

31 July 2023

Dr Lisa O'Brien AM
Chair, Expert Panel
Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System
Australian Department of Education
GPO Box 9880
Canberra ACT 2601

Emailed to NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au

Dear Dr O'Brien,

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation Paper

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) appreciates the opportunity to respond to the Expert Panel's Consultation Paper. Our submission covers issues relating to Australia's teacher workforce, school leadership and student wellbeing, with an emphasis on actions that we believe offer governments the most immediate gains allied to long-term benefits, and which have the potential for high impact.

Australia's teacher workforce

While Chapter 4 of the Expert Panel's Consultation Paper is devoted to a discussion of issues related to 'Our current and future teachers', the central role of teachers as agents to address student equity, achievement and wellbeing issues is also apparent throughout the Paper.

It is AHISA's view that the most immediate and far-reaching gains for student outcomes will be achieved through a national policy focus on Australia's teacher workforce in the following key areas:

1. *Promoting school-based teacher-mentors*, to support ITE students on school placements, support Graduate status teachers attain Proficient status, support mid-career ITE entrants or those training under internship arrangements and to support peer observation and professional exchange among colleagues within a school for ongoing professional learning.
2. *Upskilling Australia's teacher workforce*, to enable teachers to meet the demands of escalating technological disruption in schools, support student learning, help address learning loss through student absences and reduce teachers' workloads.
3. *Resourcing teachers*, to help meet individual student need, including cultural and language differences, and to enable the adoption of digitally-enabled pedagogical approaches and development of students' digital literacy.
4. *Streamlining teacher registration*, to facilitate teacher mobility, alternative teacher training pathways such as internships, transfer to the profession by mid-career professionals and re-entry to the profession.

Strengthening school leadership

To support development of Australia's teacher workforce, to establish a strong foundation for the "school leadership pipeline" and to ensure the capacity and capability of future school leadership, AHISA recommends a national focus on professional learning for middle school leaders.

As well as having the potential to become senior leaders or principals, middle school leaders (who themselves are likely to have a significant teaching load) are typically those who have most interaction with teaching staff in a leadership or supervisory capacity and therefore most likely to influence teachers' job satisfaction and sense of belonging at school.

Student wellbeing

AHISA's submission addresses the issue of data collection in relation to student wellbeing, examining potential avenues to be explored by Education Ministers prior to setting wellbeing targets.

We present the above proposals in more detail in the following pages, drawing on AHISA's submissions to the Productivity Commission's 2022 National School Reform Agreement Review (17 June and 21 October 2022), AHISA's response to the Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (1 December 2022), our response to the Teacher Education Expert Panel's Discussion Paper (20 April 2023) and our recent submission to a parliamentary inquiry into the use of generative artificial intelligence in the Australian education system (21 July 2023).

AHISA welcomes any inquiries the Expert Panel may have about this submission. These may be directed to me at telephone (██████████), or via email at ██████████

Yours faithfully,

Dr Chris Duncan

AHISA Chief Executive Officer

ABOUT AHISA

AHISA Ltd is a professional association for Heads of independent schools.

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

AHISA's 460 members lead schools that collectively account for over 450,000 students, representing 70 per cent of Australia's independent sector enrolments and over 11 per cent of total Australian school enrolments. AHISA members' schools also educate a significant proportion of senior secondary students: 20 per cent of Australia's Year 12 students attend AHISA members' schools.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 44,000 teaching staff and almost 30,000 support staff.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Over 20 per cent of members lead schools serving low- to very low-SES communities. The geographic spread of members' schools is also diverse, with schools located in major city, inner regional, outer regional, remote and very remote areas. School size varies from less than 200 students to over 3,000 students, with most members' schools falling within the range 600 to 1400 students.

AHISA believes that a high-quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities regarding the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

1. AUSTRALIA'S TEACHER WORKFORCE

Australian governments – either collectively or singly – are already focused on addressing a range of teacher workforce issues, particularly in relation to initial teacher education (ITE) course offerings and attracting more entrants to the profession. While initiatives to attract more and diverse candidates to the teaching profession are important, a focus on retaining those who have already taken their first steps toward a career in teaching or who are already working within the profession promises to offer more immediate gains in achieving greater teacher workforce stability.

Just as important as strengthening Australia's teacher workforce is enabling teachers to make the greatest possible contribution to students' learning at every stage of their professional career. It is quality teaching – and consistency in that quality – which offers the most direct and sustainable gains in equity of student outcomes.

AHISA recommends four actions that would help strengthen the teacher workforce and contribute to quality teaching, and which are most likely to demonstrate measurable gains within a five-year period while also delivering long-term impact.

1a. Promotion of school-based teacher-mentors

In its recent report¹ to the Australian Minister for Education, the Australian Government's Teacher Education Expert Panel made a number of recommendations to improve the impact of pedagogical practice on student outcomes, many of which referred to the value of teacher-mentors in supporting their implementation. With particular reference to Initial Teacher Education (ITE) students, the report reached a conclusion supported by research evidence:

Skilled mentors are critical to the quality of practical experience and learning outcomes for ITE students. (Page 15)

AHISA welcomes the Teacher Education Expert Panel's recognition of the important contribution school-based teacher-mentors make in helping ITE students practise and embed pedagogical skills. AHISA is concerned, however, that the Expert Panel's recommendations to encourage engagement of school-based teacher-mentors will not be sufficient to realise the appropriate support for teacher-mentors or their full potential to contribute to the ongoing professional development of teachers.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel recommends that Education Ministers agree to pursue professional recognition of mentor teachers by: counting part of the hours mentor teachers spend supervising practical experience placements toward their professional learning requirements for obtaining and maintaining teacher registration; and requiring the experience of mentoring initial teacher education students as evidence for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers or equivalent certification. (Recommendation 11 of the report.)

While a glancing reference is made to 'quality professional learning' (page 15), the report does not make clear how and by whom this would be achieved. Further, the recommendation that the hours teacher-mentors spend supervising practical experience placements teacher-mentors should count toward their own professional learning requirements misrepresents the intent of professional learning requirements for maintaining teacher registration and grossly underestimates the professional desire of teachers to continuously improve their practice and expand their knowledge. Such a recommendation is punitive rather than supportive of the profession.

The literature review and stakeholder consultations undertaken on behalf of the Teacher Education Expert Panel by dandolopartners and published in the Expert Panel's Discussion Paper² found that: 'There is high variation in support and guidance for mentor teachers. Some jurisdictions provide little or no guidance. Other jurisdictional approaches range from high-level policies outlining broad roles and responsibilities to more detailed frameworks to support mentoring activities.' (Sub-section 3.3.2, page 54 of the Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper.)

Dandolopartners also found limited teacher mentor capacity and capability (Sub-section 3.3.4):

Stakeholder consultation suggested that many teachers do not feel they have the time to mentor ITE students beyond their existing teaching demands. Current processes for selecting mentors are typically ad-hoc and unstructured. Poorly planned selection can lead to high variation in a school's mentor cohort in terms of experience, capability and investment in the role. Mentors may also be unaware of – or lack access to – professional development opportunities that would improve their capability. For example, an evaluation of AITSL's Supervising Preservice Teachers program demonstrated that while the program was effective, many teachers were unaware of its benefits. Furthermore, stakeholder consultation suggested that teacher workforce shortages compound the scarcity of teacher mentors. (Page 55)

In its report to the Australian Government, the Teacher Education Expert Panel notes (page 72) that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in its submission to the Expert Panel's Discussion Paper 'highlights ambiguity about the "expectations of mentors, their role, the mentoring processes expected, the pre-requisite experiences and qualities, the training available and the resources to support [mentors]"'. AITSL also reported evidence of "considerable variation" in the quality of mentors'.

The Teacher Education Expert Panel's recommendations are unlikely to address these issues.

Worth noting in the light of the dandolopartners findings are mentions in Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper case studies of professional development and/or resourcing of teacher-mentors who engage with ITE students during their school placements, including:

- The description of the NT Department of Education and Training and Charles Darwin University Teaching School program (page 50) notes that the program facilitates 'resources for mentors including guides for planning and assessment of placements and templates for observation/ reflection' and 'ongoing professional learning and development for mentor teachers and Professional Learning Leaders in schools'.
- The NSW Hub School Program case study notes that the program includes an initiative which provides professional learning in mentoring skills for mentor teachers in schools (page 51).

Research undertaken by academics at Brown University and Harvard University in the United States, as reported in a November 2022 post at *One Schoolhouse*³, found that 'traditional in-service models produced little uptake of new pedagogical or curricular initiatives, but by combining traditional in-service with follow-up coaching, uptake improved by more than eight times'.

The US research reflects findings from a series of interviews conducted by AHISA with its members in 2015 to inform a paper on mentoring prepared for AITSL as part of a project involving national principals' associations and related to the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) Review. In these interviews, AHISA members reported that mentoring and/or observation and feedback are considered successful models for professional development of teachers *at all stages in their careers*.

As AITSL points out in its background paper, *Teaching futures*⁴, an ‘ever-proliferating range of digital and learning technologies’ has increased skills expectations of teachers. The experience of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and shift to hybrid forms of education delivery reinforced this view. While remote learning is no longer a forced mode of education delivery in most schools, increasing student absences and adoption of blended learning approaches (especially but not only for secondary students) continue to require that teachers gain expertise in the development of online content and online delivery. Now, teachers must rapidly acquire skills in generative AI tools and adapt to their impact on classroom teaching as well as their own administrative tasks. Teachers must be able to guide students’ acquisition of skills in using these tools as well as acquire the skills themselves.

As an effective means to accelerate uptake of new pedagogical and curricular initiatives, mentoring supports increased agility in schools and school systems as they adapt to rapid social and technological change.

AHISA strongly advocates that teacher-mentors must be trained if they are to be fully effective and have most impact on the profession and therefore on student outcomes. As AHISA members noted when interviewed for AITSL’s 2015 TEMAG project, ‘Mentors need to be outstanding adult educators, not just outstanding child and adolescent educators’.

A nationally-supported system of trained teacher-mentors in schools has the potential to:

- assist the supervision of ITE students on practicum placements, specifically in helping to link theory and practice, thereby contributing to the quality of placements
- assist ITE students develop and demonstrate the attributes and skills to be assessed under Teaching Performance Assessment requirements
- assist the induction of newly graduated ITE students in schools
- support the transition of beginning teachers from Graduate to Proficient status
- support ITE students enrolled in clinical teacher education programs and internships
- support alternative pathways into teaching, for example for career-change professionals, including practitioners in the visual and performing arts or from VET-related industries, and for those in targeted areas of teacher shortage, including native speakers of languages other than English, or with a background in physics and chemistry or higher-level mathematics
- support the ongoing professional learning of graduates and experienced teachers
- support teachers’ acquisition of new skills in response to technological disruption or curriculum and other government-mandated change.

Given the potential impact of a teacher-mentor system on Australia’s teacher workforce, including retention of teachers in the profession, AHISA advocates that a national approach by governments to formalise and at least partially fund the training and support of mentors is warranted.

As initial steps toward a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors, AHISA suggests:

1. A review of teacher-mentor training and certification already offered in Australia, and their supporting standards or frameworks and tools/resources. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training’s Effective Mentoring Program encompasses a two-day mentoring course as well as online modules and is supported by a Mentoring Capability

Framework⁵; Queensland University of Technology offers an online certificate course, *Mentoring Beginning Teachers*, rated for 13 hours of certified professional development.⁶

2. A review of international teacher-mentor training and certification programs and/or related standards, tools or resources and any evidence of their impact, such as Washington State Standards for Mentoring and related resources for mentors⁷ and the non-statutory national standards for school-based initial teacher training mentors developed by The Teaching Schools Council in the United Kingdom.⁸ (It is worth noting that the Teacher Registration Board of South Australia commissioned such a review in 2016-17.⁹)
3. Development of draft standards for Australian teacher-mentors for consultation among ITE providers and the profession. AITSL is well-placed to undertake such a task, having already produced *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*¹⁰ to inform jurisdictions' frameworks and guides for the induction of initial teacher education (ITE) graduates in schools. The guidelines also establish the contribution of mentoring to graduate professional development.
4. Identification of resources or tools for teacher-mentors that could be developed nationally and existing resources or tools that could be linked via a dedicated page on AITSL's website, such as AITSL's mentoring guide¹¹ and its range of tools and resources designed for use between peers and mentors to improve teaching practice.¹²
5. Review of AITSL's Supervising Preservice Teachers online training program¹³ for its suitability as the basis of a national online training program.
6. The Australian Government could fund the development of accredited microcredential teacher-mentor courses by university ITE providers under its Microcredentials Pilot in Higher Education program.

To promote both 'diffusion' and development of teacher-mentor expertise, AITSL could also host an online professional support group for teacher-mentors.

Given the potential importance of teacher-mentors to Australia's teacher workforce, AHISA further suggests consideration be given to the national accreditation of teacher-mentor training courses to:

- Ensure their compatibility with the accreditation of ITE courses
- Give assurance of quality to those undertaking the courses as well as to mentors' future mentees
- Assist in the recognition of teacher-mentor training courses as professional development counting towards teachers' ongoing registration requirements.

Consistency in mentoring approaches would also support consistency in ITE Teacher Performance Assessments.

A national teacher-mentor scheme could help to rapidly increase the number of teacher-mentors and therefore their impact on teaching quality, with consequent impact on equity in student outcomes. To initiate a national scheme with the breadth and depth to have immediate and long-term impact on retention of ITE students and graduates and their professional learning, government funding support is required. As noted above, at least some jurisdictions are already investing in teacher-mentor programs and resources. The Australian Government also has a leadership role to play. It might consider, for example, introduction of matching grant schemes.

In a recent article canvassing options to break the ongoing cycle of teacher shortages experienced in the United States¹⁴, influential education academic Linda Darling-Hammond, President and CEO of the

Learning Policy Institute and Emeritus Charles E. Ducommun Professor of Education at Stanford University, proposes provision of high-quality mentoring for all beginning teachers to ‘sharply reduce attrition and increase competence’. According to Darling-Hammond, ‘A federal matching grant to states and districts that create high-quality mentoring and induction programs for beginning teachers – who most often teach in high-need schools – would reduce churn, heighten teaching quality, and heighten student achievement’.

The Australian Government could make available to state and territory governments a grants pool to pay schools in all sectors which make application for a set amount to support time release of certified teacher-mentors. Such grants might be limited to mentoring of pre-service teachers, interns and ITE graduates in their first two years of teaching.

1b. Equipping teachers with the skills for transformation

A demand for greater personalisation in student learning, allied to increased choice among online education offerings from non-school providers, had already begun to challenge the perception of schooling provision as geographically defined before the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated periods of remote learning for students. Schools’ experimentation with augmented reality (AR), virtual reality (VR) and now generative artificial intelligence (AI) flags that technological disruption of school education is likely to accelerate.

The speed of technological change and its impact on schools signal that governments have a vital role to play in the upskilling of Australia’s teacher workforce – not only to build the capacity of the sector to meet the demands of digital transformation but to ensure that all students have equal access to the educational benefits of this transformation. The potential benefits of generative AI to assist the work of teachers as well as students multiplies the equity gains from government-supported skills development of teachers. As can be seen from Australia’s experience of remote learning during COVID-19, a failure to invest in the up-skilling of teachers at points of system disruption widens equity gaps and contributes to teacher attrition.

Accelerated disruption requires an accelerated response. To overcome the time lag between the imperative for schools to introduce new technologies and the embedding of matching skills in ITE courses, AHISA recommends that, in consultation with state and territory governments, the Australian Government tasks AITSL with oversight of the development of free online short courses to give all teachers the opportunity to fill skills gaps created by technological disruption. The Australian Government could negotiate with the states and territories to gain agreement to national accreditation of such courses to meet teachers’ professional learning requirements for ongoing registration.

Technological disruption to the delivery of school education affects more than pedagogy and the modes of education delivery. For example, greater flexibility in education delivery would require a review of current legislation, regulation, curriculum delivery and student assessment and certification to determine what, if any, structural elements must change to enable provision changes, including:

- the definition of ‘student attendance’ to accommodate off-campus learning
- accreditation of external resources to meet curriculum requirements and standards
- moderation of internal and external examinations and/or assessment
- the impact on per student recurrent funding If students are able to ‘bundle’ their choice of courses from a range of providers.

The federal government is well placed to lead a national approach to such challenges through the Education Ministers Meeting and the Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC).

Already Education Ministers have established a cross-jurisdiction AI Taskforce to progress the drafting of an Australian Framework for Generative Artificial Intelligence in Schools, which has now been released for consultation.¹⁵ Given the prospect of continued and accelerated disruption of the sector, AHISA recommends the Education Ministers establish a specific taskforce or widen the remit of the existing AI Taskforce to monitor potential disruptions and their impact on all aspects of education delivery.

Governments have a primary role in ensuring all schools and students are equipped with the appropriate digital hardware, software, internet access and bandwidth to enable Australia's school system to continue its digital transformation and to ensure all students are able to access the opportunities this transformation brings.

Provision made during COVID-19 lockdowns – such as school-based laptop/tablet loans to students, low-fee access to internet connection and cheaper access to internet/satellite coverage in regional and remote areas – provides a wealth of evidence on the nature of digital gaps and how schemes to bridge those gaps might inform national effort involving the federal and state and territory governments. The Australian Government's School Student Broadband Initiative¹⁶ is a welcome approach to help achieve equity in access to online resources, but further measures are required.

1c. Equipping teachers with the tools for transformation

Just as technological disruption calls for new skills for teachers, it demands recalibration of existing teaching resources or the creation of new resources.

The shift to remote learning during COVID-19 highlighted the complexity that digital delivery modes brought to the context of learning and teaching, and therefore to the nature of the resources teachers require. Generative AI tools have added a new level to that complexity in the form of issues such as information integrity, academic integrity and data privacy. Resource development must therefore support teachers' professional autonomy to shape lessons and learning and teaching materials, not only to ensure that teachers are able to meet the needs of their students in a way that is relevant to students' lived experience, but to enable the fast adaptation of resources to what has become a rapidly changing environment for education provision.

In September 2022, Zoom released a commissioned report prepared by Intelligence Business Research Services (IBRS), *The future of education: Lessons for educators*.¹⁷ Drawing on a series of interviews with educators undertaken in 2020-21, the report describes lessons learned from the delivery of remote learning during COVID-19 on how teaching and learning resources can best be adapted for digital delivery. The report notes that COVID-19 prompted the rapid evolution of content development to support the work of both students and teachers, resulting in highly granular, "bite-sized" educational content that can be reused across multiple curricula and upgraded frequently. A further finding was that bite-sized digital content also supports equity of access to online learning when students may have connectivity or bandwidth challenges or are working from a mobile phone. The Zoom/IBRS report also notes that digitised content enabled sharing of content among teachers, which promoted collaboration on the creation of content and in turn encouraged peer review of content.

These findings suggest resources produced by National Education Architecture (NEA) organisations – already highly regarded – may need to be regularly reviewed and even reconfigured in the light of emerging demands for digital delivery of content, hybrid delivery models and increased personalisation of learning.

The proven capacity of NEA organisations to generate quality resources for teaching (as well as online courses and illustrations of practice) further suggests that they offer a platform for Australian

governments to play a more direct role to ensure all Australian schools have access to trusted, quality generative AI tools and digital resources.

In our submission to the recent parliamentary inquiry into the use of generative AI in Australia's education system, AHISA outlined a scenario in which the extensive research and resources generated by NEA organisations could be the materials on which specialised, "walled garden" chatbots are trained. The term "walled garden" refers to versions of ChatGPT or other chatbots which are trained on vetted and trusted source materials.

An example of how an Australian government-sponsored generative AI tool could assist teachers is in the area of curriculum delivery. Australia has a national F-10 curriculum, with state and territory interpretations of the curriculum already documented by ACARA for online access by teachers. Via ACARA's main website and its dedicated website for Version 9 of the Australian Curriculum, teachers have access to a range of curriculum documents and aides, including:

- standards of achievement
- integration of the general capabilities and cross-curriculum priorities
- strategies to address students' special learning needs, including language background
- student work samples
- illustrations of practice
- professional learning opportunities.

Teachers are also able to access digital teaching and learning resources allied to the Australian Curriculum via ESA's Scootle collection.

Currently, teachers must search these extensive resources to gather the information they require to develop curriculum sequences, syllabi, units of work, whole-of-class lesson plans and personalised lesson plans for students with related standards of achievement, or to gather potential teaching resources. It is possible to imagine a generative AI chatbot which can respond to teachers' prompts to deliver official curriculum resources by a range of parameters, such as jurisdiction, student year level, student achievement level and specified general capabilities or cross-curriculum priorities while also providing links to appropriate assessment resources. That is, the generative AI software could minimise teachers' time spent on search and compilation and provide them with a trusted classroom-ready resource or the basis for further curriculum interpretation. Linked to illustrations of practice on AITSL's and AERO's sites, teachers could also have immediate access to evidence on the most appropriate teaching practices as well as video examples of how to deliver aspects of their lessons.

The South Australian Government recently announced that it has partnered with Microsoft to trial an 'AI chatbot specifically for use in schools and built from the ground up with student safety in mind'.¹⁸ From the limited details available publicly, it would appear this generative AI chatbot app is not so much a "walled garden" model as an open access model with protective features. It may, however, offer an available – and relatively cheaper – model for schools to enable safer student access to commercial generative AI chatbots.

AHISA recommends that Australian governments investigate responses such as the SA Microsoft model, and at the same time investigate the development of generative AI tools which have the potential to deliver more for both Australian students and their teachers in the longer-term, including "walled garden" generative AI tools.

To further prepare Australia's education system to be "future fit", AHISA further recommends that Education Ministers agree to progress the Online Formative Assessment Initiative, which appears to have stalled under the existing National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

1d. Streamlining teacher registration

Referring on its website to its 2018 National Review of Teacher Registration report¹⁹, AITSL notes:

Interpretation and administration of teacher registration requirements vary across jurisdictions. Work needs to be done to streamline and enhance existing processes to improve teacher mobility across the nation [and] ensure rigour and consistency in judgements.

While Education Ministers endorsed the implementation strategy for recommendations made by AITSL, as yet no progress is apparent, despite an agreement for action under the current National School Reform Agreement (National Policy Initiative B(i)(a)).

Support by jurisdictions for alternative teacher training pathways such as internships and to support entry to teaching by mid-career professionals suggests that, if there is to be no prospect of a national teacher registration scheme, the need to streamline jurisdictions' teacher registration requirements is gaining greater urgency to help strengthen teacher workforce arrangements. A minimum goal to be achieved across the life of the next NSRA could be to achieve automatic mutual recognition of Australian jurisdictions' teacher registrations.

Incorporation of a goal relating to teacher registration in the NSRA would also support Education Ministers' agreement to take action on teacher registration under the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (Priority area 1 – Improving teacher supply, point 6).²⁰

2. STRENGTHENING SCHOOL LEADERSHIP

The disruption of schooling in 2020 and 2021 due to COVID-19 made evident the complexity of the work of teachers and the depth of teachers' professionalism. It further revealed the importance of school leadership structures in effecting fast pivots to online delivery and ensuring the ongoing health and wellbeing of both staff and students. In particular, the COVID-19 disruptions highlighted the key role of the middle management tier of school leadership in implementing and embedding change in schools and in supporting strong school cultures.

Given the impact of middle leadership on facilitating transformation in schools, AHISA suggests that a national policy focus on this tier of leadership through the NSRA could deliver appreciable immediate and long-term gains to all Australian schools, including building strong foundations for the capacity and capability of future school leaders. Due to middle leaders' close work with teachers, as well as strengthening the leadership pipeline in school education improvements in middle leaders' skills and capacities would help support teachers' sense of professional satisfaction, engagement with their work and sense of belonging to their school and to the profession – all important contributors to teacher retention.

AITSL has produced a Spotlight evidence summary on middle leadership in Australian schools²¹ and is currently consulting the sector on Professional Standards for Middle Leaders. Further specific actions that could be pursued via the NSRA include:

- AITSL to use the Professional Standards for Middle Leaders to inform the creation of resources and/or short courses to support progression to middle and senior leadership roles
- AITSL to undertake a rapid literature review of effective professional learning for middle tier school leaders and scope current professional learning options for this level of leadership
- The Australian Government to increase the number of Commonwealth Assisted Places for post-graduate courses to encourage the development of and enrolment in accredited post-graduate certificate and diploma courses in middle leadership
- There is also the option to consider development of microcredential courses under the Australian Government's Microcredentials Pilot in Higher Education program.²²

3. STUDENT WELLBEING

AHISA acknowledges the ongoing efforts of federal and state and territory governments to address the health and wellbeing of children and young people, including through the development of frameworks and teaching and learning resources to support school-based effort. We welcome recognition in the Expert Panel's Consultation Paper of the importance of student wellbeing and consideration of support for students' mental health and wellbeing as a focus for the next NSRA, and here examine the issue of gathering and evaluating meaningful wellbeing data.

As the Expert Panel recognises, the 'what' and 'how' of data collection are questions yet to be resolved. The purpose of the data collection and how and by whom the data will be used are further important considerations, as is whether universal or sample measurement is required.

A review of all current national measures and survey instruments relating to the wellbeing of children and young people in Australia could help make these determinations, including those of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Children (LSAC). The Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) Survey also gathers data on wellbeing and family life.

Data integration between NAPLAN results and LSAC and between NAPLAN and the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY) has offered additional depth to the insights gained from these data collections, and suggests that opportunities for integration of data sets should be considered in a review of survey instruments. For example, the Consultation Paper notes that 'potential domains include sense of student safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption' (page 25). Data for some of these domains are already collected in Australian schools on a sample basis via international testing regimes such as the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and Progress in International Reading and Literacy Study (PIRLS).

Surveys conducted on young people's exposure to gambling and on drug and alcohol use also offer valuable longitudinal data on important social and other contributors to wellbeing. Augmented by targeted surveys conducted by state- and territory-based commissioners of children and young people, these data collections already offer valuable insights for government policy formation.

In its submission to the Productivity Commission's 2020 Mental Health Inquiry²³, AHISA presented a range of evidence drawn from a survey of its members undertaken in 2019. Of relevance to the NSRA Review are the following findings:

- Almost 80 per cent of respondents to the survey reported that their school's approach to student health and wellbeing is based on or incorporates a specific philosophy or research base.
- Some 67 per cent of survey respondents reported that an external framework or survey had been used to evaluate the school's student health and wellbeing program or aspects of it. The most frequently mentioned external framework used was the Australian Student Wellbeing Framework, followed by the relevant state or territory document (eg NSW Wellbeing Self-Assessment Tool for Schools, Victorian Framework for Improving Student Outcomes: Health and wellbeing dimension, Queensland Student Learning and Wellbeing Framework, South Australian Wellbeing for Learning and Life Framework). Other evaluation tools mentioned included:
 - ACER's Social-Emotional Wellbeing Survey
 - Mission Australia Youth Survey

- Flourishing at School Survey
- Gallup Essential Elements wellbeing survey
- South Australia’s Wellbeing and Engagement Collection.

This last finding suggests that research into schools’ use of existing national and state/territory frameworks and evaluation tools could prove valuable in devising a student wellbeing measurement tool that could both augment existing school practice and deliver national data requirements. These resources could also be the basis for further resource development as mentioned in section 3.4.1 of the Expert Panel’s Consultation Paper. The multi-dimensional Australian Student Wellbeing Framework²⁴, which offers aligned components such as a school wellbeing check, illustrations of practice on ways to use the Framework and free professional learning courses for educators and pre-service teachers on use of the Framework, offers a valuable model for such development.

Consideration might also be given to outsourcing a sample survey approach to data collection to providers such as the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER). ACER’s Social-Emotional Wellbeing Survey²⁵ has already delivered significant time series data²⁶ on Australian students’ wellbeing.

Priority should be given to data collection methods which support schools’ and jurisdictions’ existing efforts and minimise any additional administrative burden. ■

NOTES

- ¹ Australian Department of Education (2023) *Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel*. Accessed <https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/strong-beginnings-report-teacher-education-expert-panel>.
- ² The Teacher Education Expert Panel Discussion Paper, issued March 2023, is available at <https://www.education.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/teacher-education-expert-panel-discussion-paper>.
- ³ Rathgeber B (2022) Traditional approaches to changing pedagogy don't work. *One Schoolhouse*, 4 November 2022. Accessed <https://www.oneschoolhouse.org/open-doorsblog/traditional-approaches-to-changing-pedagogy-dont-work>.
- ⁴ AITSL (2021) *Teaching futures*. Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachingfutures>.
- ⁵ The Victorian Department of Education and Training's *Mentoring Capability Framework* is posted at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/mentoringcapabilityframework.pdf>. Its *Principal and school leader guide to induction of graduate teachers* is posted at <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/Principalandschoolleaderguidetoinductionofgraduateteachers.pdf>.
- ⁶ Accessed at <https://www.qut.edu.au/study/professional-and-executive-education/courses/mentoring-beginning-teachers>.
- ⁷ Accessed at <https://www.k12.wa.us/educator-support/beginning-educator-support-team/washington-state-standards-mentoring>.
- ⁸ Accessed at http://socialsciences.exeter.ac.uk/media/universityofexeter/collegeofsocialsciencesandinternationalstudies/education/partnership/primary/Mentor_standards.pdf.
- ⁹ The report of the review is available at <https://www.trb.sa.edu.au/sites/default/files/PdfDocuments/TRB-Induction-and-Mentoring-Report-June-2018.pdf>.
- ¹⁰ Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/graduate-to-proficient-australian-guidelines-for-teacher-induction-into-the-profession>.
- ¹¹ Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/practical-guides/mentoring>.
- ¹² Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/develop-others>.
- ¹³ Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/supervising-pre-service-teachers>.
- ¹⁴ Posted at <https://www.ascd.org/el/articles/breaking-the-legacy-of-teacher-shortages>.
- ¹⁵ The draft Framework has been prepared by the NSW Department of Education and is accessed at <https://education.nsw.gov.au/about-us/strategies-and-reports/draft-national-ai-in-schools-framework>.
- ¹⁶ Information about the Initiative is available at <https://www.infrastructure.gov.au/media-communications-arts/internet/national-broadband-network/school-student-broadband-initiative-ssbi>.
- ¹⁷ The report is available at <https://explore.zoom.us/media/epub-lessons-in-education-v5.pdf>.
- ¹⁸ South Australian Department for Education media release, 5 July 2023, 'Nation-leading trial in SA schools to focus on the safe use of AI'. Accessed at <https://www.education.sa.gov.au/department/media-centre/our-news/nation-leading-trial-in-sa-schools-to-focus-on-the-safe-use-of-ai>.
- ¹⁹ Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/national-review-of-teacher-registration>.

²⁰ The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, December 2022, is accessed at <https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan>.

²¹ Accessed at <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/middle-leadership-in-australian-schools>.

²² See the federal Minister for Education's media release, 'New microcredential courses to support in-demand jobs', 11 June 2023. Accessed at <https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/new-microcredential-courses-support-demand-jobs>.

²³ The Inquiry report is accessed at <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/mental-health/report>.

²⁴ Australian Student Wellbeing Framework is a multi-dimensional resource for schools, offering aligned components such as a school wellbeing check, illustrations of practice on ways to use the Framework and free professional learning courses for educators and pre-service teachers on use of the Framework. Further information is available at <https://www.education.gov.au/student-resilience-and-wellbeing/australian-student-wellbeing-framework>.

²⁵ Information on ACER's survey tool is available at <https://www.acer.org/au/sew>.

²⁶ Accessed at https://www.acer.org/files/Infographic_YCDI-ACER_Wellbeing_2003-2017.pdf.