



VALUING the teaching profession
AN INDEPENDENT INQUIRY

Submission to the Inquiry

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The authors are willing to be approached for further discussion arising from this submission or to provide further information to the Panel.

1. THE PURPOSE OF THIS SUBMISSION

The purpose of this submission is to put forward a proposal for the development of a NSW Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard (NSWSTRS).

1.1 This Inquiry is of major significance. Its findings will provide a deeper public understanding of the nature and value of teachers' work and will have broad implications for the future operation of the NSW public school system and its member schools.

1.2 A key issue for the Inquiry is how its findings on the value of teachers' work might be translated into government decisions about public investment in schools to best meet the learning needs of students. The purpose of this submission is to discuss this question and to propose one response.

1.3 This submission sets out, for the Panel's consideration, a plan for the development of a NSW Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard (NSWSTRS). This would provide a policy instrument that captures the contemporary realities of teachers' work and brings together all of the elements that are essential to quality teaching, from the supply of teachers to the resources and conditions needed for those teachers need to do their best work. It is a mechanism designed to support a clearer focus by principals and teachers themselves, working with their school communities, on realising the full value of teachers' work. It is also a mechanism designed to induce governments both State and Commonwealth to understand that the teaching force is a valuable public asset and to take greater responsibility for the quality and distribution of teaching among schools.

1.4 A funding standard provides a means to assess the overall level of investment needed for schools to perform the work expected of them; as well as to provide a basis upon which to assess the funding entitlements of individual schools. Such a standard provides a direct and explicit link between education and funding to inform government budget decisions about the level of public investment in schools rather than having political considerations being the starting point for funding policy. This is not a new concept in Australia. It was introduced by the Whitlam Government in the 1970s as a basis for Commonwealth recurrent funding to both public and private schools. The concept was re-introduced in the 1980s in the form of a 'community standard'. The Commonwealth then reintroduced the concept in the context of the Gonski Review; and a national schooling resource standard (SRS) is currently used as a basis for a funding agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth. There are now sound reasons for moving from this kind of generalised recurrent resources standard to a more direct focus on teaching and the resources required to support effective teaching in schools. At the State level, the NSW staffing formula can be understood as a form of resource standard. A resourcing standard based on the provision of principals and teachers as well as the support they need to manage and perform the workload expected of them provides a means of holding all those responsible for the quality and the equity of our school system to account for the use of this investment.

1.5 Teachers' salaries are the most significant cost of schooling, comprising around 60 per cent of all recurrent expenditure on NSW public schools. A further 14 per cent of total recurrent spending is accounted for by salaries for a range of teaching support staff as well as administrative and other non-teaching staff. The remaining 26 per cent includes costs for such items as technology, materials and stationery which could be integrated into the NSWSTRS where they are directly needed for teachers to do their work.

1.6 The main argument for moving to a standard with a more direct focus on teaching is this: that when it comes to how governments can have a direct influence on the quality of schooling itself, their most readily available lever is investment in teaching. There are ethical, educational and economic reasons why governments have an obligation to take all possible steps to ensure that all schools can provide the conditions in which teachers can do their best work to enable their students and the whole community to achieve optimal educational returns on this investment.

1.7 *The significance and timeliness of this Inquiry has only been heightened by the advent of the coronavirus pandemic.* The challenges this crisis has brought with it have led to a clearer awareness among the general public (and, at the national level, on the part of the current Australian government) of the complex nature, value and centrality of teachers' work in our society. At the same time, we have a greater responsibility than ever to provide our school system with the level and range of resources needed to equip all our children and young people to meet the social, political and economic challenges of climate change and the aftermath of the current pandemic.

1.8 The following sections of this submission set out a broad blueprint for the development of a NSW Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard (NSWSTRS) to enhance equality of access to high quality teaching for all students in NSW public schools.

2. FOUNDATIONS FOR THIS PROPOSAL: THE VALUES AND PRINCIPLES OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

2.1 In developing the proposal for a NSWSTRS, we have looked at the school system from the perspective of school leaders and teachers, with a view to providing them with practical support to make decisions about how to deploy their schools' teaching resources in the most effective, efficient and transparent way. But this is contingent upon their schools first having adequate and appropriate resources to work with.

2.2 Principals and teachers work to meet the learning entitlement of students and the expectations of parents and the broader community in schools across NSW which are operating in widely varying circumstances, and with both commonalities and differences. These schools operate in the context of agreed curriculum and teaching standards and of the principle enshrined in the NSW Education Act 1990 that the primary responsibility of the State in the education of children is the provision of public education of the highest quality. The quality and integrity of the school system is dependent upon the effectiveness of mechanisms used to provide all schools with the level and range of resources they need to meet these standards consistent with the values and principles of public schooling.

Values and principles

2.3 *The dimensions of public schooling.* The quality of our public school system is a direct indicator of our commitment to the maintenance and advancement of democracy in this State and country. While there is more to education than what takes place in schools, schooling is the formal process by which we assist young people to develop their capacity to learn and to think for themselves in a democratic society.

2.4 Public school systems are the essential means by which governments meet their obligation to guarantee compulsory, universal primary and secondary education or the vocational equivalent.

2.5 That guarantee is inclusive: the obligation covers all children and young people, from across the spectrum of individual ability and behaviour, and of social, economic, family and cultural circumstances. This inclusiveness creates a pressure on public systems and schools to keep pace with the times and to innovate and - where necessary - to improvise

2.6 Public education is based on an understanding of schooling as a mass enterprise, a social process of mutual benefit, where decision-making is based on a recognition of shared interests and on the concept of the common good.

2.7 In a public school system, the values of quality, equality and equity are inextricably linked. The system must accommodate the common and shared interests of all schools and students as well as the significant differences. This must be managed through policies that avoid marginalisation and exclusion and that depress educational opportunities for students in schools serving less advantaged communities as well as the level and distribution of outcomes of schooling overall.

2.8 Equality of opportunity to an inferior standard of schooling is barely worth having, while there is little to be said for achieving high quality schooling for only the most privileged. Equity must also be considered in relation to efficiency and effectiveness. There is little to be achieved from allocating resources fairly across a school system or among individual students if they are spread too thinly to deliver quality outcomes.

2.9 From the standpoint of children themselves, timeliness is a significant aspect of equity. The vital early years for learning only come once. For many children, resources delayed are opportunities denied. Schooling is not simply a preparation for adult life, but also a significant period in the lives of children and young people, deserving of the resources required at all stages for the learning and growth that is expected of them.

2.10 The values and principles on which public schooling is based, where all students share an equal entitlement to the quality and intensity of teaching they need to achieve their personal best, means that there is a need for a systemic approach to resourcing teachers' work across all schools. The key elements of a school system can be described broadly as: curriculum; teaching, assessment and reporting; student welfare; buildings and facilities; technology; and administration. These could be characterised, again broadly, as teaching and non-teaching resources. These are not discrete categories, since buildings and facilities, for example, can facilitate or impede effective teaching. The focus of this submission is on the mechanism used to deliver professional and support staffing to schools along with teaching resources.

2.11 *The most vital role of a public school system is to support what happens in schools and classrooms.* As Bruner¹ reminds us, it is inside the heart and minds of teachers and students, working together in their classrooms, that the subtle process of schooling happens, the process of empowering human intelligence and human sensibility for life in an open society.

¹ Bruner, Jerome (1994), 'Four Ways to Make a Meaning'. Paper delivered at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New Orleans.

2.12 There are clearly pre-conditions for students to engage readily with learning. Perhaps the most basic is attendance along with a sufficient level of physical and emotional health to be able to be attentive. Governments contribute to students' capacity for active engagement with schooling through action beyond the school: through broad social policies that support families in such areas as housing, health, income support, transport and early childhood education and care.

2.13 In relation to conditions within the school, education research and experience tell us that the best way to support students to complete their full 13 years of schooling (or the vocational equivalent) successfully is to maximise the time they spend with teachers who are capable of engaging them in a program of learning that offers them intrinsic and extrinsic rewards both immediate and long term.

2.14 One international report in 2007 stated that the world's most successful school systems (ranked on the basis of PISA findings) did three vital things: *they got the best teachers; got the best out of teachers; and stepped in when pupils started to lag behind*².

2.15 *In a high quality public education system, the conditions will exist **in all schools** for them to provide:*

- A safe, comfortable, secure and orderly learning environment
- An ethical and caring culture where students have a sense of belonging and of their own identity
- High quality teaching where all students are challenged to achieve their personal best through a curriculum that has the commitment of teachers through a sense of 'ownership'; and that engages students across the spectrum of abilities, aspirations and interests
- Special assistance to those who need more intensive support than average to learn successfully
- Programs for professional learning and development throughout all career stages for school leaders and teachers that are closely aligned with agreed professional teaching standards.
- Other forms of learning support, including support staff, high quality buildings and facilities, ICT and curriculum materials.
- Structures and processes for interacting with and responding to the communities and the individual families and students they serve including through improving the programs and services they offer.

2.16 A high quality public school system will give priority to creating the conditions that are most conducive to effective teaching in all schools; and to making the work of teachers easier and not harder to perform. Routine administration, for example, will need to be streamlined in order to minimise the teacher time diverted from the essential tasks of teaching.

2.17 In a high quality public school system structures and processes for decision-making about curriculum, teaching and assessment, including about teaching and curriculum standards, will be developed in collaboration with school leaders and teachers to ensure that these provide guidance and support for schools.

² McKinsey Report (2007). *How the world's best performing school systems come out on top*

2.18 Such a system will have a capacity for research, data collection and analysis to provide the information necessary for system policy development; for continuous improvement in curriculum and teaching; for maximising efficiency in the use of resources and for evaluation and accountability. In relation to accountability, schools will be supported by an efficient process for providing the information necessary for governments to account for this public investment in education.

2.19 There has been progress over recent years in NSW in establishing these systemic structures and processes to increase the capacity and quality of the public system in relation to the criteria described above.

3. CURRENT SITUATION: TEACHERS' WORK

3.1 The focus of this Inquiry will be on examining the work that teachers are doing in schools across NSW. Its findings will provide the understandings and insights needed to construct a NSWSTRS. The development of this standard will require an understanding of the range of factors, pressures and challenges within schools that affect teachers' work and that are within the control and influence of the school to manage. These factors contribute to the total teaching workload of a school and to differences among schools in relation to teaching workload.

3.2 *Research demonstrates that teaching is an intellectually demanding profession that involves highly complex tasks.* Teachers are responsible for the general as well as the strictly educational well-being of children and young people and this entails a range of activities that are often described as 'duty of care'. Keeping students physically and emotionally safe and secure involves a range of tasks for teachers: checking attendance; playground duty; managing excursions; and counselling individual students or groups. Teachers need to be able to deal with their students collectively and to deal with their individual differences – to support them to shape their behaviour as individuals, but also as a social group.

3.3 Much of the time and effort teachers spend relates directly to the curriculum. This includes the work of lesson planning which can include research, preparation of materials for use by the teacher and students in the classroom, as well as the work of face-to-face teaching in the classroom, interacting with students and drawing on a repertoire of techniques for engaging them in learning. Time and effort is expended by teachers in creating the environment in the classroom where students can work effectively and stay on task; and on managing behaviour in the classroom to this end. In many classrooms teachers have to deal with students with challenging behaviour as well as with students who have intensive support needs.

3.4 Also related to the curriculum is the range of tasks associated with making sure that students are making progress. Assessment is of most significance to the teachers themselves, who need to know whether every student is progressing and to plan action where improvement is needed.

3.5 This requires time spent on marking students' work and providing feedback to students themselves and to their families or carers. In addition, teachers participate in formal assessment procedures, supervising tests and examinations. Teachers need to provide information and data that feeds into the accountability structures and processes by which governments can meet their obligations for accounting to the general public for investment in education.

3.6 Teachers must also set aside time for professional learning, to maintain and extend their knowledge and skills and to keep abreast of changes to curriculum and pedagogy. As so dramatically

demonstrated by the recent disruptions to schooling arising from the pandemic, teachers also need to keep abreast of technologies that can enhance learning for their students in and beyond the classroom.

3.7 Teachers participate in the structures and processes required for teamwork across the school as a whole: the staff meetings; the curriculum planning meetings; the ‘crisis’ meetings. They are also responsible for making time for communicating and meeting with parents and the school community.

3.8 As well as these basic functions, many teachers go above and beyond the call of duty through the time and effort they expend in working with students on special events and performances – cultural and sporting activities that enliven their schools and provide students with valuable learning experiences.

3.9 In terms of “getting the best teachers”, many practising teachers are involved in supervising and mentoring student teachers as well as beginning teachers in their schools, to get them off to a good start and to increase the chances of retaining them in the profession.

The need for a systemic approach to supporting teachers’ work

3.10 Questions are periodically raised about where control over resources and funding decisions should be located within a system. Too often they are based on false dichotomies between ‘centralisation’ and ‘devolution’.

3.11 Certainly the ‘system’ is there to support the schools, and therefore there should be sound reasons for placing resources that are provided to support teaching and learning in schools outside those schools. But there clearly are some such good reasons. These may relate directly to the quality of education; to the benefits of economies of scale; to equity; or to governance.

3.12 For a start, schools cannot decide for themselves the level and share of their entitlement to the available funding. Such allocative decisions need to be made centrally, consistent with the values and principles of public schooling.

3.13 Where there are scarce resources in terms of, for example, expertise in particular areas of curriculum, teaching and assessment, it may well be necessary for these to be pooled and shared, rather than fragmented or dissipated. For example, students may be able to study online languages or other subjects that could not be provided at every school site, while their own schools may need an allowance of time for a teacher on site to provide some monitoring and supervision. Schools in areas where it is difficult to find teachers or other professionals with particular skills or expertise may need to rely on centrally provided staffing support, including through the possibility of flexible online services. Other examples of resources that are more effectively or necessarily provided centrally would include legal services, statewide staffing and personnel matters, and industrial relations.

3.14 The education budget also needs to provide for the conduct of what might be called intermediary functions between the schools and other agencies which need to be performed at a central level. An example would be the need for a capacity at the system level to conduct relationships on behalf of NSW public schools with the Commonwealth, or with other states; or within the State between schools and other departments and agencies including cultural institutions, such as the ABC.

3.15 As stated previously, the complex work of teaching and learning happens in schools and classrooms as students and teachers engage and interact with each other.

3.16 This fact has led some public school authorities to conclude that all teaching resources should be placed in schools, closest to the 'end users'. This is a highly simplistic argument. It is one that is particularly attractive to those who favour minimising the role of government generally and who, in the sphere of schooling, have a concept of schools as stand-alone, independent and competing units rather than of schools working together within a supportive system. Where states in Australia have attempted to introduce and fund 'autonomous', self-governing, public schools, arguing that their freedom from systemic constraints will generate significant educational innovation, there has been no evidence to the best of our knowledge of such schools introducing any advances in curriculum or teaching that could not have been (or that had not already been) introduced in schools operating within the mainstream system, or innovations that were not reliant on the additional financial incentives that have generally been provided to schools chosen to participate in these ventures.

3.17 *There is also a need to recognise that the teaching workload of schools is affected by a range of factors, pressures and challenges that are outside the control or influence of individual schools.* It is prudent, for example, for a system to withhold some resources from schools in a central or regional pool to deal with short term or unforeseen emergencies.

3.18 Systemic action is needed to manage key challenges to the healthy operation of schools which arise from growth, decline and shift in the school population. Governments are responsible for ensuring an adequate supply of teachers; and the size of the teaching force overall will be based on educational and financial considerations of the resources needed to provide all students across the system with access to schools and to high quality curriculum and teaching. Careful planning is needed maintain a balance between supply and demand in relation to school places across the system as a whole.

3.19 *This demographic planning is a complex challenge.* The school population is finite (a product of birthrate and immigration) but constantly changing due both to overall and to local rises and falls in the student population. The investment by government in schooling has finite budgetary limits. This means that planning the size and location of schools and the distribution of students among those schools is necessary on economic, educational and social grounds if all schools are to be able to provide the conditions most conducive to highly effective teaching. Experience has demonstrated that leaving the distribution of the school population (and therefore of teachers and teaching resources) to chance - or through deliberate recourse to market solutions - leads to exclusion and marginalisation of particular schools and students.

3.20 When the supply of school places exceeds the demographic demand this can lead to costly under-use of capital facilities. It will also unleash negative forms of competition among parents and schools for enrolments and will lead to social stratification, creating conditions that load the dice against effective teaching in particular schools by leaving them with a disproportionately high share of the teaching workload of the system and without a commensurate share or level of resources.

3.21 There are too many schools across Australia, including in NSW, where teachers are dealing with a concentration of those students whose personal and community circumstances, through no fault of their own, mean that they have atypically high support needs and are almost entirely reliant for their education on what they can learn at school. In schools serving communities with high levels of unemployment or family disruption, for example, students and their schools are less able to draw on families or the community for the forms of assistance that exist in many other schools. Principals

and teachers in these schools are routinely having to deal with problems that come in from outside the school, taking up time and effort that would be available in other schools for tasks more directly related to curriculum and teaching. In some cases, such schools may find it more difficult to attract and retain the highly qualified and experienced teachers they need; to provide the same range and depth of curriculum; to establish the degree of stability, calm and order and the climate of safety and well-being that are taken for granted in other schools.

3.22 It is not practicable for a government to distribute the total educational workload of the public school system evenly among schools. Students cannot be distributed among schools such that all schools get a similar mix from across the spectrum of socio-educational advantage and disadvantage or the range of intensity of learning support needs. Nor is it possible to arrange for each school to have an equal share of the total strengths of the teaching force – in terms of qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills.

3.23 Governments can and should mediate the problems that arise from demography through policies that contain the market forces that are intrinsic to schooling rather than unleashing them. They also need to use their schools resourcing policies to alleviate the negative effects of the uneven distribution of the total teaching workload among schools.

3.24 In the next section of this submission, we put forward practical suggestions for the staged construction of a NSWSTRS.

4: HOW TO CONSTRUCT A NSWSTRS

4.1 Changes to schooling, including to the ways in which schools are resourced, need to be made cautiously to avoid disruption to the work of teachers and students. They should also, as far as possible, build on the strengths of current arrangements while eradicating or minimising their weaknesses.

4.2 We envisage a NSWSTRS that combines two important features of current school resourcing arrangements in the NSW public school system, namely the SRS and the NSW staffing formula.

4.3 *An explicit standard of resources for all schools.* The process of developing this NSWSTRS would involve narrowing the Commonwealth's SRS, with its broad and arbitrary focus, to a standard that is tightly focused on teaching resources. These resources, of course, include the school's entitlements to teaching positions consistent with the approach taken in the NSW staffing formula. *The objective would be to produce what could be described as a more comprehensive, complex and sophisticated form of the current staffing formula, expanded by the inclusion of the range of resources required to support and complement the work of teachers through providing the conditions in schools that are most favourable to high quality teaching. Refer back to time spent on ask with effective teachers*

4.4 The current arrangements for funding NSW public schools have been affected by the advice provided by the Gonski Review Panel to the Federal Gillard Government in 2011. Much of the impact of that advice since that time has been diluted and, in some cases, distorted by the responses of governments from both major political parties over the past decade.

4.5 Despite this, the **structure** of the funding model proposed by the Gonski Review remains in place in Commonwealth legislation and related State and Territory government policies, including in NSW.

4.6 A key component of this structure is the provision of public funding against criteria linked to the achievement of an explicit standard of resources for all schools: a schooling resource standard (SRS). This was a pivotal point in the history of schools funding. Building on the funding benchmarks established previously by the Whitlam and Hawke governments, the Gonski model provided an explicit benchmark for the specification and distribution of public funding for schools across Australia, based on educational rather than political criteria.

4.7 When first developed in 2011, the Gonski Review Panel conceded that its costing was based on criteria drawn from available information at the time. Its base standard for all schools was inferred from the expenditures on schools with superior NAPLAN outcomes. The Panel's analysis of needs-based loadings was based on relatively arbitrary assumptions of weightings for socio-economic circumstances, language backgrounds, indigenous communities, school size and remoteness. This process produced a dollars per student amount for schools and systems to determine how they could manage their work to fit that amount, rather than starting with a clear understanding of the work that is required.

4.8 To be fair, the Gonski Panel envisaged that further and more forensic research into schools' resource standards would be undertaken by an independent Schools Resources body. That work, however, has not been undertaken to a significant extent. In fact, the adjustments made since the tabling of the Gonski report have mainly been in response to political pressure from non-government school authorities and interest groups. Despite these problems, the essential principle of a resource standards framework is in place in NSW and provides a basis for the reform which we propose here.

4.9 *An alternative, forward-looking process.* The process that we propose here for developing a NSWSTRS stands in contrast with the method adopted by the Gonski Panel, which entailed working backwards from purported 'successful' schools. We suggest a forward-looking approach to making an educational assessment of the factors contributing to the workload of each school. This requires professional judgments about the degree of intensity of needs of particular groups of students and communities in a range of settings; and about the weightings to be given to other factors that affect the workload of schools. This forward-looking approach avoids the artificiality of per student 'loadings'. It is only in the context of an actual school setting that it is realistic to assess the best way to provide the kind and amount of teaching support that an individual student will need, having regard to the school's circumstances and its capacity and range of options for grouping learners with similar needs. ***A per student cost should be the artefact and not the driver of schools funding.***

The findings of this Inquiry will provide the starting point for a NSWSTRS.

4.10 *Measuring the teaching workload of schools.* The result of this Inquiry will be a clearer picture of the nature of teachers' work that has been built up through an open and consultative process. This will provide the information needed to measure the teaching workload of schools across the State. In addition, there is a wealth of existing relevant information and statistical data arising from work in NSW over recent years by the Department (including its Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation), the NSW Education Standards Authority, the NSW Teachers Federation, and universities; as well as from elsewhere in Australia and overseas. Earlier reports from

Commonwealth agencies such as the Schools Commission and the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training could also prove useful.

4.11 Clearly the stage of schooling and the related curriculum requirements will be a major determinant of a school's workload, along with the total school enrolment.

4.12 *The student profile.* All students are not equal when it comes to the level of care and teaching support they need. Many will learn successfully in what might be called 'mainstream' classroom settings. Others will need additional care and learning support – more intensive or specialist teaching support in the 'mainstream' classroom, or in smaller groupings – to gain the full benefits of their schooling. And then there are students with very high additional support needs for personal care and specialist teaching. Schools with students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will have a more complex set of tasks than schools with less diverse communities; just as schools with students drawn disproportionately from socially, economically and educationally privileged backgrounds will have a less complex and demanding workload than those with students drawn from the other end of the spectrum.

4.13 *Teacher staffing profile.* The level of teacher qualifications and experience will also have implications for a teaching resources standard. As noted previously, it is not practicable for a government to mandate for each school an equal share of the total strengths of the teaching force – in terms of qualifications, experience, knowledge and skills. But this does not justify the fact that there is a higher public investment in teaching in those schools with a high proportion of experienced and expert teachers with their (appropriately) higher salaries than in those schools with early career teachers at the starting salary level.

4.14 *Investing in equity and quality.* In the interests of equity and quality from the point of view of students and teachers, the NSWSTRS should provide for all classroom teachers to be funded at the top of their salary scale. Salaries would be paid to teachers at their appropriate level, but the difference in funding between the teacher's salary and the top salary would be provided to schools as part of their funding entitlement, to be used to provide the conditions necessary to support early career teachers. These include, for example, induction programs, mentoring, time off from face-to-face teaching, professional learning.

4.15 *Professional learning.* The need for professional learning is not confined to the early years of teaching but is continuous throughout all stages of a teaching career. The full value of setting professional standards for teachers or, for that matter, curriculum standards can only be realised if there is provision for the resourcing needed for teachers to attain those standards. A key resource is time, in the form of relief from face-to-face teaching for teachers to engage in developing their professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement.

4.16 *Out-of-field teaching.* There is a clear case for a teaching resources standard in NSW to include intensive professional learning support for teachers required to teach in a curriculum area for which they are inadequately prepared. This would require a time allowance at the school level if this support were available there or, if not, to enable them to participate in flexible online delivery by specialist teachers employed centrally.

4.17 There has long been recognition of the need to make more effective and efficient use of outstanding teachers by expanding the career pathways for those with the capacity to lead professional learning. A [recent report](#) from the Grattan Institute argues for a "cascading system of expertise across and within schools, to connect formal training to in-school support, and help spread and build evidence". In this system professional learning would need to be better resourced, supported by subject experts, and built in to the everyday work of teachers.

4.18 There are strong educational arguments for making better use of those with leadership and expertise to enhance the professionalism of the teaching force generally. But this is also a necessary part of any policy reform to attract high achievers to enter and remain in teaching.

4.19 Experience and research tells us that those who enter teaching are generally not motivated by hopes of making a fortune. But neither are these potential entrants to teaching – especially those who are also high achievers with a range of career options - going to be attracted to teaching if it involves a large financial sacrifice. There are those who compare Australian teacher salaries with selected overseas countries which have lower teacher salaries on average and yet which produce high student outcomes; and who argue that this is evidence against increasing teacher salaries. [Another recent report](#) from the Grattan Institute points out the fallacy in this claim. While beginning teachers in public schools are paid well, the pay scale is flat and a young classroom teacher’s pay stops rising within ten years so that by the time they reach their thirties and forties their incomes have not kept pace with other professions they might have chosen. Since the 1980s, teachers’ pay in this country has fallen well below pay in other professions.

4.20 *Developments in technology enabling flexible delivery.* The exigencies of coping with the coronavirus pandemic have brought to the fore the developments that have occurred over time in what would once have been called ‘correspondence’ learning and then ‘distance education’ to describe the provision of education for those who could not attend on site at a school. But developments in technology mean that this has now morphed into flexible delivery which encompasses not only specialist teachers’ experience in delivering distance education off campus, but also two other developments. First there has been a general move to empowering students, in the course of their schooling to take greater responsibility for their own learning, working individually or in groups, thus fostering their sense of engagement and independence. Second, there have been developments in technology which now also allow the school system to provide many of the support services and learning resources that previously required dedicated specialist infrastructure to students and to teachers regardless of their location and with an immediacy and currency that was previously impossible.

4.21 The development of a NSWSTRS should provide for significant investment in expertise to develop these forms of flexible learning to enrich the work of teachers in their schools, to enable classroom teachers and teachers with specialist expertise to incorporate flexible and interactive forms of learning in their daily work. High quality flexible learning is not a cheap option, nor is it a replacement for face-to-face classroom engagement between teachers and students. It is a powerful means of adding value teachers’ work. Increasing professional expertise in flexible delivery does provide a means of realising one of the key promises of public education – to provide a guarantee of access to quality curriculum and teaching to every student in every school. This is an investment that needs to be considered as an alternative to the economic and social costs of transporting students past their local schools to more distant sites in the name of ‘choice’.

4.22 *A feasibility study.* It would be open to the Inquiry to propose a feasibility study into the development of a NSWSTRS as proposed in this submission.

4.23 Elements of the proposed NSWSTRS have been outlined above. To summarise these broadly, they include the school principal and leadership positions and the teaching positions generated by the school curriculum; as well as a complement of support staffing directly involved in teachers’ work. Then there are the resourcing needs generated by the student profile of the particular school. The teaching profile of the school will, in turn, generate the professional learning resourcing needs. Resources in the form of teaching materials and equipment for teachers and

students will be included; as well as support for technologies used in teaching and learning. In addition to time for face-to-face teaching, schools will need an allowance of additional time, including for professional learning, mentoring, research, assessment and reporting, planning and educational administration tasks.

4.24 Other factors that may need to be integrated into the resourcing standard of schools include: high student turnover; high teacher turnover and the degree of difficulty in attracting and retaining teachers in some localities; and the implications of geographical remoteness for curriculum teaching.

4.25 We have set down here for the information of the Inquiry Panel a very general description of the kind of process we have envisaged in the course of preparing this submission for the Inquiry, while recognising that a more expert and detailed investigation is needed in the form of a feasibility study.

4.26 We have envisaged a staged process for the development of the NSWSTRS with the Inquiry findings as its key starting point. It would be led by a small team of those with the expertise necessary to identify and cost the elements of a school's workload and to devise a method of grouping similar schools for resourcing purposes. This would be necessary to ensure equity – so that similar schools across the State would have a correspondingly similar Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard.

4.27 The process would be a participatory and consultative one. The expert team would have a working group drawn from principal associations, the NSWTF and parent representatives and from relevant areas of the Department and NESA. It would need to be a staged process. Notional groupings of schools according to workload would be produced and trialled to refine the mechanism to be used for mapping the workload of all NSW schools as a basis for determining **their particular entitlement to adequate and appropriate staffing and teaching resources**, their STRS. **Expert advice and analysis would be needed at this stage on how all the elements of the standard could be weighted against each other in terms of their significance in contributing to quality teaching.** The next step would be to trial this mechanism on a sample of schools from across the broad groupings that have been identified. This staged process may well have revealed other factors that affect the teaching workload of schools and that need to be taken into account.

4.28 In practical terms, the overall investment required to establish the NSWSTRS will be a judgment based on balancing optimal resource levels with budgetary realities. This will, in turn determine the cost of the standard for each individual school. The cost of principals and teaching staff will be set by agreed salary scales.

4.29 At this stage, we envisaged a broad consultative process to achieve consensus on the work to this stage so that it could be trialled across the system.

4.30 We have envisaged that, from the point of view of those working in schools, the Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard would take the form of a document or schedule that would set out the allocation of staffing and teaching resources for a school according to its measured STRS. This document would set out the school's entitlement much like the current staffing formula, but with an allowance for relevant support staffing and for specialist staffing. It would also set out the teaching resources to which teaching staff would be entitled individually and collectively, such as time allocations for the tasks outlined in Section 3 above and for professional learning appropriate to the stage of their careers and for specific purposes. Clearly some of these entitlements would attach to individual teachers, such as time for induction and mentoring programs or support for out-of-field

teaching. It would also be open to all the educators within the school, through structures and processes to enable participatory decision-making, to decide where these resources might best be pooled to use them to greatest advantage from the point of view of students' learning. In our experience, participating in strategic decision-making about the school's priorities and in planning and resourcing the action needed to meet those priorities is, in itself, a powerful form of professional learning.

4.31 Schools could be provided with their estimated STRS setting out their staffing and teaching resources entitlement in the final quarter of the year. This would allow for changes in enrolments at the earliest appropriate stage of the next school year. Along with their STRS they would receive a template for setting out their school plan for the following year. It may be practical for this plan to cover a longer period, say 3 years, with provision for an annual update to accommodate the need for any significant variations from the original plan. School plans would be submitted to an appropriate area of the Department to provide assurance that schools are applying their resource entitlements to the purposes for which they were intended. For example, where a school receives funds to support early career teachers, its plan would specify how these funds were being applied to an induction or mentoring program to support those teachers. Similarly, school plans would indicate the ways in which funds provided for students with high support needs were being used for that purpose. It would be important to achieve a balance between enabling schools flexibility in planning the most effective and economic use of their resources and safeguarding the integrity of the resourcing standard. This process would provide a system overview of the use of resources in schools to strengthen curriculum and teaching, in particular. It would also inform system planning while contributing to ongoing evaluation and periodic review of the STRS itself.

4.32 It is clear that for larger schools, the STRS would provide a larger 'menu' of planning and resourcing options than it would for smaller schools. For the latter, however, it could provide a useful basis for collaboration with neighbouring schools, or through flexible online options, to find ways to mix and match their resources to expand their scope for meeting curriculum and teaching priorities.

4.33 In our thinking about the development of a NSWSTRS we also considered the possibility of schools, working individually or collectively, finding the flexibility to create opportunities for fixed-term appointments for teachers in addition to the formal promotions and salary structure. Schools would identify particular tasks, involving research perhaps, or materials development to improve their operation or to deal with difficult problems or shortfalls. Teachers with the relevant skills could apply to take on these tasks (with appropriate additional remuneration drawn from the schools' resources) or they could be off-lined from their regular classroom teaching for a specified time. This would be a means of recognising the expertise and skills of classroom teachers, of broadening and diversifying teachers' work and providing opportunities for leadership development and professional learning. Clearly such a possibility for fixed term opportunities of this kind would need an appropriate regulatory basis within the broader industrial framework to ensure transparency and due process. Consideration could also be given to the setting up of a NSW Schools Resourcing Board along the lines of the Commonwealth's National Schools Resourcing Board to provide independent oversight and advice to the State Government on the operation of the proposed NSWSTRS.

The benefits of moving to introduce a NSWSTRS

4.34 In sum, the benefits of a Staffing and Teaching Resources Standard for the NSW public school system include the following.

- It is a mechanism designed to achieve a more systemic focus on realising the full value of teachers' work. It should also support the same focus by principals and teachers themselves as well as school communities to understand how they can add value to this work.
- The STRS is not a revolutionary idea and does not involve having to start from the beginning. It can be seen as an enhancement of the staffing formulae of the kind used by public systems across Australia and can, thus, build on current practice and draw from experience and from work previously done by, for example, the initial Gonski Inquiry.
- It is also a mechanism designed to induce governments, both State and Commonwealth, to understand that the teaching force is a valuable public asset and to take greater responsibility for the quality and distribution of teachers among schools.
- Strengthening the supply of quality teaching in NSW public schools should be a strategic priority for the NSW Government in the re-construction that will be necessary as a result of the coronavirus pandemic and in the face of the challenge of climate change. The development of a NSWSTRS would demonstrate the Government's commitment to the public teaching force as a vital asset for the delivery of an essential service.

4.35 Furthermore, the Inquiry's terms of reference, in our view, require consideration of how teachers' work is to be adequately and appropriately resourced.

5. MATTERS ARISING

5.1 The responsibility for the action necessary to provide the resources necessary to quality teaching does not lie exclusively with the NSW Government.

5.2 The NSW public school system operates within the larger national system of schooling. This is best described as a 'hybrid' system, with its mixture of values, structures, finances, responsibilities and accountabilities. Public funding of non-government schools has progressively transformed Australia's system of schooling from one consisting in discrete operations across public, Catholic and independent schools, thence to a 'dual' system of schooling and, beyond this, to a 'hybrid' system. The convergence of public funding levels between public and non-government schools has, however, not been matched by corresponding changes to responsibilities and obligations. There is widespread evidence that the political underpinnings of today's hybrid system are contributing to inequality and inequity that is now evident across our whole school system and, over recent decades, to stagnating levels of educational achievement.

5.3 NSW has played a leading role in the development of national curriculum and teaching standards over recent decades. We believe that the findings of this Inquiry and the directions that it proposes for resourcing the professionalism and the workload of teachers could well have a broader influence nationally.

5.4 In the interests of the NSW public school system, its teachers and its students and the State as a whole, there is a need for the NSW Government to prepare for the re-negotiation the role of the Commonwealth in schools funding.

5.5 The establishment of a NSWSTRS could provide a future platform from which the NSW Government could be ready to re-negotiate its own agreement with the Commonwealth.

5.6 *Funding for schools in NSW is currently authorised through a formal agreement between the Commonwealth and State governments.* In turn, that agreement has been made against the provisions of Commonwealth and State education legislation, the National School Reform Agreement, and, in particular, the bilateral agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth on quality schools reform.

5.7 As with all such formal documents, there is much ‘devil in the detail’ that ends up defining the true nature of the underlying policy positions of the signatories. And most of the issues arising from that detail create difficulties for public schools in NSW. Some examples are set out here.

5.8 Commonwealth legislation stipulates that its funding share for government schools is limited to 20 per cent of the SRS, while its funding of non-government schools has been set at 80 percent of the public cost of the SRS. This ‘prior obligation’ of the Commonwealth for funding private schools to reach at least their SRS has been established by custom and fiat, rather than by any explicit formal federal/state agreement under national conventions. Linking the funding of private schools to the Commonwealth’s revenue sources and limited delivery responsibilities is a serious step in the Australian Federation that has been introduced without due consideration of its implications for the planning and funding of public schools.

5.9 The current bilateral agreement between the Commonwealth and NSW governments covers funding for the 2019-2023 quinquennium. That agreement notes that NSW contributed 70.8 per cent of the SRS in 2019 and commits to providing 72.2 per cent in 2023. This is an increase of less than 2 per cent, equivalent to an additional \$180 per student on average in NSW public schools from the NSW Government. The NSW/Commonwealth bilateral agreement confirms that the State would limit its contribution to 75 per cent of the SRS by 2029. Over the same period, the Commonwealth Government has contracted to increase its share of NSW public schools’ SRS from around 18 per cent in 2019 to its limit of around 20 per cent by 2023, an average increase of just over \$700 per student.

5.10 This means that the formal agreement between NSW and the Commonwealth would result in NSW public schools operating at only 92 per cent of the SRS by 2023; and a maximum of 95 per cent by 2029.

5.11 By contrast, the Commonwealth will achieve its 80 per cent share of the public cost of the SRS for non-government schools by 2023; while the NSW Government is scheduled to reduce its funding share from the current 25 per cent in 2019 to 23 per cent by 2023, assuming the political will to do so. As a consequence, non-government schools will be operating at around 103 per cent of the SRS over the agreement’s funding period, while public schools will be left to operate at from 88 to 92 per cent over that period.

5.12 To rub salt in to this wound, the NSW/Commonwealth bilateral agreement allows NSW to incorporate in its funding base for agreed expenditure on public schools up to 4 per cent of expenditure from *outside* the recurrent operation of these schools, such as State funding of the NSW Education Standards authority (for state-wide curriculum and teaching standards) and for depreciation of capital assets. These items have *not* been incorporated in its funding base for non-government schools.

5.13 Excluding this anomalous inclusion of expenditure on NESA and depreciation in respect of public schools would reduce the NSW Government’s share of the SRS for these schools from 72 to 68 per cent. If the Commonwealth meets its contribution of 20 per cent of the SRS, NSW public schools

overall will operate at only 88 per cent, well below the 103 per cent promised to non-government schools. And this comparison does not take into account, for the latter, funding from parental fees and other sources of private income which take the resources of number of these non-government schools even further above their designated funding standard.

5.14 *Indexation:* Section 11A of the Australian Education Act provides that the SRS is indexed each year, ostensibly to account for the effects of inflation. But, following negotiations with the non-government sector, the Act guarantees that annual indexation will be at least 3 per cent, despite the fact that education wage growth and CPI increases are currently around 2 per cent and are projected to continue at that level in the years ahead. Non-government schools will be the major beneficiaries from this provision of the Act due to the Commonwealth's decision to fund 80 per cent of the public cost of the SRS for those schools, but only 20 per cent for government schools. At the same time State governments are proposing wage freezes for public servants, including teachers, in response to the Covid crisis.

5.15 There is now a wealth of evidence that schools funding policies in Australia, particularly as a result of the effects of Commonwealth policy over decades, have turned into a war of attrition against public schools. The effects of these policies have been widely documented and are the subject of continuing analyses, including recently by [Bonnor et al.](#) and by [Cobbold](#).

5.16 The Commonwealth has further complicated the transition to full funding of the SRS by introducing a separate *Choice and Affordability Fund*, costed at \$1.2 billion over ten years. The NSW share of these funds for non-government schools is estimated at around \$35 million, or an average \$75 per non-government school students. This fund was introduced under the banner of 'supporting parental choice and affordability of schools' so as to minimise the effects on schools that would otherwise be disadvantaged by the new Direct Measure of Income (DMI) for determining a non-government school's capacity to contribute to the SRS. The DMI replaces the previous index of socio-economic status. Some of these funds will also be directed to support non-government schools in regional and remote areas and in drought-affected areas.

5.17 The NSW Government will also provide funding for schools that is outside the conditions of the bilateral agreement with the Commonwealth. Beginning in 2020, the NSW Government will complement the Commonwealth's Choice and Affordability Fund with a separate *NSW School Equity* program funded at \$712 million over ten year, or just under \$80 per public school student, to support government schools with higher needs as defined by the Australian Education Act.

5.18 The above factors have the effect of weakening the integrity of the SRS and of making the funding scheme generally 'porous'. The political forces underlying both governments' decisions to provide funding outside the national agreements can only serve to undermine the integrity of the Gonski funding model and public confidence in it.

5.19 *For some time, governments, Commonwealth and state combined, have provided recurrent funding at a level that covers the cost of teaching staff salaries across both the public and non-government sectors.* In the public sector, these costs are met by government. For non-government schools, by 2018, expenditure on teaching staff salaries of \$11.2 billion was exceeded by recurrent funding of \$11.3 billion from the Commonwealth alone. States and territories provided further recurrent funding to those schools of some \$3.6 billion.

5.20 It is now incumbent upon both levels of government to develop a rational basis for sharing responsibility for the planning and funding of this national asset – the teaching force. The adoption of a NSWSTRS could provide a foundation for necessary reform of national schools funding policy.

5.21 There is a need for a new social contract around public schools. The effects of the coronavirus will demand higher public investment to strengthen both the quality and the equity of our education and training system. It is imperative that this investment be directed in such a way that ensures its benefits are fairly available to all Australians. Public investment in schooling must be concentrated on the public schools that are open to all.