



## **Submission to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System**

TEACHERS AND TEACHING RESEARCH CENTRE

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The Teachers and Teaching Research Centre (TTRC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the *Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation Paper*.

Established in 2013, the TTRC is led by Laureate Professor Jenny Gore and sits within the School of Education at the University of Newcastle. The TTRC is an Australian leader in high quality, high impact educational research into initial teacher education, quality teaching, teacher development, school change, leadership, student aspirations, equity, and STEM education.

Our submission responds to each chapter of the consultation paper and addresses key questions where our large and unique evidence base can inform policy decisions.

We make nine key recommendations (summarised below).

We would welcome an opportunity to meet with the esteemed panel to elaborate further on our significant research base and recommendations for the National School Reform Agreement (NSRA).

### **Summary of key recommendations**

- i)** Allocate dedicated, protected time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and participate in evidence-based, pedagogy-focused professional development, to improve teaching quality and teacher retention.
- ii)** Develop a comprehensive suite of policy initiatives aimed at valuing the profession, in collaboration with key groups such as teacher and principal associations, unions, and researchers.
- iii)** Change the HALT accreditation process to recognise teachers engaged in impactful learning and improvement programs.
- iv)** Develop a comprehensive strategy for teacher and school leader career development that covers the entire teaching career lifecycle.
- v)** Mandate a portion of professional development hours to focus on evidence-based, pedagogy-focused professional learning. AITSL should maintain a list of accredited providers/programs – which should be subject to rigorous standards of evidence.
- vi)** Establish a fund of sufficient scale to support programs of research to better inform policy and practice.
- vii)** Task AERO with the development of guidelines, rules and processes for the brokering of datasets from bodies such as ACARA and state and territory departments to be made available to researchers throughout Australia.
- viii)** Task AERO with providing a portion of its funding for commissioning independent, peer-reviewed research using the same successful model as the UK's Education Endowment Fund.
- ix)** Task AERO to support the synthesis and dissemination of high-quality, independent research for key audiences such as practical and accessible guides for teachers and school leaders and reports for policymakers (e.g. using the successful model of Social Ventures Australia's Evidence for Learning).

## Capitalising on the opportunity for meaningful reform

We applaud the government's holistic, whole-of-sector approach to reform, with important reviews underway or recently completed in early childhood education, initial teacher education, and the higher education sector. This review into the National School Reform Agreement is arguably the most important piece of that puzzle, setting the stage for reform of our school system through clear targets and reform priorities with buy-in from Commonwealth, state, and territory governments.

Broadly, we see three overarching considerations as critical if the nation is to capitalise on the opportunity represented by the current NSRA review to achieve successful reform.

First, we call for **recognition of education's complexity**. Teaching and learning involve complex relationships among students, teachers, schools, systems, communities, and the broader educational, social, and economic landscape. We commend the commitment of this review to tackling some of the thorniest issues in education: raising the status of teaching, addressing the teacher shortage, improving student outcomes, and narrowing equity gaps. However, we caution against latching on to simplistic solutions. Education in Australia requires layered, nuanced, evidenced-informed policy solutions with a long-term focus.

Second, much has been made of specific evidence-based strategies, techniques, and interventions, such as cognitive science, explicit instruction, phonics, curriculum resources for teachers, and small group tutoring. While such approaches potentially form part of the reform agenda, genuine improvement requires consideration of the broader Australian education landscape. For example, how teachers are positioned by, and how they respond to, proposed reforms will be critical – given that what they do in classrooms ultimately matters most. We commend consideration of **approaches to reform that have broad applicability and multiple benefits**, to deliver better and faster return on investment without overburdening teachers and school leaders.

Third, this review represents an opportunity to **enrich the production, dissemination, and use of evidence** across the sector. Teachers and school leaders are asked to implement evidence-based practices but have limited access to research outputs and limited capability in the interpretation of results. Policymakers aim to deliver evidence-informed policy but often, with limited research capability themselves, latch on to 'findings' without high quality evidence. These challenges exist in a field that lacks adequate research funding. We encourage careful interrogation of evidence, including our own, in the adoption of any strategy, and we call for concerted efforts to enrich the production, dissemination, and use of evidence. Such a commitment to evidence also means ensuring the reform initiatives in the next NSRA are supported by proper, well-funded, frank, and fearless evaluation.

This Government has a rare opportunity for developing a nationally coherent reform agenda that delivers a better, fairer education system – one that genuinely supports teachers and lifts outcomes for millions of students. To capitalise on this opportunity, we must adopt a system-wide approach to reform that treats teaching comprehensively, treats teachers respectfully, and considers the entire teacher workforce. Genuine reform that will make a lasting difference to educational outcomes in Australia requires policy informed by research and practice, practice supported by research and policy, and research that is valuable for both policy and practice.

## Evidence base underpinning this submission

Two nationally significant, ground-breaking programs of research undertaken by the TTRC inform our response to this review.

**First, our work on quality teaching demonstrates a powerful, cost-effective way to improve academic outcomes and narrow equity gaps in achievement.**

### Callout 1: Quality Teaching Rounds

Successive randomised controlled trials show teacher participation in the award-winning,<sup>1</sup> evidence-backed Quality Teaching Rounds professional development program improves student outcomes in literacy and numeracy by two to three months in just one school year compared to a matched control group.

These results were slightly stronger in disadvantaged settings, signalling the power of this approach to narrow equity gaps.

QTR has been trialled and successfully implemented in both primary and secondary schools and in a range of specialist contexts, including small, rural, and remote schools; highly disadvantaged schools; schools for specific purposes; hospital schools; environmental education centres; and distance education centres.

QTR is universally valued by teachers who participate. It raises the status of the profession by respecting the complexity and intellectual rigour of teaching. Participation in QTR boosts teacher morale and confidence, which are critical factors in addressing teacher retention and the widespread teacher shortage.

The QT Model – developed by Associate Professor James Ladwig and Laureate Professor Jenny Gore – centres on three dimensions of quality teaching derived from research:

1. Intellectual quality – developing deep understanding of important ideas
2. Quality learning environment – ensuring positive classrooms that boost student learning
3. Significance – connecting learning to students' lives and the wider world.

Underpinning each dimension are elements of teaching practice for which there is evidence of impact on student outcomes.<sup>2</sup> The QT Model was developed for the NSW Department of Education, has been its framework for quality pedagogy since 2003, and has been subjected to extensive and rigorous testing during the past two decades.

The QT Model can deliver the kinds of improvement in teaching and student learning sought by all systems and governments when it is embedded in teaching practice using the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) approach to professional development.<sup>3</sup> QTR brings together teachers at any stage of their careers, and from any grade and subject, to learn from each other and improve their pedagogy.

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<sup>1</sup> Engagement Australia. (2022). 2022 Engagement Australia Excellence Award Winners Announced. <https://engagementaustralia.org.au/2022-engagement-australia-excellence-awards-winners-announced/>

<sup>2</sup> Ladwig, J., and King, M. (2003). "Quality teaching in NSW public schools: An annotated bibliography." Ryde: NSW Department of Education and Training Professional Support and Curriculum Directorate.

<sup>3</sup> Bowe, J. & Gore, J. (2017). Reassembling teacher professional development: the case for Quality Teaching Rounds. *Teachers and Teaching*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13540602.2016.1206522>

Rigorous randomised controlled trial research shows that QTR improves the quality of teaching, teacher morale,<sup>4,5,6</sup> teacher efficacy,<sup>7</sup> and student academic achievement in both literacy<sup>8,9</sup> and numeracy,<sup>10</sup> with slightly stronger effects identified in disadvantaged schools. The positive effects on student achievement have been demonstrated for students in Years 3–6, in two states (NSW and QLD), and in an independent trial conducted by the University of Queensland’s Institute for Social Science Research.<sup>11</sup> A cost-benefit analysis by Deloitte Access Economics in 2020 found that every dollar invested in QTR would return between \$40 and \$150 in gross state product uplift,<sup>12</sup> based on teachers participating in just four days of in-school QTR professional development (a “set of Rounds”). Not only is QTR backed by rigorous evidence but, in a crowded professional development marketplace, it is delivered by a not-for-profit social enterprise housed within the University of Newcastle.

## Second, our work on aspirations and equity provides major insights for how to meet student needs and shape the nation’s future.

The Aspirations Longitudinal Study (2012–2018) was the largest study of its kind investigating the educational and occupational aspirations of Australian school students. The study generated more than 10,000 survey responses and 700 interviews with school students in Years 3–12, as well as surveys and interviews with their teachers, parents, carers, and career advisers. Since 2018, several related studies have followed up to investigate the impact of recent national events, including the COVID-19 pandemic, natural disasters, and mental health pandemic, on students’ aspirations for teaching and other careers.

Major insights from this work include:

- The vast majority of students of all ages and from all backgrounds aspire to higher education and to careers that require university qualifications. However, students from equity groups remain significantly less likely to enrol in university than their more advantaged peers.
- Teaching is the second most popular career aspiration among students in Years 3–12, and NAPLAN results are not a significant predictor of interest in teaching. A higher proportion of girls than boys and a higher proportion of Indigenous than non-Indigenous students<sup>13</sup> are interested in teaching careers during their school years.
- More should be done to capitalise on interest in teaching, while rhetoric on needing to attract the “best and brightest” is unwarranted<sup>14</sup> and unhelpful.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Gore, J., Lloyd, A., Smith, M., Bowe, J., Ellis, H., & Lubans, D. (2017). Effects of professional development on the quality of teaching: Results from a randomised controlled trial of Quality Teaching Rounds, Teaching and Teacher Education. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.08.007>

<sup>5</sup> Gore, J., & Rickards, B. (2020). Rejuvenating experienced teachers through Quality Teaching Rounds professional development. *Journal of Educational Change*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10833-020-09386-z>

<sup>6</sup> Gore, J., & Bowe, J. (2015). Interrupting attrition? Re-shaping the transition from preservice to inservice teaching through Quality Teaching Rounds, *International Journal of Educational Research*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijer.2015.05.00>

<sup>7</sup> Harris, J., Miller, A., Gore, J., Holmes, M. (2022). Building capacity for quality teaching in Australian schools: QTR Digital RCT final report. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1471857>

<sup>8</sup> Povey, J., Porter, M., Kennedy, L., Hussain, A., Bellotti, M., Cook, S., Austerberry, S. (2023). Building Capacity for Quality Teaching in Australian Schools: Queensland Replication Study Final Report. <http://hdl.handle.net/1959.13/1471855>

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Gore, J., Miller, A., Fray, L., Harris, J., & Prieto, E. (2021). Improving student achievement through professional development: Results from a randomised controlled trial of Quality Teaching Rounds. *Teaching and Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2017.08.007>

<sup>11</sup> TTRC. (2022). Building Capacity for Quality Teaching in Australian Schools: Research Impact 2019-2023 [https://qtacademy.edu.au/research/#flipbook-df\\_19173/1/](https://qtacademy.edu.au/research/#flipbook-df_19173/1/)

<sup>12</sup> Deloitte Access Economics. (2020). Quality Teaching Rounds – Cost Benefit Analysis. <https://qtacademy.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Deloitte-Access-Economics-QTR-Cost-Benefit-Analysis-Final-report-9-Sept.pdf>

<sup>13</sup> Gore, J., Barron, R.J., Holmes, K., Smith, M. (2016). Who says we are not attracting the best and brightest? Teacher selection and the aspirations of Australian school students. *Australian Educational Researcher*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-016-0221-8>

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> Mockler, N. (2022). *Constructing teacher identities: How the print media define and represent teachers and their work*. London: Bloomsbury.

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

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

In addressing this question, consideration must be given to the complexity of measures in education. For example, measures of attendance can be complicated by illness, performance commitments, and family opportunities. Caveats such as “unjustified absence” are open to interpretation and cannot be captured in simple metrics. Engagement is similarly difficult to measure and differentially defined. Even academic performance is not straightforward, with standardised tests of literacy and numeracy the primary, but inadequate, measurement tool available. Well-documented unintended consequences of NAPLAN include time spent on test preparation,<sup>16</sup> narrow and slow reporting of results,<sup>17</sup> anxiety and illness related to high stakes testing regimes,<sup>18</sup> and the use of the data to create leagues tables like those in MySchool leading to further entrenched disadvantage.<sup>19</sup>

Ladwig argues<sup>20</sup> in an award-winning paper in the prestigious *Review of Educational Research*, titled “Beyond academic outcomes,” that the more we lean toward focusing on non-academic outcomes of schooling, the more we open the whole child to surveillance and control. Much more research is needed into which non-academic programs “work” and which have lasting, powerful outcomes, for whom, and under what conditions. Decisions about what to measure need to be understood “as questions of lived experience, empirical effects, and collective social experience”.

This recognition of complexity and unintended perverse outcomes from measurement means that caution must be exercised in making decisions about what and how to measure student outcomes.

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

“Evidence-based practices” currently in vogue derived from brain and learning science have not, in many cases, been rigorously tested in school classrooms under randomised controlled trial conditions. Proponents often assume a straightforward link between laboratory-based scientific evidence and its practical application in the classroom.<sup>21</sup> This does not mean such practices should not be in the mix. However, rigorous research into these and other practices must be part of the next NSRA.

Frustratingly, evidence-based teaching practices are often simplified and pitched in opposition to each other<sup>22</sup> (for example, explicit instruction versus inquiry approaches) when what matters most is the

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<sup>16</sup> Carter, D., Manuel, J., Dutton, J. (2018). How do secondary school English teachers score NAPLAN? A snapshot of English teachers' views. *Australian Reading Association*. <http://hdl.handle.net/10453/129630>

<sup>17</sup> Bahr, N., Pendergast, D. (2018). Let's abandon NAPLAN – we can do better. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/lets-abandon-naplan-we-can-do-better-95363>

<sup>18</sup> Howell, A. (2017). ‘Because then you could never get a job!’: children's constructions of NAPLAN as high-stakes. *Journal of Education Policy*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/02680939.2017.1305451>

<sup>19</sup> Gannon, S., McKnight, L. (2023). Pausing NAPLAN did not destroy society – but new changes might not fix the future. *AARE EduResearch Matters*. <https://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=16085>

<sup>20</sup> Ladwig J. (2010). Beyond Academic Outcomes. *Review of Research in Education*. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X09353062>

<sup>21</sup> Beale, J. (2020). Educational Neuroscience and Educational Neuroscientism. *Routledge*. <https://www.routledge.com/The-BrainCanDo-Handbook-of-Teaching-and-Learning-Practical-Strategies/Harrington-Beale-Fancourt-Lutz/p/book/9780367187057>

<sup>22</sup> Reid, A. (2021). Teachers use many teaching approaches to impart knowledge. Pitting one against another harms education. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/teachers-use-many-teaching-approaches-to-impart-knowledge-pitting-one-against-another-harms-education-166178>

quality of the pedagogy.<sup>23</sup> By reducing teaching to a set of techniques or “practices” we overlook the fact that it is possible to teach well or badly using any method (including explicit instruction and inquiry approaches). This simplification risks unsatisfactory outcomes from the current reform agenda.

Instead, we must take a nuanced view of supporting teachers to deliver quality teaching by understanding the complexity of classroom practice.

Effective teaching requires more than knowledge of and skills in delivering specific practices. It requires understanding of the social and emotional contexts of schools and classrooms, and the capacity to adapt to students’ needs and to classroom dynamics. It requires an understanding of how to employ specific techniques in ways that deliver quality learning outcomes. Depending on the context, the lesson, the needs of the students, all these teaching approaches (explicit instruction, inquiry-based, phonics, balanced literacy, etc.) can be valid and impactful. They are complementary rather than competing. Graduate teachers and experienced teachers alike should be equipped with a broad range of knowledge and skills for the classroom. Most importantly, teachers require a comprehensive understanding of high-quality pedagogy to underpin their practice and ensure their readiness for the classroom.

This is where a conceptual framework such as the QT Model, and its application in the classroom through QTR professional development, is valuable. It does not prescribe or dictate a particular way of teaching. Rather, it can be used in conjunction with all teaching strategies and school programs – such as specific literacy and numeracy programs – to underpin teaching with a fundamental understanding of what good teaching looks like in any given classroom and thereby deliver better outcomes.

##### **5. What should the specific targets in the next NSRA be? Should the targets be different for primary and secondary schools? If so, how? What changes are required to current measurement frameworks, and what new measures might be required?**

Teaching is the most important in-school factor affecting student outcomes. It stands to reason that enhancing teaching quality should be a target in the next NSRA. This poses three obvious and fundamental challenges – what does quality teaching look like, how do we measure it, and how do we support teachers to build their capacity to deliver quality teaching?<sup>24</sup>

We argue the QT Model provides a framework for understanding and measuring quality teaching. However, large scale measurement would be prohibitively expensive and time consuming. Moreover, the QT Model has been designed to support teacher development. It is not to be used for teacher assessment, outside de-identified research protocols. Student achievement measures at school or jurisdictional levels are indicative but not straightforward proxies for quality teaching. We caution against their deployment in simplistic ways.

Instead, an important target in the next NSRA should focus on providing the conditions in schools to support teachers to enhance their teaching. Such a target would include allocating sufficient time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and participate in evidence-backed professional development, such as QTR, focused on pedagogy.

In the context of the teacher shortage crisis, improving teacher retention should also be a target of the next NSRA. Teacher retention can be achieved by raising the status of the profession and improving conditions in schools (see Q15 & 16) and by boosting teacher morale, confidence, and job satisfaction (see Callouts 1 & 3). Reform initiatives such as investing in high-impact professional development and

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<sup>23</sup> Gore, J. (2022) Ideological battles over the curriculum and pedagogy miss the complexities of teaching, *EducationHQ*. <https://educationhq.com/news/ideological-battles-over-the-curriculum-and-pedagogy-miss-the-complexities-of-teaching-113237>

<sup>24</sup> Gore, J. (2021). The quest for better teaching. *Oxford Review of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03054985.2020.1842182>

producing a ‘teacher and leader development strategy’ (as outlined in Q22) offer clear mechanisms for achieving better teacher retention.

**Recommendation:**

- i) Allocate dedicated, protected time for teachers to collaborate, plan, and participate in evidence-based, pedagogy-focused professional development, to improve teaching quality and teacher retention.

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

Our research on the impact of COVID-19 on student learning provided some of the earliest directly comparable empirical evidence in the world.<sup>25</sup> Despite lockdowns and remote learning in consecutive years (2020 and 2021), NSW students bucked global trends and maintained annual learning growth equivalent to pre-pandemic years.<sup>26,27</sup> These results are a testament to teachers who valiantly ensured student learning was not compromised despite incredibly challenging circumstances.

However, our study also found significant *negative* effects on teacher<sup>28</sup> and student<sup>29</sup> wellbeing and mental health. For teachers, COVID-19 greatly exacerbated workloads and concerns about employment conditions while, for students, the narrowed curriculum and time spent away from friends and other social networks during periods of lockdown led to serious signs of stress and anxiety. Teachers reported significant and worrying decline in student behaviour and increased mental anguish.

Jess Harris, of the TTRC, was commissioned by the Victorian Department of Education at the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic to provide analysis on approaches to post-crisis schooling from around the world to help inform the department’s pandemic response.

She found<sup>30</sup>:

- Regional and rural students are at greater risk of disengagement and parents and teachers need to monitor for signs of student trauma.
- Teachers and school staff have limited training in how to deal with traumatised students, so departments must find funding to support teachers to better understand how trauma impacts learning and behaviour and to identify effective teaching practices that better support students (and their families) experiencing trauma.
- Schools are pillars of the community and positioned to be hubs for external service providers, such as public health and mental health professionals, to help build resilience.
- Ongoing crisis management plans with clear communication to staff, students, and the broader community can help parents and students stay connected and feel a sense of agency in the aftermath of crises.

On average in NSW, just one<sup>31</sup> professionally trained school counsellor is available to work with the students of every two schools – a rate far lower in regional Australia. Students are waiting more than

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<sup>25</sup> Donnelly, R., & Patrinos, H. (2021). Learning loss during COVID-19: An early systematic review. *Centre for Economic Policy Research*. <https://cepr.org/node/390761>

<sup>26</sup> Gore, J., Fray, L., Miller, A., Harris, J., Taggart, W. (2021). The impact of COVID-19 on student learning in NSW primary schools: an empirical study, *The Australian Education Researchers*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-021-00436-w>

<sup>27</sup> Miller, A., Fray, L., Gore, J. (2023). Was COVID-19 an unexpected catalyst for more equitable learning outcomes? A comparative analysis after two years of disrupted schooling in Australian primary schools. *Australian Educational Researcher*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s13384-023-00624-w>

<sup>28</sup> Fray, L., Jaremus, F., Gore, J., Miller, A., Harris, J. (2022). Under pressure and overlooked: the impact of COVID-19 on teachers in NSW public schools, *The Australian Educational Researcher*, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-022-00518-3>

<sup>29</sup> Fray, L., Jaremus, F., Gore, J., Harris, J. (under review). Learning from home during COVID-19: troubling consequences for students’ return to school.

<sup>30</sup> Harris, J., Knipe, S., Smithers, K., Ross, A. (2020) Transitions from remote delivery to reopening: A review of evidence on school improvement for schools impacted by COVID. *University of Newcastle*.

<sup>31</sup> NSW Teachers Federation. (2020). Students at risk due to a lack of school counsellors. <https://news.nswtf.org.au/blog/media-release/2020/10/students-risk-due-lack-school-counsellors>



four weeks<sup>32</sup> to see school counsellors. Schools and communities are desperate for this form of support. A 2012 pilot study<sup>33</sup> in a disadvantaged high school found a significant number of health problems impacting student learning outcomes. The addition of an experienced nurse to the school team had a positive impact on students and their families in terms of both physical and mental wellbeing and learning engagement.

A major eight-year study<sup>34</sup> (2015–2022) from the UK involving more than 28,000 students aged 11-16 found mindfulness training for teachers did not help support the mental health of students. The researchers found that “enthusiasm was ahead of the evidence” on mindfulness programs. This study provides a clear case-in-point for our three overarching principles: reform efforts must take into account the complexity of education; effective interventions must deliver multiple benefits without overburdening teachers; and rigorous evidence must inform decision making and the evaluation of initiatives.

Where improving students’ mental health and wellbeing is concerned, we caution against adding to workloads by expecting teachers to fill the gap in available qualified health professionals. At the same time, more should be done to support staff to understand trauma, identify mental ill health, and refer students and their families to health professionals. Schools need more qualified counsellors to meet demand, and there is benefit in exploring the embedding of additional health staff in schools.

## Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

### 15. What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?

Based on our world-leading longitudinal study of student aspirations in Years 3–12, two issues are critical in encouraging students into teaching: first, raising the status of the profession; and second, supporting students’ educational and career aspirations.

On supporting students’ aspirations, enthusiasm for teaching exists among high school students.<sup>35</sup> Teaching is the second most popular career aspiration among students in NSW government schools in Years 3–12. Prior academic achievement (based on NAPLAN results) was **not** a significant predictor of interest in teaching<sup>36,37</sup> – meaning many high-achieving students want to pursue teaching as a career.

Policies and initiatives should be developed that capitalise on the widespread interest in teaching among school students. One positive initiative designed to nurture students’ interest in teaching is Macquarie Fields High School’s “*future teacher program*” which takes students between Years 8 and 12 through a structured program where they have opportunities to teach in local primary schools and learn more about what it is to teach and what it takes to become a teacher. Such career specific programs can take various forms but play an important role in attraction and recruitment.

Rates of initial teacher education (ITE) enrolment and completion are dropping,<sup>38</sup> which increases pressures on schools and the system in a time of teacher shortages. However, this issue is wider than

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid.

<sup>33</sup> Noon, T. (2018). Barriers to effective educational outcomes in disadvantaged high school communities and the impact of a whole-person approach to schooling. *University of Newcastle*.

<https://nova.newcastle.edu.au/vital/access/%20manager/Repository/uon:35195>

<sup>34</sup> Kuyken, W. (2023) Mindfulness in schools doesn’t improve mental health. Here’s why that’s a positive <https://wellcome.org/news/mindfulness-schools-doesnt-improve-mental-health-heres-why-thats-positive>

<sup>35</sup> De Bortoli, L. (2021) What are the occupational aspirations of Australian 15-year-olds? *ACER*

<https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1014&context=snapshots>

<sup>36</sup> Gore, J., Barron, R.J., Holmes, K., Smith, M. (2016). Who says we are not attracting the best and brightest? Teacher selection and the aspirations of Australian school students. *Australian Educational Researcher*. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s13384-016-0221-8>

<sup>37</sup> Fray, L., Gore, J. (2018). Why people choose teaching: A scoping review of empirical studies, 2007–2016, *Teaching and Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.tate.2018.06.009>

<sup>38</sup> Department of Education. (2023). Completion Rates – Cohort Analysis. <https://www.education.gov.au/higher-education-statistics/completion-rates-cohort-analyses>

education as the Universities Accord interim report makes clear,<sup>39</sup> predicting almost double the number of university-qualified graduates will be required by the middle of the century. Improving equity of access to the university sector as a whole, removing barriers for underrepresented students, and supporting students within higher education to ensure their success are critical strategies to be considered.

### Callout 2: Supporting student aspirations

Teachers play a vital role in shaping the next generation of leaders, scientists, artists, and teachers. One approach to support students' career and educational aspirations is a free 10-hour accredited online professional development course that helps teachers understand how students form their career and educational aspirations and the role that they play in aspiration formation.

Based on our aspirations research, and funded by the Australian Department of Education, *Supporting Student Aspirations* offers an inexpensive, research-based approach to capitalising on the existing interest in teaching in our schools. The course provides strategies for teachers, career advisers, and school leaders to nurture meaningful post-school aspirations in their students.

Almost all teachers (93.9%) involved in an evaluation of the course reported that the content was useful in understanding students' aspirations, and most participants (87.8%) told us they gained strategies to apply in their own school to nurture and support student aspirations.<sup>40</sup>

A similar free online course was developed with a focus on how community members outside of schools can help nurture the aspirations of young people.

Information on accessing both courses can be found at: [aspirations.edu.au](https://aspirations.edu.au)

On raising the status of teaching, valuing teachers and raising their professional status is an enduring challenge in education. Teachers are subject to harsh criticism and unfairly blamed for falling or stagnating student outcomes. Covered in the media more, and more harshly, than other professions,<sup>41</sup> it's no wonder we struggle to attract new teachers and retain the ones we have.<sup>42</sup> Media and government critiques are picked up by the broader public, with teachers and principals reporting a torrent of abuse directed at them by students, parents, and the community.<sup>43</sup>

We argue that the relentless policy and media discourse on needing “better and brighter teachers,”<sup>44</sup> devalues teachers, their work, and their sense of professional identity, ultimately working against the aims of policy makers to attract high-achieving and diverse cohorts into teaching.

Instead, we need to help a broad audience – policymakers, media, government, families, students, and prospective teachers – understand that teaching is intellectually rigorous and challenging work which makes for a rewarding and attractive career.

Simple steps like changing the rhetoric around “the best and brightest” or differentiating between improving teaching quality and improving teacher quality (the practice, not the person) will help.

<sup>39</sup> Department of Education. (2023). Australian Universities Accord Interim Report. *Department of Education*. <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-universities-accord/resources/accord-interim-report>

<sup>40</sup> Prieto, E., Sincock, K., Patfield, S., Fray, L., Gore, J. (under review). Beyond outreach: Capitalising on the untapped potential of teachers to help widen participation in higher education.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

<sup>42</sup> Mockler, N. (2022). No wonder no one wants to be a teacher: world-first study looks at 65,000 news articles about Australian teachers. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/no-wonder-no-one-wants-to-be-a-teacher-world-first-study-looks-at-65-000-news-articles-about-australian-teachers-186210>

<sup>43</sup> See, SM., Kidson, P., Dicke, T., Marsh, H. (2022). The Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey Data. *Health and Wellbeing*. <https://healthandwellbeing.org/pages/principal-reports>

<sup>44</sup> Gore, J., Mockler, N. (2022). Teachers the fall guys for a failing system. *Sydney Morning Herald*. <https://www.smh.com.au/national/teachers-the-fall-guys-for-a-failing-system-20220623-p5avxb.html>

## Recommendation:

- ii) Develop a comprehensive suite of policy initiatives aimed at valuing the profession, in collaboration with key groups such as teacher and principal associations, unions, and researchers.

## 16. What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?

As previously noted, raising the status of the profession is key to supporting teachers to remain in the profession and making teaching an attractive career. This is acknowledged as a priority area of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan,<sup>45</sup> which includes an advertising campaign and a focus on nominating teachers for Medals of the Order of Australia. There is more work to be done in this priority area including linking with other reforms in relation to teacher salaries and conditions, school funding, raising the status of teaching by implementing changes suggested in Q15 and engaging teachers in processes like QTR which honour the complexity of teaching and deliver ongoing professional improvement in ways teachers experience as helpful and respectful.

The recent Gallop Inquiry,<sup>46</sup> funded by the NSW Teachers Federation, noted “profound changes in the work and workload of teachers” over the past two decades. These findings are reinforced by the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review which called for the removal of red tape and administrative burden from teacher workloads. Recent leadership changes in the NSW Department of Education attest to the kind of approaches (and discourses) that give teachers greater hope that their work is understood and valued.<sup>47</sup>

Keeping current teachers in the workforce is another priority area of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. The aim to reduce unnecessary workload and free teachers up to focus on core teaching tasks and collaboration is critical, especially because the teaching that occurs in classrooms every day shapes the learning of children and young people in schools now.

Teachers consistently report wanting more time to plan, collaborate, and engage in high quality professional development.<sup>48</sup> Importantly, as the Grattan Institute has reported,<sup>49</sup> teachers want to collaborate in meaningful ways, not just for the sake of collaborating.

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<sup>45</sup> Department of Education. (2022). The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. *Department of Education*. <https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/national-teacher-workforce-action-plan>

<sup>46</sup> Gallop, G., Kavanagh, T., Lee, P. (2021). Valuing the teaching profession. *NSW Teachers Federation*. <https://nswtf.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/06/Valuing-the-teaching-profession-Gallop-Inquiry.pdf>

<sup>47</sup> Gore, J. (2022). The William Walker Oration 2022: Inspiring hope through evidence-based pedagogy. *Australian Council for Educational Leadership*. <https://www.acel.org.au/ACEL/ACELWEB/Publications/Monograph/About.aspx>

<sup>48</sup> Ibid.

<sup>49</sup> Hunter, J., Parkinson, N. (2023). Many teachers find planning with colleagues a waste of time. Here's how to improve it. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/many-teachers-find-planning-with-colleagues-a-waste-of-time-heres-how-to-improve-it-203413>

### Callout 3: Keeping the teachers we have

The Australian Government has funded the University of Newcastle to expand Quality Teaching Rounds to support the induction of early career teachers as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. The project, *Strengthening Induction through Quality Teaching Rounds*, aims to address the teacher shortage and lift outcomes for both students and teachers, based on the compelling evidence base that sits behind QTR.

The project will support 1,600 early career teachers and their more experienced colleagues from schools across Australia to take part in QTR over the next four years. The project will support teachers to remain in the profession by improving teacher morale, confidence, and job satisfaction. It will have the added benefits of lifting teaching quality and improving student outcomes, highlighting the advantages of investing in initiatives with broad impact.

As examples, QTR was a transformational experience for early career teacher, Kaitlin Heggen, at Hambledon Public School. Kaitlin's transition into the classroom after university was complicated by COVID-19 lockdowns and remote learning. She considered leaving the profession numerous times in her first year but, after participating in QTR, she now has greater confidence, feels supported by strong collegial relationships, and is more certain about her career in teaching.

Nick Short, who moved to Cobar High School on a NSW Teach Rural scholarship, had initially planned to stay only three years and earn his transfer points but has now been in Cobar for six years. QTR is part of a long-term strategy to support new and experienced teachers alike at Cobar High. Nick reports that by building strong relationships and improving their teaching through QTR, staff feel encouraged to stay longer while ensuring their students receive high quality learning experiences.

### 17. What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?

The status and workload conditions described in Q15, Q16, and Chapter 3 must be addressed to make returning to the profession an attractive proposition for teachers who have left.

We know of one rural area in Australia where the average age of available casual teachers is 76. Providing support for qualified teachers who have been out of the profession for some time to participate in programs like QTR would help them gain confidence in the currency of their knowledge and ensure they are prepared to deliver quality learning experiences on their return to the classroom.

### 18. What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?

Several reform ideas are being trialled or rolled out in various jurisdictions including scholarships for study, bonuses and incentives such as rent and other living and relocation subsidies. These should be supported by rigorous evaluation to understand their impact, success, and any negative consequences.

We also urge the review panel to examine the unintended perverse incentives of such (important) strategies as transfer schemes which, by design, result in teachers regularly leaving the very communities most in need. This revolving door of new teachers creates its own set of challenges for hard-to-staff schools as experienced by Nick Short (see Callout 3).

## 19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

The student population in Australia is diverse. It is important that our workforce of teachers and school leaders is representative of the wider society. Our research found a higher proportion of female students than male students and a higher proportion of Indigenous students than non-Indigenous students were interested in teaching. In a separate study, however, Indigenous students in the highest NAPLAN quartile were far less likely to desire to go to university than non-Indigenous students – a result that highlights deep-seated cultural and historical factors that shape interest in attending university.<sup>50</sup> Completion and retention rates for Indigenous students are lower than the broader population<sup>51</sup>; however, the University of Newcastle's Wollotuka Institute boasts a high retention rate and should be looked to as a model for support and engagement for First Nations students.

Our research shows that equitable access to higher education is more complicated than overcoming crude barriers such as money, distance, and prior education. It is important that initiatives are appropriately targeted and considerate of the cultural and socio-economic complexities of attracting a more diverse cohort into ITE.<sup>52</sup>

Overlapping with the work of the Universities Accord, the following strategies for attracting a diverse group of students into ITE have merit:

- allocating places for students from underrepresented groups (at all universities, including prestigious institutions);
- offering targeted early entry schemes that do not rely solely on academic measures; and,
- providing financial support through scholarships and fellowships for disadvantaged students.<sup>53</sup>

To support this work, the next NSRA could recommend teachers and career advisers participate in the *Supporting Student Aspirations* free online professional development course to help ensure students have the best opportunity to pursue their post-school goals.

## 20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?

The University of Newcastle has graduated more Indigenous students, including teachers, than any other university. Its Wollotuka Institute, established in 1983, is pivotal in both attracting and assisting First Nations students. It offers dedicated support for Indigenous students including outreach activities in schools, tutoring support, and culturally tailored care.<sup>54</sup>

Past reform initiatives and their evaluations also point to possible learnings for attracting more First Nations teachers. From the 1,000 Indigenous teacher goal set in 1982 to the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSITI) project (2011-2015) there has been a long and relatively successful history of approaches to attracting and retaining First Nations teachers. MATSITI, funded by the Australian Government between 2011 and 2015, aimed to increase and retain the number of Indigenous teachers in Australian schools. An independent evaluation of the

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<sup>50</sup> Gore J, Patfield S, Holmes K, et al. (2017). When higher education is possible but not desirable: Widening participation and the aspirations of Australian Indigenous school students. *Australian Journal of Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0004944117710841>

<sup>51</sup> Nakata, M., Nakata, S., Biggs, S. (2023). More must be done so Indigenous students are ready to succeed at university. *The Australian*. <https://www.theaustralian.com.au/higher-education/more-must-be-done-so-indigenous-students-are-ready-to-succeed-at-university/news-story/70518ce52ec3d6af44502e2dd0b5b6b3>

<sup>52</sup> Gore, J., Patfield, S., Fray, L., Harris, J. (2022). *Community Matters: The Complex Link Between Community and Young People's Aspirations for Higher Education*. Routledge. <https://www.routledge.com/Community-Matters-The-Complex-Links-Between-Community-and-Young-Peoples/Gore-Patfield-Fray-Harris/p/book/9780367895006>

<sup>53</sup> Jackson, J., Tangalakis, K., Hurley, P., Solomonides, I. (2022) Equity through complexity: Inside the "black box" of the Block Model. *NCSEHE*. <https://www.vu.edu.au/mitchell-institute/tertiary-education/inside-the-black-box-of-the-vu-block-model>

<sup>54</sup> Lester, J., Heitmeyer, D., Gore, J. M., & Ford, M. (2013). Creating and sustaining meaningful partnerships for supporting indigenous teacher education, *Journal of Australian Indigenous Issues*, 16(4), 3–18.

project identified 743 additional teachers who joined the workforce during the time period and identified several positive impacts. Despite this evidence, MATSITI funding was not extended. The evaluation panel of the MATSITI project made 14 recommendations that should be considered by this NSRA review.

## **21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?**

Casual teachers are an incredibly important but often overlooked part of the teacher workforce. Students have, on average, one full year with a casual teacher across their schooling<sup>55</sup>, yet casual teachers do not receive support to undertake professional development in schools.

Our study<sup>56</sup> which involved 24 casual teachers from eight schools participating in QTR demonstrated that providing casuals with the opportunity to engage in high impact professional development improved the quality of their teaching, their morale and connection to the school, and their professional networks.

Among other needed reforms, the next NSRA presents an opportunity to acknowledge the importance of the casual workforce by including provisions for schools and systems to support their ongoing development and learning. This will likely increase retention of casual teachers and have a positive impact on student learning.

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

HALT was designed as a pathway to recognise and reward teachers who want to stay in the classroom. However, the take-up of HALT accreditation has been so low it can be considered an abject failure. Accreditation through onerous paperwork and administration is not the answer.

Instead, the NSRA review should consider overhauling the HALT process to make recognition of teachers committed to improving their practice core to HALT accreditation. Recognition of prior learning through completion of postgraduate degrees or other substantial programs, such as the Middle Leadership Development Program run by the NSW Department of Education's School Leadership Institute, the Teaching Excellence Program run by the Victorian Government's Academy of Teaching and Leadership, or Quality Teaching Rounds, could be used as the basis for accreditation.

Reform ideas aimed at improving career pathways for teachers, including proposals by the Grattan Institute to create master teachers, may have merit but must avoid being construed as performance pay – a process which has been roundly rejected by the teaching profession,<sup>57</sup> partly because of the noted complexity of measuring teaching quality.

AITSL is also redeveloping its teacher induction guidelines as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. We argue, however, that jurisdictions and key stakeholders should go further by developing a holistic 'national teacher and school leader development strategy' that considers every stage of the teaching career lifecycle.

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<sup>55</sup> Nicholas, M., & Wells, M. (2015). Insights in casual relief teaching: casual relief teachers' perceptions of their knowledge and skills. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359866X.2016.1169506>

<sup>56</sup> Gore, J. (2023). Final Report to the NSW Department of Education: Investigating the efficacy, complexity and sustainability of teacher change – casual teachers.

<sup>57</sup> Holloway, J., Daliri-Ngametua, R., Langman, S. (2022). Read the room, Premier. Performance pay for teachers will make the crisis worse. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/read-the-room-premier-performance-pay-for-teachers-will-make-the-crisis-worse-185406>

Such a strategy should underpin teacher accreditation and career development reforms recommended by the NSRA review panel. It would support urgent government reform objectives to:

- Raise the status of the profession;
- Strengthen initial teacher education;
- Improve retention in initial teacher education and the teaching workforce;
- Support teacher and student wellbeing; and
- Lift student achievement.

The strategy would impact teachers and teaching across the entire career lifecycle in the following ways (based on a model adopted by AITSL)<sup>58</sup>:

<b>Attract</b>	Develop a national approach to teacher recruitment
<b>Prepare</b>	Strengthen mechanisms for ensuring ITE program quality
<b>Place</b>	Strengthen mechanisms for placement across jurisdictions
<b>Induct</b>	Guarantee induction supports and conditions
<b>Develop</b>	Build capacity in teaching and leadership
<b>Recognise</b>	Expand the national system for recognising teachers including clear leadership pathways
<b>Retain</b>	Expand the national system for retaining teachers and school leaders

QTR has been mapped to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers,<sup>59</sup> the NSW School Excellence Framework,<sup>60</sup> and the National School Improvement Tool,<sup>61</sup> demonstrating its applicability in developing teachers at all stages of their careers. Against the same career lifecycle framework, research shows how QTR:

<b>Attract</b>	Presents teaching as intellectually challenging and rewarding work
<b>Prepare</b>	Strengthens ITE program quality and coherence
<b>Place</b>	Builds graduate confidence and preparedness for diverse teaching contexts
<b>Induct</b>	Supports high quality teaching practice in collaborative professional cultures
<b>Develop</b>	Improves student achievement, teaching quality, teacher morale, and school culture
<b>Recognise</b>	Supports teacher accreditation and promotion
<b>Retain</b>	Increases job satisfaction and wellbeing

While we would strongly advocate for all teachers to have an opportunity to participate in QTR, we recognise that such a reform in the NSRA is unlikely. Instead, the next NSRA should include a commitment to developing a teacher and school leader development strategy and allocating time for evidence-based pedagogy-focused professional development for all teachers.

#### Recommendations:

- iii) Change the HALT accreditation process to recognise teachers engaged in impactful learning and improvement programs.
- iv) Develop a comprehensive strategy for teacher and school leader career development that covers the entire teaching career lifecycle.

<sup>58</sup> AITSL. (2021). Teaching Futures: Background paper. <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachingfutures>

<sup>59</sup> QT Academy. (2023). What is QTR? Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. <https://qtacademy.edu.au/what-is-otr/#apst>

<sup>60</sup> QT Academy. (2020). Quality Teaching Rounds and school excellence. <https://qtacademy.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/QTA-School-Excellence-Brochure-Final.pdf>

<sup>61</sup> QT Academy. (2022). Aligning Quality Teaching Rounds with the National School Improvement Tool. <https://qtacademy.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/NSIT-print-friendly.pdf>

- v) Mandate a portion of professional development hours to focus on evidence-based, pedagogy-focused professional learning. AITSL should maintain a list of accredited providers/programs – which should be subject to rigorous standards of evidence.

### **23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?**

There is some merit in providing teachers with high quality curriculum resources. However, this is not a panacea for gifting time to teachers. Curriculum resources, no matter their quality, need to be adapted into lesson planning by teachers based on their context, the lesson, their students, and myriad other factors. The suggestion by the Grattan Institute that teachers will get back three hours a week<sup>62</sup> has been widely panned by teachers<sup>63</sup> who note that curriculum resources will have little to no impact on the administrative burden that is driving teachers away from the profession. Serious reform needs to tackle the root of the problem which is cutting the time teachers spend on administrative tasks and making time in their workplace agreements for meaningful collaboration, joint planning, and adequate time to focus on the core business of teaching and learning.

### **24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?**

“QTR Digital,” a wholly online version of Quality Teaching Rounds, was developed in 2018 to ensure teachers in small, rural, and remote schools could access the same high quality professional development as their colleagues in regional and metropolitan areas. In our 2021 randomised controlled trial, we found that QTR Digital – like the traditional version of QTR – improved teaching quality and teacher efficacy. We also found two months’ growth in reading achievement for students whose teachers participated in the program compared to the control group.<sup>64</sup> This evidence supports QTR Digital as a technology for improving teacher effectiveness in the classroom.

By developing a deep understanding of the QT Model, QTR (and QTR Digital) provides a powerful way for teachers to understand and deliver good teaching. For those teaching out-of-field (which is more common in small, rural, and remote schools), the emphasis tends to be on disciplinary knowledge and curriculum. But teaching out-of-field also depends on being able to relate lessons to the wider world and engage students, while also homing in on deep understanding of key concepts.

QTR prepares teachers and graduates for all contexts of teaching and helps them develop real confidence in providing powerful learning experiences through intellectual quality, a quality learning environment, and making learning meaningful to students which, in turn, ensures powerful learning.

## **Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes**

Too often, evidence in education comes from small scale and/or methodologically weak studies.<sup>65</sup> Such studies typically lack necessary sample sizes to generate generalisable findings, tend to measure proximal outcomes which are easier to change but less likely to demonstrate broad impact than distal outcomes, and often apply correlational or quasi-experimental designs which are more prone to bias than experimental research, particularly randomised controlled trials.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Hunter, J., Haywood, A., Parkinson, N. (2022). Ending the lesson lottery: How to improve curriculum planning in schools. *The Grattan Institute*. <https://grattan.edu.au/report/ending-the-lesson-lottery-how-to-improve-curriculum-planning-in-schools/>

<sup>63</sup> Wilson, R., Sears, J., Gavin, M., McGrath-Champ, S. (2022). ‘This is like banging our heads against the wall’: why a move to outsource lesson planning has NSW teachers hopping mad. *The Conversation*. <https://theconversation.com/this-is-like-banging-our-heads-against-the-wall-why-a-move-to-outsource-lesson-planning-has-nsw-teachers-hopping-mad-188081>

<sup>64</sup> Ibid.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, D., Ho, P. (2020). Effect sizes in education: bigger is better right?, *Evidence for learning*, <https://evidenceforlearning.org.au/news/effect-sizes-in-education-bigger-is-better-right>

<sup>66</sup> Miller, D. (2021). Effect sizes: Bigger is better, right? *ACER Teacher* [https://www.teachermagazine.com/au\\_en/articles/effect-sizes-bigger-is-better-right](https://www.teachermagazine.com/au_en/articles/effect-sizes-bigger-is-better-right)



Educational research in Australia is limited by the funding available in the field. Over the past 20 years, education has received just 1.6 per cent of all grant dollars provided by the ARC.<sup>67</sup> The average grant in education over that same period was \$358,164 (compared to \$472,273 for all fields), which is wildly insufficient to carry out the kind of large-scale, systematic research required to underpin education policy and practice.

**Recommendation:**

- vi) Establish a fund of sufficient scale to support programs of research to better inform policy and practice.

**30. Is there data collected by schools, systems, sectors or jurisdictions that could be made more available to inform policy design and implementation? What systems would be necessary to make this data available safely and efficiently?**

While randomised controlled trials are expensive to conduct, they provide one of the most rigorous ways to measure the impact of interventions. Access to existing datasets, such as NAPLAN results at the school and student level, can reduce costs and administrative burden on schools and teachers, while providing reliable generalisability on the impact on student outcomes of particular interventions.

Depending on the interventions being measured, other datasets such as survey data from teachers and students (like the NSW Department of Education's *Tell Them From Me* survey) could be made available. Access to national datasets would make high quality research more affordable and provide the conditions for large, longitudinal programs of research – the kind that could properly inform research, policy, and practice.

The establishment of AERO was an important initiative of the last NSRA. However, it lacked clear direction on its role and function in the Australian education landscape. As such, AERO has positioned itself as part-researcher, part-think tank, and part-repository of practical guidance for teachers and schools but appears to have adopted a paradigmatically narrow view on research it will commission, advocate, and promote. Despite its interest in conducting research, AERO lacks the expertise to undertake the kind of large-scale, rigorous research Australian education policymakers require to inform reform initiatives. Hundreds of researchers at Australian universities are poised to undertake this work.

**Recommendations**

We make three recommendations for the next NSRA on AERO's role in the sector:

- vii) Task AERO with the development of guidelines, rules and processes for the brokering of datasets from bodies such as ACARA and state and territory departments to be made available to researchers throughout Australia.
- viii) Task AERO with providing a portion of its funding for commissioning independent, peer-reviewed research using the same successful model as the UK's Education Endowment Fund.
- ix) Task AERO to support the synthesis and dissemination of high-quality, independent research for key audiences such as practical and accessible guides for teachers and school leaders and reports for policymakers (e.g. using the successful model of Social Ventures Australia's Evidence for Learning).

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<sup>67</sup> Australian Research Council. (2022). NCGP Trends: Areas of Research, accessed 13 October 2022 <https://www.arc.gov.au/funding-research/funding-outcome/grants-dataset/trend-visualisation/ncgp-trends-areas-research>

**32. Should an independent body be responsible for collecting and holding data? What rules should be in place to govern the sharing of data through this body?**

As stated above, we believe AERO is perfectly positioned to take responsibility for negotiating access to datasets, safely storing those datasets, and brokering access to data for researchers.

**34. How could the national USI support improved outcomes for students?**

The national USI will provide reliable de-identified linked data from multiple datasets to enable the evaluation of the impact of initiatives and interventions across multiple broad measures to better inform policy decision-making and progress toward a fairer, high-achieving education system.

**Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability**

The Federal and NSW Governments have committed to meeting 100% of the School Resource Standard (SRS) for all NSW public schools by 2025. This is an important announcement in the context of recent ACARA analysis which shows 98% of private schools are funded above the Gonski-recommended SRS while 98% of public schools are funded well below. Nationally, state and federal funding for independent and Catholic schools has outpaced public school funding by 34% and 31% to just 17%, respectively.

The inequitable funding of Australian public schools further entrenches disadvantage in our education system.

The next NSRA must outline a process for achieving 100% SRS for all public schools as a matter of urgency