

# **Submission**

to the

## **Quality Initial Teacher Education Review**

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18 July 2021

### **Summary**

This experiential submission focusses on the initial teacher education (ITE) of undergraduate university students in the context of gifted students and gifted education in primary and secondary settings and in all sectors. The submission describes some of the characteristics of intellectually gifted students, and suggests some of their educational needs which are not always being met at school. It illustrates some of the shortcomings of a system which does not train its university education students to teach the gifted children whom graduates will inevitably find in their classrooms from day one. Finally, it considers the consequences, for Australia and for school students themselves, of continuing to ignore the needs of gifted students at school by neglecting to require ITE providers to train education students in gifted education.

# Contents

1. What is this submission about?
2. Narrowing the scope of this submission
3. Who are gifted students?
4. What do gifted students need?
5. What is the current situation in Australia with respect to the teaching of gifted students?
6. How can initial teacher education ensure that graduate teachers will be well prepared for the classroom in the case of gifted students?
7. Why is all this important?
8. Finally...

## *Confidentiality*

This is **NOT** a **confidential** submission, and I expressly grant permission for it to be published on the Review's website and/or circulated to anyone who the Review believes might wish to see it. Similarly, I record here that I will be sharing it with the members of GLD Australia and with a variety of other parents, teachers, academics, government officials and disabilities associations who have reason to be interested in its contents and recommendations.

# 1. What is this submission about?

This submission is made in response to the call for submissions by the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (**'Review'**)

[https://submit.dese.gov.au/jfe/form/SV\\_bm7UXXP37DMxypo](https://submit.dese.gov.au/jfe/form/SV_bm7UXXP37DMxypo)

I note the Review's advice that submissions will be accepted until today, 18 July 2021.

## ***Author's familiarity with the population of students described in this submission***

Since 2015 I have been an Honorary Visiting Fellow at the **School of Education** at the **University of New South Wales ('UNSW')**, but I make this submission in my ***personal capacity***, and I note that it has not been endorsed by, and does not necessarily reflect the views of, UNSW.

Since 2005 I have also been national coordinator of **GLD Australia**, a national non-commercial online learning community and support group responding to the needs of gifted learners with disability (**'GLD'**), and the needs of those who teach, care for, or advocate for them, through the sharing of information, research and personal experiences.

GLD Australia is a not-for-profit independent learning community with a member-owned and member-operated online discussion list. It is affiliated with the Australian Association for the Education of the Gifted and Talented <http://www.aaegt.net.au>, which is the Australian national umbrella association for state and territory gifted associations.

GLD Australia has no political affiliations, is not an incorporated association, and thus has no income, membership fees, property, officers, employees or premises. Run entirely by non-paid volunteers, it does not offer any tutoring or exam preparation courses or other commercial services.

Because GLD Australia is not a legal entity, I make this submission in my ***personal capacity***, as a volunteer advocate who has been supporting parents of gifted and GLD children for around 15 years.

In the course of my volunteer work for GLD Australia and for a variety of other gifted and learning disabilities associations and groups, I have since 2005 spoken to, and communicated via email with, many hundreds of parents whose gifted and GLD children are not having their needs met at school.

I have also liaised with a wide variety of NSW and Queensland primary and secondary teachers, schools and other professionals in this context for over a decade.

This submission presents an aggregation of my everyday experiences from over the past two decades in volunteering and lecturing in this field, and the experiences of many hundreds of those parents, teachers and other professionals, as reported to me.

I include the biographical information above to explain the genesis of my familiarity with this population – not as an assertion that my views reflect those of all members of GLD Australia or of any of the other voluntary associations with whom I work, or that I in any way have authority to speak on their behalf.

In the interest of completeness, I note also that I do not run a business or sell any publications or products. I do not accept fees from parents for advocating for their children, and I do not accept fees for lecturing at universities, for providing in-service professional development or training to teachers in schools, or for speaking at conferences, even when I am an invited speaker.

I am not a qualified teacher. I lectured at the university level for around 10 years in the 1970s, but I have no personal experience of teaching gifted or non-gifted primary or secondary children, with or without disability. Though I am a retired lawyer, I do not 'act for' parents in my capacity as such.

## **2. Narrowing the scope of this submission**

### ***Terms of Reference***

This submission will be confined to the following issue raised in the Commission's Terms of Reference: <https://qitereview.dese.gov.au/tor/>

*"Part B. Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers*

*Question 8. How can Teaching Performance Assessment arrangements be strengthened to ensure graduate teachers are well-prepared for the classroom?"*

It will be my submission that without specialist and compulsory undergraduate training in gifted education, graduate teachers will not be well prepared for the classroom in the case of least 10% of their new students.

## **Discussion Paper**

This submission will be confined to the following issue raised in Part B on page 16 of the Discussion Paper: <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/quality-initial-teacher-education-review-2021-discussion-paper>

*“Preparing ITE students to be effective teachers*

*Question 4. Are graduate teachers ready for the classroom?”*

The Discussion Paper asserts that, “Top-performing education systems ensure that teachers are rigorously trained and equipped with the skills, confidence and knowledge to be highly effective from day one in the classroom.”

It will be my submission that, without specialist and compulsory undergraduate training in gifted education, graduate teachers will not possess the skills, confidence and knowledge needed to be highly effective from day one in the classroom with at least 10% of their new students.

### **3. Who are gifted students?**

Based on the model and definition of giftedness which has been adopted by virtually every state and territory education department in Australia, there are approximately 400,000 intellectually gifted students in Australian schools: students who have scored - or who are capable of scoring - at or above the 90<sup>th</sup> percentile on a standardised test of intellectual **ability**.

Clearly since the term ‘gifted’ refers to students falling within the top 10% of intellectual ability, it is not logically possible to claim that, “All children are gifted.” Of course, all children have gifts (ie, relative strengths), and all children are considered to be gifts by their parents, but not all children are ‘gifted’ in the way that the word is used in educational research literature in Australia and worldwide.

Gifted students have high intellectual ability in relation to their chronological-age peers. They are capable of exceptionally high academic performance, if given appropriately challenging learning experiences. The development of their high potential into outstanding achievement in one or more fields is the shared responsibility of families, educators and communities.

Intellectual giftedness occurs in the same proportions across all socio-economic and cultural and ethnic groups, independent of factors such as

financial disadvantage, gender, indigenous heritage, geography and disability (except, of course, intellectual impairment).

Accordingly, gifted students are found in all communities and in almost every classroom in Australia.

Education systems' failure to respond to the needs of the gifted is most detrimental to high-ability students from **disadvantaged** backgrounds because they are the least likely to enjoy support mechanisms outside school.

## 4. What do gifted students need?

There is no research in support of the ubiquitous assumption that all intellectually gifted students, having supposedly won the genetic lottery, will invariably enjoy school, learn effortlessly, succeed academically, and go on to pursue successful careers.

Without suitable educational experiences, targeted teaching, extension activities and in some cases specialised intervention such as acceleration and ability-grouping, gifted students' natural abilities may never be transformed into high academic performance.

Gifted students usually have learning needs which are different from those of neuro-typical students. They usually thrive when presented with equitable and socially just educational programs whose rigorous and enriched curriculum regularly challenges, extends and develops higher-order thinking and engages students' curiosity and motivation.

However, despite their initial enthusiasm to learn, gifted students do not generally attain top levels of academic achievement or remain high performing on their own. They need to be regularly stimulated and challenged, and their innate potential needs to be developed by passionate and inspirational teachers who have been professionally trained to identify and support giftedness.

Perhaps even more important, our most able students need to be expected to complete work which meets their readiness to learn, instead of simplistic and routine tasks whose lack of academic challenge serves to rob them of a chance to develop skills such as resilience, tenacity and self-regulation – skills which neuro-typical students manage to develop as of course.

Providing suitable educational experiences for gifted students, especially during the early years of schooling, is critical.

Of course it would be ridiculous to expect a gifted tennis player to independently develop their potential without appropriate teaching and coaching and encouragement. Intellectually gifted students are no different.

In particular, highly capable students need to have their needs met at school on a **full-time** basis – not just at chess club every second Wednesday, or at weekend or holiday 'gifted' workshops, or when it's time to prepare for occasional extracurricular activities such as Tournament of the Minds.

Gifted students are gifted all day, every day.

Since gifted students are a heterogeneous group, each requires specifically targeted adjustments to their educational program. There is no universal solution appropriate for all gifted students.

If you've met one gifted student, then you've met one.

Similarly, some will require social and emotional support, perhaps especially those whose advanced intellectual abilities lead them to feel 'different' from their chronological-age peers.

None will benefit from being stereotyped as 'nerdy', introverted, socially awkward, humourless, clumsy or lacking in leadership potential.

## **5. What is the current situation in Australia with respect to the teaching of gifted students?**

There have been two bipartisan Australian Senate Committee inquiries into the education of gifted students, the first reporting in 1988 and the second in 2001.

Each Committee, the second building upon the findings of the first, strongly recommended the **pre-service training of all teachers** in the accurate identification of gifted students, and in strategies not only to teach them but also to inspire them to develop their potential.

Both inquiries identified gifted students as the most educationally disadvantaged students in the country, yet to date there has been little done to correct this inequitable situation. Further, even with the emerging awareness of intellectually gifted learners with disability (ie, GLD), emphasis is frequently placed upon the area of disability without

comparable recognition of gifted students' strengths, abilities, talents or personal achievements.

As a result, parents and teachers regularly report disturbing instances of the countless ways in which the needs of gifted students are every day being ignored by teachers in Australian schools.

### **Parents' concerns**

On the one hand for example, **parents** are concerned about:

- gifted students who are capable of working several years above chronological-age peers but who are being told each February that they will have to **sit quietly** and colour in or play on a computer until May so that the teacher can concentrate on preparing the rest of the class for NAPLAN; or
- gifted students who are scolded and told that they have been 'naughty' to have quietly and independently worked ahead in their workbooks and accordingly that they must stay in at recess and **rub it all out**, and then be content to wait for the rest of the class to 'catch up' because otherwise the less able students may 'feel bad' [cf: Are fast swimmers told at school that they must deliberately swim more slowly in their races so that less skillful swimmers will not 'feel bad'?]; or
- a girl with an IQ of 152 (99.97<sup>th</sup> percentile), who is in Year 3 but currently studying Year 8 Science, being told that the school wants her to repeat Year 3 so that she will have more time to improve her **handwriting**; or
- a parent being told to **stop reading** aloud to a gifted child at home, or to stop allowing the child to read on their own at home, or to put all the books at home up high so that the child can't reach them, because the child is 'getting too far ahead'.

Crippled, as it is, by a deep-seated belief that high achievement, especially academic achievement, should be discouraged or even undermined (the so-called 'tall poppy syndrome'), Australia invariably conveys to its most able students the subtle message that it is always better not to stand out and not to 'get ahead of oneself'.

This social phenomenon based on anti-intellectualism, together with its accompanying emphasis on everyone always being rewarded just for showing up and participating, results in a situation where children and adults of genuine merit are often resented, cut down or criticised because their abilities or achievements seem to elevate them above, or distinguish



them from, their peers. The tall poppy syndrome serves to prompt some teachers to encourage conformity at all costs, with the result that high academic achievement, especially in the early years of schooling, can sadly lead to sneers, insults, bullying and social rejection.

### ***Teachers' concerns***

On the other hand, **teachers** are concerned that, in light of the 'crowded' curriculum and its three 'cross-curriculum priorities' and four 'general capabilities', and especially in the current NAPLAN-driven context, they find themselves day after day focusing on students who 'can't do it yet', at the expense of students who 'already can do it' or who 'have been able to do it for years'.

Teachers are the first to recognize and acknowledge that all they are doing for their gifted students most days is simply looking after them – basically little better than daycare.

To keep gifted students busy, some teachers give them **more** work of the same dumbed-down complexity, instead of offering more challenging and advanced work. Or sometimes, as a 'reward' for finishing their meaningless tasks early, gifted students are offered 'free time'. Or even 'a chance to teach the others what I have just taught them but don't have time to repeat'.

And of course this is understandable. Teachers correctly assert that their own performance reviews (and hence promotion prospects and remuneration) depend principally on their ability to achieve grade-based outcomes and to facilitate learning amongst those at the 'bottom' and those in the 'middle' – in other words, to facilitate learning in all but the very students who are demonstrably the most capable of it and the most likely to benefit from it – the gifted.

As a result, an unknown number of intellectually gifted students are tragically failing to develop their potential at school.

### ***Gifted students' concerns***

Having been for years force-fed what for them is an unchallenging and repetitive prescribed curriculum, gifted students lack not only opportunities for appropriately paced learning, but also the regular company of true intellectual peers.

We are asking our most able children to sit quietly for three or four years while the mandated curriculum catches up to them. We are grooming them to accept boredom as their default setting at school.

They enter kindergarten with the excited belief and expectation that they will learn – indeed, learn a lot. The disappointment which they feel upon discovering that this will not be happening serves to dissipate their former enthusiasm for learning and can eventually lead to academic underachievement. Is it really any wonder that gifted students make the least amount of progress each academic year, especially during their years in primary education?

Indeed they are usually working well below their capabilities in a system designed for universal, though modest, proficiency – a system based on the grouping of students in classrooms not by ability but rather simply by year of birth.

In such mixed-ability classrooms, the least advanced 10% of students begin each school year five or six years behind the most advanced 10%. One study found that at least 30% of Year 5 students were already performing at a Year 6 level, at least 20% at a Year 7 level, at least 12% at a Year 8 level, and at least 4% (ie, one in every 25 students) at a Year 9 level or above.

Yet the same mandated year-level Year 5 curriculum is supposed to be delivered to all of them, generally without regard to individual students' past levels of achievement or readiness to learn. What happens to the third of the Year 5 students who have already mastered that curriculum and are ready to move on? What happens to the one child in every Year 5 class who is ready to work at a Year 9 level – or above?

The mandated curriculum has of course usually been designed for 'average' students. It builds in a serious amount of repetition to address the needs of those learners who require ongoing review of material already presented, and it often has relatively low ceilings. Studying this curriculum, our most able pupils are necessarily shackled to the pace of their classroom's average learners.

How can gifted students ever learn to be academically strong when the system is every day encouraging them to be weak - to be silent, passive observers of their education? As the years go by, and as their initial enthusiasm and abilities begin to dissipate, our most able students sadly come to understand that this outcome is viewed as both expected and acceptable.

As noted below, teachers are increasingly being told that they must '**differentiate**' the mandated curriculum to meet the needs of all the students in their mixed-ability classes. They are encouraged to adopt something called 'targeted teaching'.

Accordingly, in an attempt to do that, a teacher could for example be called upon to teach simple addition to one child and at the same time teach algebra to the child in the next seat. The greater the ability gap within any given class, the more difficult it is for any teacher (no matter how well trained and how well intentioned) to appropriately match the complexity of the material with the readiness of each learner.

Differentiation is not easily implemented, even by those teachers who have allegedly been formally trained in this, that and the other 'model' of how it's supposed to be introduced.

After completing their in-service training, teachers report that differentiation is just too hard – unless classes are already ability-grouped.

Sometimes in mixed-ability, so-called 'inclusive' classes, gifted students are used by teachers as de facto teacher aides and expected to help struggling students to learn what the gifted student has mastered long ago. While this practice may be permissible on rare occasions, its wholesale adoption is unconscionable, as it takes advantage of gifted students' goodwill at the expense of allowing them to progress academically and to develop their own abilities. In addition, if used regularly, this practice promotes gifted students' frustration and general dissatisfaction with the whole school experience, and serves to set them even more apart from their similar age peers.

All these factors can combine to sometimes prompt gifted students to lose interest and motivation and ambition. After years of being encouraged to 'slow down' so that others can 'catch up', some gifted students conclude that it would be better to give up school-based learning altogether. Why bother trying to learn your schoolwork to the best of your ability if your efforts are rarely accurately measured, rewarded or acknowledged?

Accordingly it is not surprising that so many gifted students are overtly or covertly underachieving.

If you are a student who is getting straight As on work which you learned two or three years ago, you are under-challenged and you are underachieving. No one learns anything from being required to repeat work which they have already mastered, except perhaps subliminally how to decelerate their own natural rate of learning to make their peers and teachers feel more at ease.

Further, there is no justification for universally and unthinkingly equating high grades or academic accolades with successful learning. Some gifted students effortlessly obtain outstanding grades on middling expectations for children of their age – but are those students really ever learning

anything new? Are they receiving any real value for their investment in attending school?

Students who easily top their grade every year for 12 years straight and who excel in all their tests without ever having to study and prepare can understandably come to form an unrealistic picture of their capabilities.

They are accordingly then tragically ill-prepared for the inevitable day when the academic work does indeed become too challenging and complex to be approached in such a cavalier and capricious manner. Having never learned how to struggle and persist, they are actually disadvantaged vis-à-vis their average-ability peers who have been having to put in considerable effort since Year One.

What do adults do if they inadvertently enrol for a workshop whose content turns out to be already familiar and beneath their levels of already acquired competency? Most would leave before lunch. School children don't have the option of doing that.

Consider a young man who spends all his time at home experimenting with recipes and cooking techniques and, keen to become a chef, enrolls in the appropriate course at TAFE. If it turns out that, day after day, all that the student learns is how to make toast, will he be minded to stay and complete the course? So many gifted students report that all they are being taught at school day after day is toast, toast and more toast.

By late primary/early secondary school, gifted students such as those in the examples cited above are tired of underachieving. They are increasingly disillusioned. They have had enough of playing the game called school, and they have lost all respect for most of the adults who are refereeing it.

Sometimes by adolescence such students have learned to utterly despise school, and they are tired of having to check their brain at the door. They long to quit – and some either consciously or unconsciously resolve to do whatever it takes to achieve that goal (including sometimes resorting to extreme behaviour which they realistically hope will lead to expulsion...).

As they near Year 12, especially in those jurisdictions which have government high-stakes competitive Year 12 final exams, many gifted students have figured out that school has long ceased to be about authentic learning, and has instead become merely systemic training in preparation for a finishing line.

The most serious problem facing the parents of some gifted students is not how to encourage their previously eager and formerly ambitious

children to strive for good grades, but rather how to coax them to want to stay in school at all.

Several years ago, the then Chief Scientist for Australia, Ian Chubb, was heard in the media regularly bemoaning the fact that too few of our most able senior secondary students are choosing to study higher-level mathematics and physics and chemistry. He pointed out what a loss that is to Australia. Perhaps one of the reasons that so few students elect to enrol in such high-level courses by Year 11 is not that the courses are seen as 'too hard', but rather that many of those who are the most capable of excelling in them have already quit school, either figuratively or literally. They are tired of going to school to make toast, toast and more toast.

If you are a gifted 14-year-old whose needs have never been properly responded to at school and who has long since forgotten the excitement which used to come with academic challenges, and accordingly if you **hate school**, why would you want to be 'motivated' to work hard and take challenging maths and science courses to get good grades to get a high ATAR so that you can then proceed to another place called 'university' - which to you just looks, sounds and seems like even **more 'school'**?

Some perpetually bored and disengaged gifted students figure out early that the most effective way to ensure they will not be forced to go on to university is to get exactly what will unquestionably disqualify them from that disagreeable possibility - a very low ATAR.

## 6. How can initial teacher education ensure that graduate teachers will be well prepared for the classroom in the case of gifted students?

The Australian Professional Standards for Teachers are silent with respect to teachers' responsibilities vis-à-vis gifted students, except to stipulate in a rather nebulous way that teachers must differentiate their teaching for students of *all* abilities (see for example Standard 1.5: <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/standards/list>).

However teachers and school leaders are the first to admit that, with few exceptions, they often simply don't know how to do that for gifted students, especially at the primary level - how to identify and support and stretch a gifted student, how to appreciate and recognise the diversity

within the gifted population and the possible reasons for underachievement amongst the gifted, how to systematically offer gifted students the learning opportunities they are ready for, how to present them with challenging work which will make them struggle and hence acquire resilience, and how to coach them to soar.

Gifted education is currently required as a compulsory undergraduate course at only one or two of Australia's universities which offer an Education degree. Some institutions offer Masters or Graduate Certificate qualifications in gifted education, but holding such qualifications rarely results in higher salaries or greater promotion prospects or other rewards, with the result that many teachers are hard pressed to justify undertaking such extended courses (on their own time and at their own expense).

Further, teacher trainees are still invariably being told by so many of their own university lecturers that gifted programs in schools are 'elitist', and that gifted students by definition will always excel, even without support or encouragement. The truth is that most can't and most don't and most won't. Untrained academics who continue to repeat unnuanced platitudes such as, "Cream always rises to the top" need to be reminded that so too does scum. These are simply myths whose shelf life is now over.

Teachers themselves are not the problem. In general, the vast majority of teachers do the very best they can for most students most of the time. They are generally well-intentioned and have chosen teaching largely because they like children, and they seek to have a positive influence on students' lives.

Yet, in spite of their very good intentions, teachers generally cannot and do not respond to the needs of the top 10% of students whom their university courses have never trained them to teach. They have never been encouraged to start every academic year by assuming that each child in front of them may be harbouring hidden but exceptionally high intellectual potential.

As a result, teachers' general lack of familiarity with the needs of gifted students results in some holding stereotyped but biased, incorrect and outdated beliefs about high-ability students – beliefs which may have been selectively derived from popular culture. Some teachers may accordingly make the mistake of looking only for rare, outstanding prodigy or genius qualities, and may be the victim of misunderstandings which are not grounded in empirical research.

Experience has shown that teachers' negative attitudes or incorrect beliefs with respect to gifted students are not normally reversed after the occasional one-hour or half-day in-service professional development session. Research reveals however that such unfortunate attitudes and

beliefs can indeed be effectively reversed after more lengthy and comprehensive formal training in gifted education, especially in the case of teachers' previously negative, quasi-visceral reactions to the concepts of acceleration and ability grouping (the two most extensively researched and empirically sound interventions for the gifted).

If teachers as a group remain ignorant about giftedness at the beginning of their teaching appointments and throughout the course of their careers, we cannot realistically expect that the school leaders who some of them will eventually become will have any kind of insight into gifted education either. The problem is hence perpetuated.

Similarly, teacher trainees are not the problem. Occasionally when I am invited in to a few of our more enlightened Australian universities to talk to education students about how to identify gifted students, how to re-engage them, and how to reverse their chronic academic underachievement, the fourth-year audiences are invariably extremely interested in and enthusiastic about these topics.

Nevertheless, in all but those universities whose education faculties require a compulsory course in gifted education, such lectures about gifted students constitute one or two 'frill' hours in a four-year undergraduate education degree, during which the unfashionable 'gifted' word is never otherwise uttered.

Many teachers claim that they would actually welcome training in teaching gifted students. They point out that the more they learn and understand about how to respond to the needs of the gifted, the more time and energy they can then devote to their other students during all the hours when the gifted are effectively engaged in true independent learning opportunities, and accordingly not as demanding of the teacher's attention.

I **recommend** therefore that consideration should be given to finding a way that teacher training on gifted students could be made compulsory in teachers' initial education while still at university.

Despite some Australian jurisdictions' offering gifted classes and programs and select entry schools, the vast majority of gifted students still find themselves being taught in regular mixed-ability mainstream classrooms by regular mainstream teachers – ie, by ITE graduates.

If a minister of education can 'order' all universities to teach phonics (cf: <http://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/nsw/education-minister-orders-universities-to-teach-phonics-or-face-losing-accreditation/story-fni0cx12-1227019125456> ) as a pre-condition to maintaining accreditation, could such a decree not also be made in the case of training on gifted

education? This would relieve a department of education of the responsibility of having to train all new teachers from scratch once they are hired and are already working in a school.

In this connection, departments of education could explore the possibility of telling their teacher accreditation bodies that, as from X date, the department will no longer be hiring teachers who have not completed university training on giftedness and on the policies governing it.

As a matter of practicality, universities will agree to teach courses in whatever they're told to (witness compulsory Indigenous sensitisation courses) because they want to be able to say to their applicants, "When you finish this degree, you'll be qualified to teach in [name of State]" - so why not courses on gifted students as well?

## **7. Why is all this important?**

Gifted students are those who have the greatest potential to become Australia's next generation of leaders and innovators, and ultimately the greatest potential to contribute to the economic and social welfare of the nation. This portion of today's school population will produce tomorrow's outstanding inventors, vaccine researchers, mathematicians, poets, judges, and creative business executives.

In an age where knowledge creation and innovation are of paramount importance, the gifted are the nation's greatest resource, and neglecting their needs will risk leaving our nation behind in an increasingly competitive world.

If we squander this resource and if we offer this group of students a mediocre education today, we doom ourselves to a mediocre society tomorrow.

The wasted potential is staggering: what might our gifted drop-outs have achieved and contributed if they had been provided from an early age with an appropriate and challenging education?

Who can estimate how much talent has already been lost as a result of absence of identification and nurturing of our most able students? How can we measure the extent of that loss to our nation – the COVID cure which was not discovered, the novel which was not penned, or the criminal investigation strategy which could have averted a terrorist attack?

Similarly, how can we measure the ultimate loss in terms of life satisfaction and self-fulfilment engendered by an education system which



has always ignored the needs of the gifted, and which has encouraged them to stagnate rather than to flourish? How can we ever accurately determine the amount of money which this is costing Australia in terms of long-term welfare dependency or negative mental health outcomes?

Australia now needs to become a society which prizes excellence as well as equity. We need to re-claim our high-ability but disengaged students, and to identify for the first time our under-performing high-potential students who may have disability or who may come from low socio-economic backgrounds or minority populations or rural areas – the types of students whom some educators would never ‘expect’ to be gifted. Too many of these gifted students are hiding in plain sight.

All gifted students should be considered to be as entitled as all other students to have their needs met, and to be allowed to learn at a more appropriate pace, and in a broader and deeper fashion, than the inflexible lock-step curricula currently permit.

**Every Australian child should have the right to learn something new at school every day.**

Giftedness constitutes a special need in the same way that disability constitutes a special need, and gifted education delivered by trained teachers is the special measure which is called for in the case of those experiencing this special need.

Gifted education is not elitist. It is not about giving some students advantages or privileges or bonuses or benefits or head starts. It is simply about giving the gifted what they need, just as all students should have their needs met at school, and all students should have their skills and knowledge developed every year and in every class, regardless of their starting point each January.

Failing to respond to the needs of the gifted is as unethical as choosing to provide no special support for the intellectually impaired. If gifted children enjoyed the same protection under the law as children who are intellectually impaired, that failure would also be unlawful.

It's one thing to stand outside a system and shout at it. It's another (and more useful) thing to constructively offer suggestions as to how it might be improved. It is the latter which the present submission has sought to do.

## 8. Finally ...

I congratulate the framers of the present Review on your efforts to improve ITE for all university education students, but especially for the children in our primary and secondary classrooms.

I am grateful for the opportunity to submit this information to the Review.

And I am of course very happy to provide further information with respect to the matters canvassed in this submission and to otherwise collaborate with you in your deliberations. I would also be pleased to participate in a public hearing in due course, if such an event is to be held.

Finally, who are all the adults currently working round the clock to develop vaccines or cures for COVID? Why, they are simply gifted children grown up of course. I urge you to take action now to ensure that Australia has more of these grown-ups in future.

**Please note, this submission also included 'Global Principles for Professional Learning in Gifted Education' by the World Council for Gifted and Talented Children as an attachment.**