

Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

1 December 2022



ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations

The parent voice on public education

ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations is the representative body for Parent & Citizen associations in the ACT. Council represents parents and carers in ACT public schools.

We acknowledge the traditional custodians of the lands and waters where we live, work and learn, and pay my respects to elders past, present, and future.

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Introduction

The ACT Council of Parents & Citizens Associations (Council) is a non-profit, non-government representative organisation whose objectives are to foster a quality public education system, provide support services for affiliate parent & citizens associations (P&Cs) and make representations to government on behalf of parents and carers across all ACT public schools.

Council's members provide a unique insight into the lived experience of families, and how important teachers are in providing a quality education for their children. Our members can provide an important perspective into the relationship between teachers and parents.

Council recognises the significant issues facing the teaching workforce and welcomes the development of the draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. Council believes that there may be opportunities for governments to engage with parent representative bodies to facilitate more productive relationships between parents and teachers and reduce teachers' workload pressures associated with parent interactions.

Council values the contributions of all educators in ACT public schools, and the supports provided by the ACT Education Directorate and other stakeholders. At a high-level Council supports the six priority areas that form the basis of the action plan.

Feedback on the Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

- Council believes that elevating the profession is important to attracting and retaining teachers. The status of the teaching profession should reflect the high priority the community places on education.
- Improving teacher supply is important to ensure the future of the workforce. Council supports the initiatives in the action plan, however, believes that permanency issues also need to be addressed by employers to ensure that new graduates aren't lost from the profession.
- Council is pleased to see that working with families and carers has been recognised as an area of initial teacher education that could be strengthened (Action 10). It is important that teachers know how to positively and constructively interact with parents. Teachers have identified having to deal with "demanding" parents as a workforce/wellbeing issue and a reason some teachers leave the profession. Understanding how to build positive relationships with parents and carers is not only become an important part of the job but also presents opportunities to tap into parents and carers skills and experience. More information is provided below.
- Council is supportive of measures which reduce the administrative burden on teachers, including streamlining of processes and more effective use of school support staff. Council is supportive of exploring what tasks can be done by non-teaching school staff, including teacher aides, however, believes that core teaching work should not be delegated to other staff.
- In order to address the workforce issues faced by teachers, governments need to be able to clearly identify and respond to the reasons for the teacher shortage and associated workforce issues. Council supports Action 23 as this data can inform further strategies to address workforce issues. Council would like to see a process to update the National

Teacher Workforce Action Plan once this data is received to capture any additional strategies that arise.

- Council supports initiatives to retain teachers including developing career pathways, mentors for early career teachers and ensuring appropriate professional development.

Parent and teacher interactions

An increasing number of interactions with “demanding” parents has been reported as one of the challenges facing teachers. Ensuring that teachers know how to work with parents and carers can benefit teachers by reducing negative interactions, deescalating conflict, tapping into unmet resources and freeing up teacher time.

Parent bodies at the state and federal level can help address concerns around parent interactions with teachers and schools. Parents and carers want to be involved in their child’s education but may not understand how best to communicate with their child’s teacher or school. Parents and carers also have skills and experience that may assist teachers in the classroom or in working with students at home.

Council considers that there are many benefits when parents are an effective partner in the education of their children. Teachers get a better understanding of the needs of individual children, what supports they either have or lack outside of school and can adjust their pedagogical practices accordingly. Parents will also feel engaged in their children’s learning and be more respectful in their interactions with the classroom teacher.

As with other aspects of the education system, parents report a wide range of experiences when it comes to parental engagement. Governments should make further investment in parental engagement to lessen the burden on teachers. Council would be happy to assist with this in the ACT.

Our recommendations below suggest actions governments could take to improve parent and teacher interactions which would improve teachers’ wellbeing and may also reduce workload.

Recommendation 1

Governments should create family engagement officer positions in schools to facilitate better collaboration between parents, P&C associations, and teachers for the benefit of students, families, and schools.

Recommendation 2

Governments should work with peak parent bodies to promote how parents and carers can work productively with teachers so that they have a net positive impact on teacher workload/wellbeing.