendance and higher suspension in school children." Child Abuse & Neglect: 105594.

<sup>17</sup> Roorda, D. L., Koomen, H. M. Y., Spilt, J. L., & Oort, F. J. (2011). The influence of affective teacher-student relationships on students' school engagement and achievement: A meta-analytic approach. Review of Educational Research, 81(4), 493-529.

<sup>18</sup> ECD (2020), "Disciplinary climate", in PISA 2018 Results (Volume III): What School Life Means for Students' Lives. OECD Publishing, Paris, <https://doi.org/10.1787/f05bb3ee-en>.

- Ensuring the requirements for embedding of abuse prevention education into curricular and teaching is appropriate and supported by additional services. Evidence-based strategies are needed to ensure the implementation of Child Safe Organisation Guidelines and National abuse prevention guidelines<sup>19</sup>
- Creating physical environments within schools and classrooms to support effective learning<sup>20</sup>, including acoustics being appropriate<sup>21</sup> and opportunities for learning within nature<sup>22</sup>.

Additional approaches to improve student outcomes do need to be implemented for at-risk cohorts, and these should include trauma-informed practice approaches, early intervention in educational support programs, and increased access to support staff within schools.

Trauma informed approaches to learning should be implemented in schools and classrooms to ensure teachers and school leaders understand the adverse impacts of trauma and social justice issues on individual learners. The freely available Thoughtful Schools Framework<sup>23</sup> underpinned by the expert derived International Trauma-Informed Practice Principles for Schools<sup>24</sup> can assist schools to review their current strategies and embed trauma informed practice into their policies and practices. By embedding trauma-informed practice through a social justice lens, schools and classrooms are likely to create a sense of safety and belonging for students, increasing engagement and educational outcomes for students.

Early intervention is key for at-risk cohorts, and targeted literacy and numeracy interventions will improve student outcomes for at risk cohorts. Successful examples of these interventions include teaching beginning reading skills to children and adolescents with intellectual disability<sup>25</sup> and speech and language therapy interventions for children with primary speech and language delay or disorder<sup>26</sup>. Tiered intervention programs which identify and target student needs will prevent children 'falling through the cracks' by embedding best-practices tiered approaches in classrooms<sup>27</sup>. Improving access and quality of Early Learning Programs (3/ 4-year-old kindergarten and childcare programs<sup>28</sup>), through increased funding, resources, and training will also have positive impacts as an early identification and intervention strategy. High quality Early Learning programs have been shown to have a significant, positive impact on social, emotional, and academic outcomes of young people from disadvantaged, and rural and remote backgrounds<sup>29</sup>.

Increasing access to, and availability of, support staff through adequate funding for professional practitioner teams within schools is vital for at-risk cohorts. This should include allied health practitioners<sup>30</sup> and support staff (e.g., speech pathologists, school psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists). Support staff can identify students at

<sup>19</sup> <https://www.cochranelibrary.com/cdsr/doi/10.1002/14651858.CD004606.pub2/full?highlightAbstract=school>

<sup>20</sup> Schneider, M. (2002). Do School Facilities Affect Academic Outcomes?.

<sup>21</sup> Shield, B. M., & Dockrell, J. E. (2008). The effects of environmental and classroom noise on the academic attainments of primary school children. *The journal of the acoustical society of America*, 123(1), 133-144.

<sup>22</sup> <http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.877058>

<sup>23</sup> <https://thoughtfulschools.org.au/>

<sup>24</sup> Martin K, et al 2023 International Trauma-Informed Practice Principles for Schools (ITIPPS); expert consensus of best-practice principles Australian Educational Researcher (in press)

<sup>25</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD011359.pub2>

<sup>26</sup> <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD004110>

<sup>27</sup> Berger, E. (2019). "Multi-tiered approaches to trauma-informed care in schools: A systematic review." *School Mental Health*: 1-15.

<sup>28</sup> Students, particularly those from greater social disadvantage, benefit from access to high quality Early Childhood Education

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/full/10.1177/004944115588789>

"Provision of quality early childhood education may be one important way to address disadvantage" in <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s13384-011-0028-6> American Context: Investment in quality early childhood education has economic as well as social advantages.

<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ920516.pdf>

<sup>29</sup> Son, A. I., Fu, X., Suto, F., Liu, J. S., Hashimoto-Torii, K., & Torii, M. (2017). Quality is key in early childhood education in Australia. *Scientific Reports*, 7(1).

<https://doi.org/10.1038/srep45359>

<sup>30</sup> Speech Pathology: [https://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/199650/sub035-education-evidence.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/199650/sub035-education-evidence.pdf); School Psychologists: <https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2022/vol-44-spring-2022/the-case-for-psychologists-in-schools>; Adequately trained Tas can improve student learning outcomes particularly in reading: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0162373721990361>; <https://academic.oup.com/jeea/article/18/1/469/5232116?login=true>

risk, remediate early markers and provide ongoing treatment for those requiring additional support. Having practitioners located in the school is important to ensure adequate access for students whose carers may not have sufficient means or capacity to attend off-site appointments.

*Consultation paper question: Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?*

Additional priority equity cohorts should include both children and young people living in out-of-home care (OOHC)<sup>31</sup>, and children and young people who are experiencing adversity and/or trauma. These cohorts both face adversity in educational attainment and identifying them as priority equity cohorts will enable appropriate and targeted support and interventions.

Children and young people living in OOHC experience significant disadvantage and adversity and are reported to have issues with engagement in education leading to decreased educational opportunity<sup>32</sup>. Children in OOHC often experience multiple or frequent school changes which is highly disruptive to support networks and peer relationships and negatively impacts on engagement with education. In Australia, First Nations children are 12.2% more likely to be in OOHC than non-Indigenous children<sup>33</sup>, a contributing factor to the educational attainment challenges for Australia's Indigenous population. Education interventions and programmes that support OOHC children's educational attainment, participation and overall wellbeing can positively influence individual life outcomes.

Adversity and/or trauma in childhood can have profound and long-lasting impacts on students, affecting various aspects of their development and well-being, including education<sup>34</sup>. Adversity and/or trauma can have a significantly negative impact on school attendance and behaviour in the classroom and can increase the likelihood of experiencing academic failure and early school dropout.

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<sup>31</sup> AIHW (2015). Educational outcomes for children in care: linking 2013 child protection and NAPLAN data. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/child-protection/educational-outcomes-for-children-in-care-linking/summary>

<sup>32</sup> Lund S and Stokes C. The educational outcomes of children in care-a scoping review. CHILDREN AUSTRALIA 2020; 45: 249-257.

<sup>33</sup> SNAICC – National Voice for our Children. (2021). Review of the ATSCPP implementation efforts over the reporting period 1 May 2019–30 April 2020. [https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Reviewing-Implementation-of-the-ATSCPP\\_2020\\_NT.pdf](https://www.snaicc.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Reviewing-Implementation-of-the-ATSCPP_2020_NT.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Bick, J. and C. A. Nelson (2016). "Early adverse experiences and the developing brain." *Neuropsychopharmacology* 41(1): 177.

### Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing.

*Consultation paper question: What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively? What is needed from schools, systems, government, and the community to deliver this?*

Schools that are effectively supporting student mental health and wellbeing will implement integrated, consistent, whole-school approaches that support positive outcomes for both students and staff<sup>35</sup>. This should include embedding trauma informed practice policies<sup>36</sup>, which can be implemented with support from existing resources in the sector<sup>37</sup>. Students should be given opportunity to access and participate in evidence-based wellbeing programs, such as the Resilience Project<sup>38</sup>. In school wellbeing and support teams also need to be adequately resourced – this should include Social Workers, School Psychologists and Speech Pathologists.<sup>39</sup>

Staff wellbeing needs to be actively considered alongside student wellbeing, as staffs' own social and emotional wellbeing has been shown to affect their reactions to student behaviour. Evidence suggests that school staff with poor social and emotional capacity are more likely to react negatively (including distress, punitive and minimisation reactions), while staff with strong social and emotional capacity are more likely to respond with positively focused reactions (including emotion- and problem-focused reactions)<sup>40</sup>. All school staff should be supported in their own wellbeing with strategies and evidence-based supports in place to enable early identification and intervention for mental health problems<sup>41</sup>.

To deliver effective approaches to student mental health and wellbeing, the education sector and schools need to be collaborative, collegial, and reflective. School leadership, administrative staff, teachers, and representatives (unions and associations) need to work collaboratively to achieve student wellbeing initiatives. Input and participation from students, parents and other community members should also be welcomed and regularly sought to inform wellbeing initiatives and priorities.

*Consultation paper question: What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?*

Strategies which support a trauma-informed approach to practice in schools, and which actively seek input from students on wellbeing approaches, should be considered as part of a national reform agenda.

Trauma-Informed Practice Frameworks are currently being implemented nationally in various settings – such as The Trauma and Learning Policy Initiative<sup>42</sup>, and the Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi-level, Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe and Supportive

<sup>35</sup> <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/wellbeing-in-australian-schools>

<sup>36</sup> Dorado, J. S., M. Martinez, L. E. McArthur and T. Leibovitz (2016). "Healthy Environments and Response to Trauma in Schools (HEARTS): A Whole-School, Multi-level, Prevention and Intervention Program for Creating Trauma-Informed, Safe and Supportive Schools." *School Mental Health* 8(1): 163-176.

<sup>37</sup> Berger, E. and K. Martin (2021). School trauma-informed practice policy. *Building Better Schools with Evidence-based Policy: Adaptable Policy for Teachers and*. K.-A. Allen, A. Reupert and L. Oades, Taylor & Francis: 104-111.

<sup>38</sup> Time spent on developing skills that promote well-being have positive effects on learning and academic achievement: <https://www.bmj.com/content/348/bmj.g3078>

<sup>39</sup> Speech Pathology: [https://www.pc.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/199650/sub035-education-evidence.pdf](https://www.pc.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0003/199650/sub035-education-evidence.pdf), School Psychologists:

<https://psychology.org.au/for-members/publications/inpsych/2022/vol-44-spring-2022/the-case-for-psychologists-in-schools>

<sup>40</sup> Buettner, C. K., Jeon, L., Hur, E., & Garcia, R. E. (2016). Teachers' social-emotional capacity: Factors associated with teachers' responsiveness and professional commitment. *Early Education and Development*, 27(7), 1018-1039.

<sup>41</sup> "Learner wellbeing is supported and strengthened by educator wellbeing" <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/wellbeing-in-australian-schools>, Teacher wellbeing needs to be supported so they can support their students: <https://www.sueroffey.com/wp-content/uploads/import/32-Roffey%20ECP29-4.pdf>

<sup>42</sup> <https://d2jb59s61v13vs.cloudfront.net/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/Evaluation-Trauma-Learning-Policy-Initiative-Inquiry-Based-Process-Year-3-BU.pdf>



Schools<sup>43</sup>. The International Trauma-Informed Practice Principles for Schools<sup>44</sup> and available support resources<sup>45</sup> can be used to guide schools in the process of adapting their practice and practices to be trauma informed. The University of Tasmania has established a research centre in [Trauma Informed Practice in Education](#) and is actively building Tasmanian education sector capacity in understanding and responding to trauma in classrooms, and developing school networks that work within trauma informed principles. Our Initial Teacher Education courses are also now embedding knowledge of the impact of trauma and best practice in responding to learning and behaviour needs.

Strategies to incorporate student perspective and voice in identifying and responding to needs of children and young people could also be applied consistently on a national level. Within school communities this can be achieved with school policies that require students are actively included, and their voices heard, when identifying needs and setting priorities within the school such as strategic planning processes<sup>46</sup>. Students should also be provided the opportunity to evaluate and give feedback to teachers about their learning and individual learning needs<sup>47</sup>.

*Consultation paper question: What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload?*

Increasing access within schools for external service providers will have a positive impact on wellbeing support for students, without adding to teacher and leader workload. External service providers can work with students and identify where there is need for outside referrals, however these providers can often experience significant barriers in attending school sites which results in students not accessing any required services. Social workers and school psychologists are best placed to refer students to external services<sup>48</sup>, and their knowledge of service types and local providers is valuable within all schools but particularly relevant for disadvantaged and at-risk students<sup>49</sup>.

Educating caregivers about available services will also improve on student wellbeing and access to services outside of the school setting. Schools are well positioned to provide information to caregivers and students directly about services to assist students. By disseminating this information through school channels, caregivers can be better informed about which services are available and the role of the services.

Schools need to enable and encourage the provision of these services within the school setting as increasing and simplifying the access to schools for external service providers will have a positive impact for students.

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<sup>43</sup> <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s12310-016-9177-0>

<sup>44</sup> Martin K, et al 2023 International Trauma-Informed Practice Principles for Schools (ITIPPS); expert consensus of best-practice principles Australian Educational Researcher (in press)

<sup>45</sup> <https://thoughtfulschools.org.au/the-thoughtful-schools-program-guidebook/>

<sup>46</sup> Simmons, C., Graham, A., & Thomas, N. (2014). Imagining an ideal school for wellbeing: Locating student voice. *Journal of Educational Change*, 16(2), 129-144. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-014-9239-8>

<sup>47</sup> Barile, J. P., D. K. Donohue, E. R. Anthony, A. M. Baker, S. R. Weaver and C. C. Henrich (2012). "Teacher-Student Relationship Climate and School Outcomes: Implications for Educational Policy Initiatives." *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 41(3): 256-267.

<sup>48</sup> Thielking, M., Skues, J., & Le, V.A. (2018). Collaborative Practices Among Australian School Psychologists, Guidance Officers and School Counsellors: Important Lessons for School Psychological Practice. *The Educational and Developmental Psychologist*, 35(1), 18-35. <https://doi/10.1017/edp.2018.4>

<sup>49</sup> Marinucci, A., Grové, C., & Allen, K. A. (2023). Australian School Staff and Allied Health Professional Perspectives of Mental Health Literacy in Schools: A Mixed Methods Study. *Educational Psychology Review*, 35(1). <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10648-023-09725-2>

## **Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers.**

*Consultation paper question: How can teacher career pathways, such as master teachers and instructional specialists, be improved to attract and retain teachers? How should this interact with HALT certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?*

HALT has not been considered a success in Australia, with very few teachers successfully completing the program. To encourage teachers to undertake HALT it needs to be reformatted to be less onerous for teachers in terms of time and additional workload to undertake; have a lower individual financial cost; and be linked to specified leadership pathways in schools. Appropriate remuneration for these leadership and specialist teacher positions also needs to be considered to ensure longevity of careers and retention within these specialist roles.

*Consultation paper question: Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?*

While there are resources made available from commercial providers and increasingly from state level education departments, it is important to recognise that curriculum materials do not always pick up the complexities and nuances of diverse classrooms and communities. Teachers are required to work with these complexities to deliver learning. There is also an imperative to avoid using pre-made curriculum materials as a script that teachers are expected to deliver uniformly. This practice, where it has been employed elsewhere (e.g., the UK in the early 2000s) has led to the decreased professionalisation of teachers and a devaluing of university education for teachers.

*Consultation paper question: Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?*

Teaching qualifications and registration should be acknowledged nationally across Australia. Additionally, an area that needs attention is the recognition of overseas teaching qualifications. There are inconsistencies in how jurisdictions acknowledge and respond to overseas qualifications. If a collective understanding and set of guiding principles was developed at the national level it would allow a greater number of qualified teachers to join the national workforce, not only increasing the size of the workforce but also bringing diversity and quality to the profession.

### **In Conclusion**

Equity across Australia's education system is of paramount importance to ensure all children, regardless of their socio-economic background, culture, ethnicity, or diversity, have access to high-quality inclusive education and greater life opportunities. Achieving equity will not only impact the individual student, additionally it will foster social and economic growth and wellbeing.

The University of Tasmania, through our School of Education, the Peter Underwood Centre for Educational Attainment, and the Trauma-Informed Practice Lab, would welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the expert panel on any of our responses provided in this submission.