

NSW submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

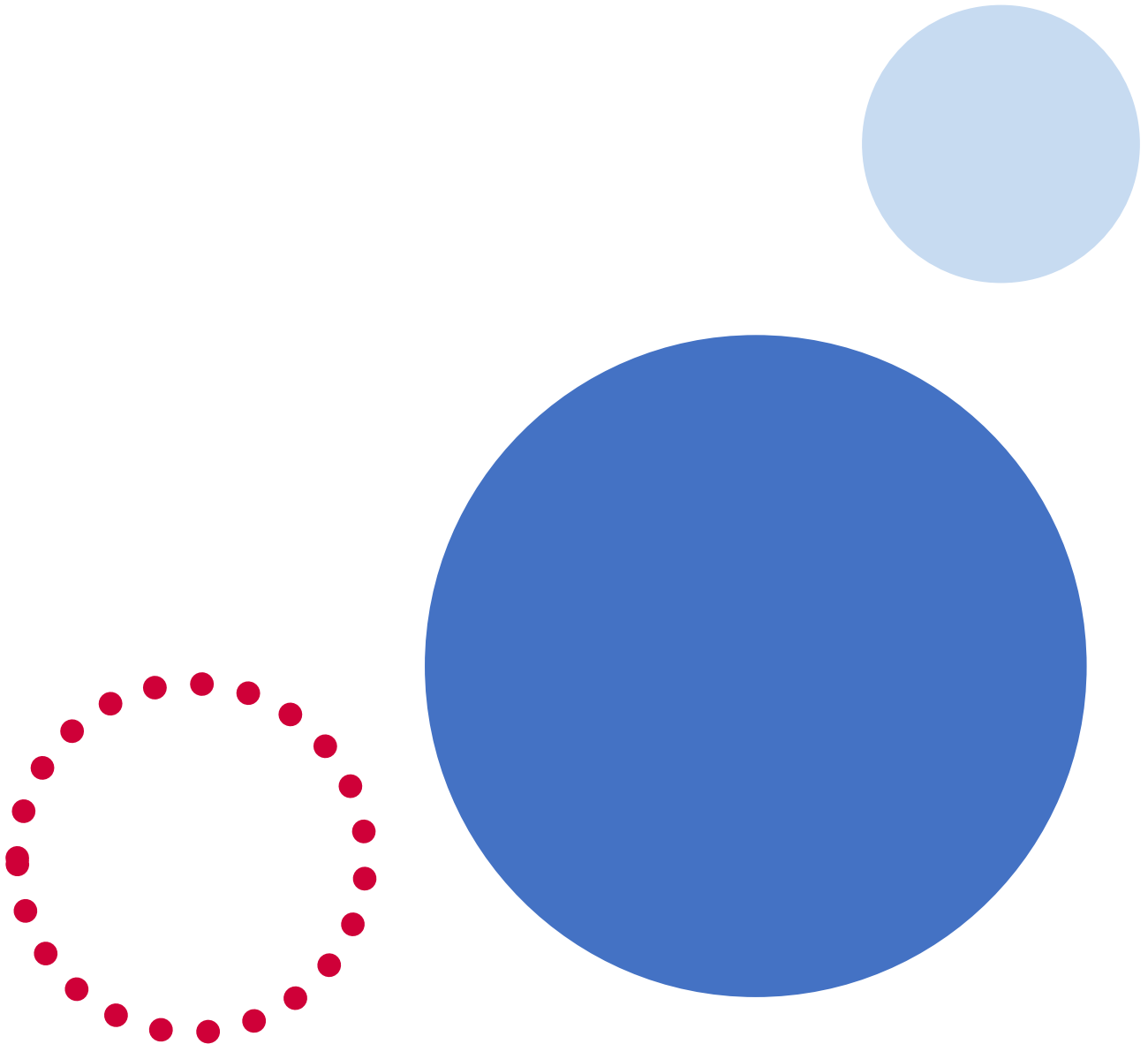


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Overview

The New South Wales Government welcomes the opportunity to participate in the Commonwealth's Quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) review (the review). This submission has been prepared in consultation with the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), the Association of Independent Schools of NSW (AIS NSW) and Catholic Schools NSW (CSNSW).

This review is timely. Quality teaching is the critical in-school influencer of student achievement. Ensuring that the right candidates enroll in ITE courses and that they are prepared to be effective teachers by their ITE programs is essential to quality teaching.

This submission focuses on four areas where co-ordinated, committed national action could realise benefits for the teaching profession, education systems and student outcomes.

First, ensuring that there are enough good quality graduates available to meet current and changing future demand for teachers is critical. Declining enrolments in ITE and an increasing number of students not completing ITE courses are significantly impacting teacher supply. As with many other jurisdictions, NSW is facing growing teacher supply challenges in specialisations like STEM and Inclusive Education, in rural and regional areas, and in secondary education. State and territory responses can be made more effective by a co-ordinated national agenda that promotes the teaching profession and reduces barriers to high quality mid-career entrants. In the course of this review, it is likely that new information about NSW teacher supply strategies will be published. Any new strategies and associated analysis will be provided to the ITE Review Panel at that time.

Second, there are opportunities to boost the quality of ITE programs. While pre-service teachers are graduating with the majority of the skills they need to implement quality teaching practice, there are some gaps and inconsistencies in knowledge. A focus on teaching practices that have the most impact on student learning outcomes will contribute to a quality workforce. NSW encourages the review to focus on ensuring ITE curriculums embed evidence-based pedagogy and teaching practices. These practices include the evidence-based approaches to phonics in literacy, current knowledge about inclusive education and an additional focus on behaviour management. NSW acknowledges there is a tension between increasing the content in ITE courses and calls for alternative pathways into teaching and considers the ITE Review Panel is well positioned to balance these competing issues.

Third, across states and territories, significant effort is invested in planning for and responding to the teaching workforce supply and demand challenges. These efforts could be significantly enhanced through access to more timely and improved Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) data covering ITE and early career teachers. An enhanced data collection would provide a better understanding of the pathways into teaching and maintain a contemporary understanding of the issues driving demand and supply.

Fourth, the Early Childhood Education sector also faces significant and increasing workforce challenges. This is concerning given research shows a skilled and stable workforce is critical to quality early childhood education. This submission recommends that the panel's considerations extend to teachers in the early childhood education workforce.

In relation to the vocational education and training (VET) workforce in schools, as with all teachers, ensuring quality is critical. The Commonwealth, state and territory governments are currently developing a VET Workforce Quality Strategy. The strategy will aim to promote high quality training and assessment in a diversity of VET settings to all types of learner cohorts. For this reason, the VET workforce in schools is not considered further in this submission.

This submission makes 10 recommendations for national action to:

- attract more high-quality candidates into ITE and the teaching profession;
- boost the quality of ITE courses to ensure confident and capable graduates;
- ensure timely access to enhanced ITE and early career teacher data; and
- recognise the importance of ITE changes on the Early Childhood Education workforce.

Detailed recommendations are set out in this submission.

Recommendations from NSW's submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Recommendation 1:

A national campaign to promote teachers and teaching as a career

The Commonwealth Government should work with states and territories to develop and deliver a major national campaign to promote the teaching profession. In addition to raising the overall profile of teaching, this could also include emphasis on measures to attract teachers:

1. to rural and regional schools;
2. in line with national supply gaps (including STEM and Inclusive Education);
3. from a diverse cohort, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

Recommendation 2:

A new pathway into teaching that reduces barriers to teaching careers

The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to drive nationally a new mid-career pathway into teaching that focuses on areas of shortage, is tailored for those with prior study and professional experience and includes appropriate quality safeguards.

Recommendation 3:

A national approach to embedding evidence-based teaching practices in ITE courses

The Commonwealth should work with states and territories and the non-government sectors to develop a national approach to embedding evidence-based pedagogy and teaching practices in ITE courses focused on teaching practices that have the most significant impact on student learning outcomes, for example using phonics in literacy. The Commonwealth should recognise innovative approaches taken by states and territories to strengthen ITE (such as the Indigenous education unit in NSW).

Recommendation 4:

Create a more inclusive education system

The Commonwealth should ensure that ITE courses nationally include a focus on inclusive education including but not limited to:

- a. a specific unit on supporting students with disability; and
- b. content and examples of inclusive education in contemporary classrooms for all groups of students including Indigenous students, gifted and talented students and EALD students.

Recommendation 5:

Greater utilisation of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)

The Commonwealth should consider increased utilisation of teaching performance assessments (TPAs) earlier in ITE programs to enhance student learning.

Recommendation 6:

Include more units on behaviour management in ITE courses

ITE providers should ensure that courses include more units on behaviour management planned and sequenced with practicum experiences so that beginning teachers are better prepared for managing student behaviour.

Recommendation 7:

Integrate professional experience placement requirements into school requirements

The Commonwealth should provide funding to support greater co-ordination between schools and ITE providers to facilitate professional experience placements (PEPs) which embody good practice.

Recommendation 8:

Utilising Commonwealth performance-based funding arrangements

The Commonwealth should utilise existing funding arrangements under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) performance-based funding mechanisms, to incentivise ITE providers (or impose conditions) to ensure ITE graduates in specialisations and areas of need.

Recommendation 9:

Improve the national data collection and make it more readily accessible

The Commonwealth should implement improved collection and distribution of ITE and early teacher data to underpin improved national teacher workforce planning. This data, (including for early childhood teachers) would assist jurisdictions to better understand:

- a. pathways into teaching;
- b. issues affecting ITE retention / completion rates;
- c. issues affecting supply and quality; and
- d. better align funded ITE provision with the subject specialisations that are in short supply.

Recommendation 10:

Consider the issues and opportunities for the early childhood workforce implications

The ITE Review Panel should consider how its recommendations can positively impact on initiatives to improve the supply, retention and quality of teachers in the early childhood education workforce.

Attract more high quality candidates into ITE and the teaching profession

Teacher supply is a major issue for employers. Declining enrolments in ITE and an increasing number of students not completing ITE courses have contributed to a teacher supply challenge. ITE enrolments in NSW have declined by almost 30 per cent from 2014 to 2019. In 2019, only 6,780 students began an ITE qualification, compared to 9,620 in 2014.

Many high achieving students are not choosing teaching as a career. The number of students with high ATAR scores enrolling in ITE courses fell by a third over the past decade - more than any other undergraduate field of study in Australia.¹ Declining workforce availability is particularly concerning given that NSW schools continue to experience increased demand due to growing student enrolments.

Another factor impacting on teacher supply and educational outcomes is a perceived decrease in community perceptions about the status of teachers and teaching as a career. Research has shown that the value a society places on teaching is linked to the attractiveness of teaching as a career, an individual teacher's sense of worth in their role and the profession, and their ability to impact student academic achievement.²

NSW has implemented a range of strategies to increase workforce supply, including from more diverse communities (see Appendix 1). The two recommended national actions to support and enhance the ongoing efforts by jurisdictions are:

- a national campaign to promote teachers and teaching as a career; and
- a new pathway into teaching that reduces barriers to teaching careers.

¹ Grattan Institute. *How to entice young high achievers into teaching* April 2021. Available at: <https://grattan.edu.au/news/how-to-entice-young-high-achievers-into-teaching/>

² Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. *Spotlight Teaching; A valued profession* October 2020. Available at: <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlight/teaching-a-valued-profession>

A national campaign to promote teachers and teaching as a career

Recommendation 1: A national campaign to promote teachers and teaching as a career

The Commonwealth Government should work with states and territories to develop and deliver a major national campaign to promote the teaching profession. In addition to raising the overall profile of teaching, this could also include emphasis on measures to attract teachers:

- a. to rural and regional schools;
- b. in line with national supply gaps (including STEM and inclusive education); and
- c. from a diverse cohort, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

NSW recommends that the Commonwealth Government consider a national campaign to promote the value proposition for teachers and attract more people to a career in teaching. Increasing the status of the teaching profession and the attractiveness of teaching as a career, should be an important focus for this review.

Any national campaign should also target teachers in line with specific national gaps for example STEM, Inclusive Education, rural and regional areas and diverse cohorts and attract teachers from a diverse cohort to reflect the student body and the communities in which teachers work.³ It could be modelled on successful recruitment campaigns, such as the Australian Defence Force campaign, but targeting a range of audiences: diverse communities; school leavers; and career changers.

The national campaign should complement state/territory initiatives by considering ways to attract teachers to the profession (in government and non-government schools) and also reinforce existing state/territory initiatives. In the most recent state Budget, the NSW Government announced \$124.8 million recurrent funding over four years to implement a

³ As per the *National Initiatives to Support Teaching and School Leadership* paper from the Education Council (11 December 2020), there is a need to attract a diverse teaching workforce with the capacity to adapt to Australia's social and geographic diversity. NSW has developed a number of approaches to increasing workforce diversity through its *Diversity and Inclusion Strategy 2018-2022*. The strategy aims to increase the diversity in the teacher workforce through the increased recruitment of Aboriginal people in senior leadership roles, staff with disability and male teachers.

strategy to boost teacher supply. This strategy aims to attract and retain high performing teachers for NSW government schools including in specialisations like STEM in secondary schools, Inclusive Education and in rural and regional locations of need. It will include a teacher value proposition and accompanying marketing campaign to improve the perceptions of teaching and attract teachers to NSW public education. It also builds upon experiences internationally (the United Kingdom), in other Australian jurisdictions (Victoria) and other education sectors.⁴ NSW can provide the review panel with a copy of our strategy to boost teacher supply and the underpinning analysis, once published.

A new pathway into teaching that reduces barriers to teaching careers

Recommendation 2: A new pathway into teaching that reduces barriers to teaching careers

The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to drive nationally a new mid-career pathway into teaching that focuses on areas of shortage, is tailored for those with prior study and professional experience and includes appropriate quality safeguards.

The Commonwealth should work with states and territories to drive nationally new pathways into teaching and this review should consider possible options. While the majority of teaching graduates will continue to come from traditional ITE courses, new national pathways into teaching should address mid-career barriers. These include transitioning to a new career later in life, committing to a lengthy training period, incurring a financial loss to leave the workforce to study and struggling to balance study and work. New national pathways should focus on areas of shortage, be tailored for those with prior study and professional experience and embed appropriate quality safeguards.

The panel could consider the mid-career program recently announced in NSW as an example of a new pathways approach. NSW considered a variety of options to attract new teachers to the profession. The benefit of more career changers with strong academic backgrounds and the right personality attributes joining the profession was evident but they face many barriers.

⁴ NSW has also implemented a number of other strategies to attract more teachers. See appendix 1 attached.

The NSW mid-career program will reduce these barriers by developing a new mid-career pathway into teaching that combines study with paid employment. This new accelerated pathway will be aimed at attracting and retaining people with significant prior experience, including academics, high-performing professionals and subject-matter experts (for example, teaching-focused academics displaced due to COVID-19 impacts). Recruitment in areas of need will be a priority as will embedding quality standards.

NSW expects to release further details about the new pathway towards the end of 2021. Further support for accelerating pathways into teaching for appropriate candidates is found in the recent *NSW Productivity Commission White Paper*.⁵

⁵ <https://www.productivity.nsw.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/Productivity%20Commission%20White%20Paper%202021.pdf>

Boost the quality of ITE courses to ensure confident and capable graduates

ITE courses should produce teaching graduates capable of implementing an evidence-led approach to improving student outcomes. As a system, the NSW Department of Education supports our schools to provide evidence-based guidance on effective practices that improve student outcomes. ITE providers must be required to more consistently and comprehensively ensure ITE curriculums embed evidence-based pedagogy and teaching practices that have the most impact on student outcomes.

For example, the need to ensure that ITE providers equip students with the skills necessary to implement a phonics approach to reading is evident. NSW has developed an approach, in consultation with the Catholic and independent school sectors, to teaching reading in the early years which incorporates phonics instruction. Phonics is compulsory for all year one students and from this year, all year one students will undergo a compulsory Phonics Screening Check. The evidence of phonics effectiveness is clear. The best results in reading for students occurs when phonics is explicitly and systematically taught from the early years of school. While NSW acknowledges that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has undertaken work to assist ITE providers to reflect evidence-based teaching practices in curriculums, NSW suggests that this would gain more momentum if considered as part of this review.

NSW is committed to creating a more inclusive education system. Findings from the 2018 TALIS survey suggest that teachers could be better prepared with the knowledge and skills to differentiate learning for students with disability.⁶ This is consistent with the experience of NSW that pre-service teachers require more training in the specific skills, knowledge and resources required to differentiate for and teach students with disability in mainstream classrooms.

Classroom and behaviour management plays a critical role in promoting student engagement and effective classrooms and lifting student performance. Classroom management is also a priority area for NSW in accrediting ITE programs.

⁶ 2018 *OECD Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS)*. The 2018 TALIS survey found that despite 74% of pre-service teachers reporting that teaching students in mixed-ability settings was included in their formal education, only 38% felt prepared to teach in such settings. Available at: https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018_CN_AUS.pdf

While pressures on ITE curriculums present challenges to developing an evidence-based curriculum, in contemporary schools, skills in inclusive education and behaviour management are essential to effective teaching. The panel should consider the tension between the need for accelerated pathways balanced with the need for additional content. NSW suggests this should be a focus for this review.

The recommended national actions to boost the quality of ITE graduates are:

- a national approach to embedding evidence-based teaching practices in ITE courses;
- create a more inclusive education system through skills and practices in differentiation;
- greater utilisation of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs);
- include more units on behaviour management in ITE courses;
- integrate professional experience placement requirements into school requirements; and
- utilising Commonwealth performance-based funding arrangements.

A national approach to embedding evidence-based teaching practices in ITE courses

Recommendation 3: A national approach to embedding evidence-based teaching practices in ITE courses

The Commonwealth should work with states and territories and the non-government sectors to develop a national approach to embedding evidence-based pedagogy and teaching practices in ITE courses focused on teaching practices that have the most significant impact on student learning outcomes, for example using phonics in literacy. The Commonwealth should recognise innovative approaches taken by states and territories to strengthen ITE (such as the Indigenous education unit in NSW).

NSW recommends that the Commonwealth work with states and territories and the non-government sectors to develop a national approach to embedding evidence-based pedagogy and teaching practices in ITE courses focused on teaching practices that have the most significant impact on student learning outcomes, for example using phonics in literacy and inclusive education.

Ensuring that ITE courses are equipping students with the skills they need to implement quality teaching practices in schools is crucial for student success. Assessing the quality of ITE courses by reference to what positively impacts student outcomes is critical.

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) could be tasked with undertaking this research. NSW would be willing to share insights with AERO as the research progresses.

Create a more inclusive education system

Recommendation 4: Create a more inclusive education system

The Commonwealth should ensure that ITE courses nationally include a focus on inclusive education including but not limited to:

- a. a specific unit on supporting students with disability; and
- b. content and examples of inclusive education in contemporary classrooms for all groups of students including Indigenous students, gifted and talented students and EALD students.

Any national approach should also include a focus on inclusive education with core content in ITE programs equipping students with the skills they need to apply effective teaching approaches. Core content in ITE programs must equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary to differentiate teaching practices and specifically focus on developing the practical skills to teach students with disability. Students should be equipped with:

- an understanding about the diverse nature of disability;
- the knowledge, skills and ability to assess the needs of students and make reasonable adjustments to meet those needs across a broad spectrum, including students with complex needs;
- effective communication and collaboration skills to work with students with disability, their parents/carers and health care professionals; and
- practical knowledge and skills to work with school learning support officers in schools.

Greater utilisation of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)

Recommendation 5: Greater utilisation of Teaching Performance Assessments (TPAs)

The Commonwealth should consider increased utilisation of teaching performance assessments (TPAs) earlier in ITE programs to enhance student learning.

Ahead of formal evaluation, indications are that TPAs are a successful addition to ITE courses. They are a useful tool to guide improvements to the practices of pre-service teachers and assess classroom readiness. Given their diagnostic value, NSW suggests that an additional modified TPA could be incorporated in ITE courses linked to an earlier professional experience placement. This would give pre-service teachers the benefit of earlier formal feedback and improve learning outcomes. Embedding TPAs solely at the end of ITE courses diminishes the learning opportunities from the TPA. It is also important to acknowledge recent challenges to schools from COVID that can also impact TPAs. In addition, NSW supports national work with states and territories to strengthen graduate assessment through TPAs and assure the consistency of TPAs.

Include more units on behaviour management in ITE courses

Recommendation 6: Include more units on behaviour management in ITE courses

ITE providers should ensure that courses include more units on behaviour management planned and sequenced with practicum experiences so that new teachers are better prepared for managing student behaviour.

NSW recommends that this review consider an increased grounding in the theory and application of evidence-based behaviour management strategies in ITE courses. While behaviour management is a skill that continues to be developed and refined throughout a teacher's career, there is a clear role for ITE providers to equip pre-service teachers with the skills they need in the classroom. Professional experience is a critical element here. Pre-service and graduate teachers need time to observe experienced teachers managing behaviour in the classroom, time to practice what they have learned and regular opportunities to receive feedback from more experienced teachers.

Ensuring that teachers (including beginning teachers) are equipped with the skills necessary to support positive behaviour is a priority for NSW and is reflected in the NSW Student Behaviour Strategy.⁷ In developing the strategy, NSW gathered the views of teachers and school leaders about the capability of beginning teachers to manage student behavioural issues. A lack of behaviour management skills in early career teachers was identified and it was suggested this lack of skills may be linked to their increased stress levels and job-related anxiety.

Teachers and school leaders highlighted the need for ITE providers to include a greater focus on behaviour management in teacher training so that beginning teachers could be better equipped to implement behaviour management initiatives when they begin their careers.

Integrate professional experience placement requirements into school requirements

Recommendation 7: Integrate professional experience placement requirements into school requirements

The Commonwealth should provide funding to support greater co-ordination between schools and ITE providers to facilitate professional experience placements (PEPs) which embody good practice.

NSW proposes that the Commonwealth provide funding to support greater co-ordination between schools and ITE providers to facilitate professional experience placements (PEPs) which embody good practice. PEPs must be geared towards the most effective development of pre-service teachers. The experience of NSW is that the number and length of placements varies considerably across ITE providers. There is also variation in the criteria and process for assessing ITEs by supervising teachers. Co-design and more co-ordination between schools and ITE providers would strengthen PEPs. In NSW, this could build upon the *HUB Schools* model.

PEPs place an impost on schools. Strengthening the arrangements between ITE providers and schools would help to address that impost. Further, NSW also suggests

⁷ Student Behaviour Strategy dated March 2021. Available at: <https://www.education.nsw.gov.au/student-wellbeing/attendance-behaviour-and-engagement/behaviour-strategy.html>

that the review should consider new Commonwealth funding approaches that would allow universities to fund engagement by schools on a cost recovery basis. This would help address the administrative challenges for schools while ensuring greater support for ITE students. If some of the impost on schools is removed it could also allow for more ITEs to be supervised by our most effective and experienced teachers.

Utilising Commonwealth performance-based funding arrangements

Recommendation 8: Utilising Commonwealth performance-based funding arrangements

The Commonwealth should utilise existing funding arrangements under the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) performance-based funding mechanisms, to incentivise ITE providers (or impose conditions) to ensure ITE graduates in specialisations and areas of need.

NSW suggests the review should consider opportunities for the Commonwealth to utilise existing funding arrangements to incentivise ITE providers (or impose conditions) to ensure that sufficient numbers of students are graduating from ITE courses in areas and specialisations where there is high need.

Annual compacts between the Commonwealth and higher education providers under the *Higher Education Support Act 2003* set out how each provider's mission aligns with the Commonwealth's strategic goals.⁸ The review could consider how the Commonwealth could leverage these compacts with higher education providers to meet current and future challenges relating to teacher supply and teacher quality.

⁸ See section 19-110 *Higher Education Support Act 2003*. Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.au/Details/C2020C00197>

Improving ITE and early teacher data to better understand pathways into teaching and identify issues affecting supply and quality

A greater sharing of timely data would assist the education sector to understand declining enrolments, non-completion of ITE degrees and issues impacting teacher supply. While the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) is intended to provide valuable insights, its lack of maturity and development as a workable data set, has presented challenges to access by NSW education sectors and hinders the ability to undertake robust national workforce planning.

Ensure timely access to enhanced ITE and early career teacher data

Recommendation 9: Improve the national data collection and make it more readily accessible

The Commonwealth should implement improved collection and distribution of ITE and early teacher data to underpin improved national teacher workforce planning. This data, (including for early childhood teachers) would assist jurisdictions to better understand:

- a. pathways into teaching;
- b. issues affecting ITE retention/completion rates;
- c. issues affecting supply and quality; and
- d. better align funded ITE provision with the subject specialisations that are in short supply.

NSW suggests that the Commonwealth implement improved data collection and distribution of ITE and early teacher data, including for early childhood teachers. Building a national evidence base to inform national strategic workforce planning is a priority

identified in negotiations with AITSL and the Commonwealth during national work in 2020.⁹ Specific areas where the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) collection could be improved include:

- Increasing the scope and timeliness of the data collected from HEIMS (Higher Education Student Data Collection), as this currently is not sufficiently accurate or complete to understand issues around ITE completion. NSW suggests that the HEIMS collection should be reviewed in consultation with the ATWD Oversight Board and universities.
- Information about the subject specialisations of the current workforce and the number of teachers teaching out of field. There is a poor link between ITE teaching courses and teaching appointments. This data is not currently available from the HEIMS collection and it should be sourced from ITE providers and the school systems throughout the country.
- Data which records the impact of recent changes to federal funding on workforce supply, for example reforms to the Higher Education Contribution Scheme. It is in the interests of the sector to understand the impact of federal reforms. Data on the impact of changes to ITE courses including accelerated pathways into teaching, graduate diploma and online courses.

⁹ AITSL: *Teaching Futures Background Paper* June 2021. Available at: [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ait1793_teaching-futures_fa\(web-interactive\).pdf?sfvrsn=d6f5d93c_4](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ait1793_teaching-futures_fa(web-interactive).pdf?sfvrsn=d6f5d93c_4)

Recognising the importance of ITE changes on the Early Childhood Education workforce

While NSW appreciates that the focus of this review is teachers in schools, ITE changes also have implications for early childhood teachers and particularly those studying combined early childhood and primary teaching degrees. Early childhood education sets the foundations for life-long learning and it is important that a review of ITE considers the knowledge and skills needed to support learning prior to school.

Given the nuanced needs of the ECE and primary school teaching workforces, it may seem logical to have separate degree offerings but this could have unintended consequences. As an example, in regional and remote areas teachers may be required to support students of mixed ages and need to be appropriately trained and accredited to do so.

Consider the issues and opportunities for the early childhood workforce implications

Recommendation 10: Consider the issues and opportunities for early childhood workforce implications

The ITE Review Panel should consider how its recommendations can positively impact on initiatives to improve the supply, retention and quality of teachers in the early childhood education workforce.

NSW suggests that the impacts on teachers in the early childhood education sector should be considered by the review. In particular, NSW suggests that the review consider intersections with the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA) work on the Children's Education and Care National Workforce Strategy, as this will include initiatives to improve the supply, retention and quality of the early childhood education workforce.

Appendix 1: NSW initiatives aimed at attracting new teachers to areas of need

NSW has implemented a number of strategies to increase workforce supply, including from more diverse communities. These include a range of scholarships and sponsorship programs to pre-service and current teachers.

NSW has implemented a number of strategies to attract quality teachers in areas of need. In the course of this review, it is likely that additional analysis about NSW initiatives will become available. This information can be made available to the ITE Review Panel at that time.

Staffing Agreement

The new Staffing Agreement 2021-2023, recently negotiated with the New South Wales Teachers Federation includes enhancements to support permanent teacher staffing outcomes across NSW, including in rural and remote locations.

Rural and remote incentives

The Department has commissioned targeted research and reviews, as well as directed additional funding, to attract and retain teachers in rural and remote areas through financial and non-financial incentives.

The NSW rural and remote incentives scheme is the most comprehensive in Australia. It includes, for example, attraction and retention benefits, rental subsidies to assist with accommodation costs, and rural teacher incentives and support, including additional professional and personal leave days.¹⁰

A review of the incentives scheme is currently underway to identify evidence-based best practice to attract and retain high quality staff in rural and remote areas. Early findings suggest incentives are a critical lever to attract staff to rural and remote schools, and

¹⁰ The full list of incentives is at <https://teach.nsw.edu.au/find-teaching-jobs/choose-rural/benefits-and-incentive>

should remain as a feature in strategies to address workforce shortages in rural and remote areas.

Some of the major themes arising from stakeholder consultation have been the need:

- for incentives to be more flexible and targeted (at the individual and the regional level); and
- to ensure the focus of incentives extends beyond financial incentives to other issues such as promoting community engagement and facilitating professional development and support for rural and remote settings.

This suggests there is an opportunity to leverage a whole-of-community approach to attract and retain teachers. For example, working with other government agencies and local communities to address the demographic, socio-economic and infrastructure challenges that contribute to the difficulty of staffing rural and remote schools.

Rural Professional Experience Program

The Department has developed a program to increase the number of high-quality pre-service teachers undertaking their final professional experience placement in rural and remote schools. The program aims to enhance supply of graduate teachers in rural and remote schools, and support the delivery of quality teaching in those schools.

In 2019, 55 final year pre-service teachers from six metropolitan universities went to geographically isolated schools, with all saying they would consider returning to rural and remote NSW for full-time employment in the future. Last year's (2020) numbers were impacted by COVID; however, 38 students still chose to go rural. Accommodation remains a challenge, and partnerships with other agencies are being explored to boost supply of housing.

In the Armidale Diocese of the Catholic school sector, Catholic schools have successfully transitioned pre-service teachers into their schools as employed teachers following completion of final placement and graduation. Incentives were provided to pre-service teachers when undertaking practicum which included allowances for meals, travel and overnight stays. These incentives supported the cost of living away from home for the period of the placement.

Teach.MathsNOW

The teach.MathsNOW scholarship supports career changers from STEM-related industries, or undergraduates studying STEM-related subjects, to complete a Masters of Teaching and take up a career as a mathematics teacher in NSW public schools. The first cohort of scholars in this program commenced study in 2020. teach.MathsNOW provides:

- financial support of up to \$50,000;
- employment as a paraprofessional while completing a teacher training qualification; and
- a permanent teaching role as a secondary mathematics teacher on successful completion of study.

Scholarships in Catholic schools NSW

In the Diocese of Wollongong, Catholic schools offer *Step into Teaching* (SIT) scholarships. These support year 12 students from Diocesan schools who are pursuing a career in teaching at university. It includes \$5000 per annum plus part time work in primary schools as a classroom SSO. The Diocese has established partnerships with universities to promote scholarships under the same banner (SIT) to attract current STEM students. The Diocese also offers an Indigenous teaching scholarship to students from a local Catholic high school with a significant Indigenous population.

Professional Experience Partnerships

A partnership was established with Australian Catholic University to develop “HUBS” to ensure the quality of the in-school experience for pre-service teachers. As part of this HUB agreement universities are undertaking to provide a free three-hour training course to prepare teachers for their role as ITE supervisors.