Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

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

Q1. 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)?

Q2. 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?

Q3. 3. How can all students at risk of falling behind be identified early on to enable swift learning interventions?

Q4. 4. Should the next NSRA add additional priority equity cohorts? For example, should it add children and young people living in out-of-home care and students who speak English as an additional language or dialect? What are the risks and benefits of identifying additional cohorts?

Q5. 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?

Q6. 6. How can the targets in the next NSRA be structured to ensure evidence-based approaches underpin a nationally coherent reform agenda while allowing jurisdictions and schools the flexibility to respond to individual student circumstances and needs?

Q7. 7. How should progress towards any new targets in the next NSRA be reported on?

Q55.
Chapter 3: Improving student mental health and wellbeing

Q8. 8. What does it look like when a school is supporting student mental health and wellbeing effectively? What is needed from school, systems, government and the community to deliver this?

In order to improve student mental health and wellbeing in schools we need further funding to support trained psychologists in schools to support teachers, guidance officers and leaders. Teaching staff are often dealing with health and wellbeing concerns, either identified or disclosed by students and parents, without any formal training to appropriately and safely manage the situation. Another point for this matter, is offering experienced teachers funding and time to access training in psychology education to assist students, parents and other staff members in every school/site.

Q9. 9. What evidence-based wellbeing approaches currently being implemented by schools and communities should be considered as part of a national reform agenda?

Q10. 10. Should a wellbeing target be included in the next NSRA? Could this use existing data collections, or is additional data required?

Q11. 11. Would there be benefit in surveying students to help understand student perceptions of safety and belonging at school, subjective state of wellbeing, school climate and classroom disruption? Would there be value in incorporating this into existing National Assessment Program surveys such as NAPLAN?

Q12. 12. To what extent do school leaders and teachers have the skills and training to support students struggling with mental health?

13. 13. What can be done to establish stronger partnerships between schools, Local Health Networks and Primary Health Networks?

Q19. 14. What can be done to ensure schools can easily refer students to services outside the school gate that they need to support their wellbeing? How can this be done without adding to teacher and leader workload?

Q56.
Chapter 4: Our current and future teachers

Q20. 15. What change(s) would attract more students into the teaching profession?

A suggestion to further reach the goal of increasing HALTs is to formalise the process of Aspirant HALTs with a more comprehensive Expression of Interest; and provide a bursary – similar to what has been suggested to attract high quality candidates into education. The approach of providing a bursary to candidates in other professions outside of education, will support schools to attract teachers, however if a bursary can be offered to experienced teachers (at least 5 year trained) already in the job; it will also support schools to retain teachers, which is another concerning problem with teachers in their first 3 – 5 years leaving the profession. In QLD, teachers in their first 5 to 10 years of experience, have the most financial incentive to become a HALT, which if marketed broadly, could also address the issue of high achieving young people not entering the profession due to the belief of teacher income not being as high as other professions.

Q32. 16. What change(s) would support teachers to remain in the profession?

Increase the number of HALTS. I support the recommendation of 'National Teacher Workforce Action Plan' to streamline the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher process in order to increase numbers, however I believe it needs to be attached to a state/territory wide HALT Aspirant Network. The Networks can be modelled from the Networks that already exist, however it should be planned, developed and delivered systematically by paid positions within the Departments. For example, currently in QLD the Dept of Ed delivers training, and the certifying authority runs the QLD HALT Network, however much of the workload is done on a voluntarily manner by HALTs, after they have already completed an extremely large body of work to achieve the qualification in the first place. If it has been identified that an increased number of HALTs are needed, than it must be supported with increased funding and investment, especially when many HALTs around the country are already at risk of burn out, due their personal interest and investment in others.

Q31. 17. What change(s) would support qualified teachers to return to the profession?

Q30. 18. What additional reforms are needed to ensure that the schools most in need can support and retain highly effective teachers?

Please refer to my previous point

Q29. 19. What can be done to attract a diverse group of people into the teaching profession to ensure it looks like the broader community?

Q28. 20. What can be done to attract more First Nations teachers? What can be done to improve the retention of First Nations teachers?

Q26. 21. What reforms could enable the existing teacher workforce to be deployed more effectively?

Q25. 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 the Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher (HALT) certification and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers?

Q24. 23. Are there examples of resources, such as curriculum materials, being used to improve teacher workload or streamline their administrative tasks?

Q23. 24. How should digital technology be used to support education delivery, reduce teacher workload and improve teacher effectiveness? What examples are you aware of?

Q22. 25. Are there benefits for the teaching profession in moving to a national registration system? If so, what are they?

Yes many benefits. In the HALT space, it is very different from state to state. There should absolutely be a national registration system, to align with a national curriculum and national teacher standards; and to streamline and make equitable the progress of teachers though the national career stages.

Q57.
Chapter 5: Collecting data to inform decision-making and boost student outcomes

Q27. 26. What data are of most value to you and how accessible are these for you?

Q35. 27. Is there any data that are not currently collected and reported on that is vital to understanding education in Australia? Why is this data important?

Q34. 28. Should data measurement and reporting on outcomes of students with disability be a priority under the next NSRA? If so, how can this data be most efficiently collected?

Q33. 29. Is there a need to establish a report which tracks progress on the targets and reforms in the next NSRA? Should it report at a jurisdictional and a national level? What should be included in the report?

Q32. 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 enable these data are made available safely and efficiently?

Q31. 31. The Productivity Commission and Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) have identified the need for longitudinal data to identify the actual students at risk of falling behind based on their performance (and not on equity groups alone) and to monitor these students' progress over time. Should this be the key data reform for the next NSRA?

Q30. 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?

Q29. 33. Is there data being collected that is no longer required?

Q28. 34. How could the national Unique Student Identifier (USI) support improved outcomes for students?

Q58.
Chapter 6: Funding transparency and accountability

Q36. 35. Are there other objectives for funding accountability and transparency we have missed?

It is clear that early career teachers need support but this is not consistent across schools, even though it has historically (in QLD) been funded well. I have led my school's Beginning Teacher Mentoring Program for 7 years, and while I have planned and delivered support for the 48 early phase staff that have come through the program, I have budgeted the money my school received to directly support the staff, other schools have first year teachers with no mentor and minimal support, but have theoretically still received the funding? A way to ensure public funding is transparent and accountable – auditing of the funding being provided to schools to support teachers in their first three years to ensure it is going to directly to their mentoring systems is needed; as well as a quality assurance or moderation system of how schools are transitioning teachers from graduate to proficient registration. Once again, the quality of support, and the rigorous application of assessment against the standards is extremely varied. I would like to see the school based principal delegate or beginning teacher mentor undergo moderation of evidence/portfolio assessment.

Q39. 36. How can governments make better use of the information already collected and/or published to achieve the objectives?

Q38. 37. What other funding accountability and transparency information regarding schools (both your school and the education system more generally) would be useful?

Q37. 38. What are the priority gaps in the current funding transparency and accountability arrangements from your perspective?

Q59. Do you have any additional comments? (2,000 characters)

I highly recommend that first year teachers in all states, territories and sectors are guaranteed less teaching time, ideally 210 minutes less in year 1, with graduated release to a full teacher timetable across three years. While student health and wellbeing is of paramount importance, we in turn need to support teacher health and wellbeing in order to achieve this. Teachers need to live wellbeing, before they can support others. First year teacher's wellbeing can be particularly fragile, and access to time with mentors can provide improvement with student conflict management, time management and curriculum knowledge, a direction correlation to the deterioration of wellbeing when not done well. And finally, I would like to advocate for the formalisation of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers to mentor Beginning Teachers when the numbers have grown. In fact the HAT standards in particular, perfectly align to support early careers teachers.

Q52. If you have more information you would like to share with the Expert Panel, please send a written response as a .docx or RTF format to NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au. An additional PDF version may also be submitted. Please make sure to note that your email is to be considered alongside your current submission.

If you have any questions about your submission or the submissions process more broadly, please contact NSRA.submissions@education.gov.au