SUBMISSION to Draft National Teacher Workforce Plan.

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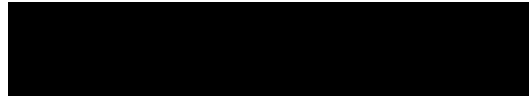
In this submission, we would like to focus on the three key areas of:
educational equity
engagement
teacher de-professionalisation.

These areas of focus, as we will argue below, are closely related and tie into the Draft National Teacher Workforce Plan particularly in relation to the following areas:

Action 15: **Build on work already underway to maximise teachers' time to teach, plan and collaborate.**
Action 16: **Examine how to support implementation of the national curriculum and literacy and numeracy progressions.**

Our submission also has implications for Action 10 (Teacher Education Expert Panel) with respect to the dot point *strengthening initial teacher education programs to deliver effective classroom ready teachers, with particular attention to teaching reading, literacy and numeracy, classroom management, cultural responsiveness, teaching students with diverse needs and working with families/carers.*

EQUITY

Our discussion of equity is set within Action 16 and focuses on how best to support implementation of the national curriculum in low-SES and disadvantaged schools. Minister Clare has said he does not want postcode to determine how a student fares in education and life. This rightly places equity at the forefront of educational concerns, as it should. Presently, of course, the relationship between socio-economic status and educational outcomes is clear – as shown by NAPLAN results (Smith et al, 2019) and even at the highest levels of schooling (Roberts et al, 2019). This, however, is a near-universal phenomenon. It has been a consistent theme in OECD reporting of PISA results:

'the socioeconomic background of students and schools does appear to have a powerful influence on performance' (OECD 2010a: 13)

'socio-economic status is …a strong predictor of performance' (OECD, 2013a: 34).

' A consistent finding throughout PISA assessments is that socio-economic status is related to performance at the system, school and student levels' (OECD, 2016b: 205)

'On average across OECD countries, 17.4% of advantaged students, but only 2.9% of disadvantaged students were top performers in reading' (OECD, 2019: 50).

Poverty and, particularly, inequality (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010), then, are, internationally, drivers of weaker educational outcomes. There are countries that run against this trend, however. Two characteristics of such countries identified by the OECD are:

a) the comprehensive nature of their education system in which all students, regardless of their background, are offered similar opportunities to learn, ie socio-economically advantaged and disadvantaged students attend the same schools.

b) high levels of school autonomy in formulating curricula and using assessments with low levels of school competition (eg OECD, 2010b).

Australia has not been one of these countries. Especially since the Howard era which re-defined public education as simply a 'safety net' (Armitage, 2007), Australia has been strongly marked by the drive towards the neoliberal marketisation of education in the name of consumer choice with all of the attendant baggage that comes with the valorisation of markets and choice: extensive high-stakes testing and, despite changes to *MySchool*, the creation of public league tables of school's results - league tables that reveal much more about the socio-economic background of a school's community than about the quality of its teachers. This has led, along with increasing amounts of public money being funnelled to private schools, to 'greater socio-economic segregation (in education)…in which the average socio-economic status of advantaged schools (is) increasing'(Erebus International 2005: 13) . More advantaged students are moving to more advantaged schools (see also Bonnor and Caro, 2007:116; Lawrence, 2012; Firth & Huntley, 2014; Thomson, 2021: 42). In most OECD countries, non-government schools get little or no money from government funding, yet Australia's four richest schools spent more on new facilities than the poorest 1,800 schools combined between 2013 and 2017 (Ting et al, 2019). By 2020-21, government schools were funded at 85-90% of the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), while Catholic and independent schools were funded at levels either close to 100% of their SRS or at levels even higher than this. It is anticipated that by 2023, public schools will receive at best 91% of the SRS, while private schools will receive 100% - or more (Thomson, 2021: 30: Reid, 2019:69). In Australia over 80% of disadvantaged students attend public schools (Smith et al, 2019; Roberts et al, 2019; Reid, 2019). The subsidisation of private schooling by successive governments has provided those schools with a substantial advantage over their public counterparts, an advantage which is not mirrored in school systems in other countries (Thomson, 2021).

Predictably, this situation has led to the 'transfer of the effects of socio-economic status from the individual level to the school level' (Erebus International, 2005: 13). In PISA 2012, for example, Australian students who were enrolled in a school with a high average socioeconomic background tended to perform better than when they were enrolled in a

school with a low average socioeconomic background (Thomson et al, 2013:269; see also Connors and McMorrow, 2015: 54). The proportion of students who attend socially mixed schools is lower in Australia than in comparable countries (eg Canada, New Zealand, UK. See Reid, 2019; OECD, 2010a, 2018). We have:

• one of the highest rates of non-government schooling (41%) in the OECD

• one of the most segregated schooling systems in the OECD (Reid, 2019; OECD, 2018)

• one of the largest resource disparities in the OECD (OECD, 2013b, 2016c).

In 2018, UNICEF placed Australia in the bottom third of countries ensuring educational equality (Chzhen et al, 2018). Professor Barry McGaw, formerly Director of Education at the OECD, warned early about this trend in Australia's PISA history. With respect to the 2000 PISA, for example, McGaw argued that Australia was highly stratified educationally and was guilty of conveying educational advantage where social advantage already existed. Further, the rate of payoff in increased literacy from increased social advantage was even greater at higher levels of social advantage - in other words, the more you already had, the more education in Australia added to your advantages. In Australia, said McGaw, we have 'ignored equity'. Moreover, he argued, PISA results showed that it was early stratification into schools of different types that tended to exacerbate differences among students, to produce low average performances and to reproduce the existing social arrangements with the socially disadvantaged placed in low- status schools where they achieve low-level results (McGaw, 2006). In 2006 PISA, he argued, 68% of the variation of performance between schools in Science was due to SES (McGaw, 2011).

And what has been the effect of this? In Australia, high achieving students are in high-SES schools and low-achieving students in low-SES schools As Thomson (2021) shows, Australian PISA outcomes for disadvantaged students reflect 'lack of provision of basic educational services' (p. 43).

Moreover, it may well be that equity is not only the problem driven by policy – those same policies which drive inequity may also be the drivers of decline. Rather than a drive to equity running against any drive to excellence, Wilkinson & Pickett's analysis of the international situation in many manifestations of social policy show that excellent outcomes may, in fact, be a result of a drive to equity. The analysis by the Equality Trust shows that this is particularly so in education:

> It is often assumed that the desire to raise national standards of
> performance in fields such as education is quite separate from the desire
> to reduce educational inequalities within a society. But the truth may be
> almost the opposite of this. It looks as if the achievement of higher

national standards of educational performance may actually depend on reducing the social gradient in educational achievement in each country (Wilkinson & Pickett, 2010:108)

The OECD itself argues similar things based on PISA results:

Achieving equity in education means ensuring that students' socio-economic status has little to do with learning outcomes. Learning should not be hindered by whether a child comes from a poor family, has an immigrant background, is raised by a single parent or has limited resources at home, such as no computer or no quiet room for studying. Successful education systems understand this and have found ways to allocate resources so as to level the playing field for students who lack the material and human resources that students in advantaged families enjoy. When more students learn, the whole system benefits. This is an important message revealed by PISA results: in countries and economies where more resources are allocated to disadvantaged schools, overall student performance… is somewhat higher (OECD 2016c: 233).

As Sahlberg says of Finland, a 'consistent focus on equity … can lead to an education system in which all children learn better than they did before' (2011: 134). And UNICEF reports, quite simply, 'More equal systems tend to have higher standards' (Chzhen et al, 2018).

Neither **inequity of outcomes nor decline cannot be blamed on teachers or teaching – or schools. It is an outcome policy** - of policy that impacts (or not) on poverty, and on inequality, and of education policy that segregates and stratifies schooling in Australia. As highly respected Australian and international educator, Professor Pat Thomson argues, the claim that the problems lie in schools and teachers, while centralised policy is the solution, has the realities the wrong way around: while many solutions may be located in schools, it is policy that is often the problem (Thomson, 2002; Hayes et al, 2017).

And what are the solutions that lie in schools? Too often the mantra for those students from disadvantaged backgrounds who may be falling behind in schools from the media and from policymakers is about 'the basics'. Former Education Minister Dan Tehan, for example, declared that '…what (phonics) does is enable those children who come from low socio-economic background(s), Indigenous children, children with a disability, children from remote and rural Australia to have the fundamental skills to learn how to read' (Tehan, 2019). There are three problems with this argument:

1) The fallacy that these students do not 'get' the basics. On the specific question of phonics, for example, researcher Alan Luke has shown that far from teachers of these students neglecting the 'basics' of literacy, that teachers in low SES schools (in Queensland, in this case) spend more time on direct alphabetic instruction and drill of grapheme/phoneme

generalisations than their middle or high SES counterparts. Far from students in poorer communities lacking 'basic skills', they in fact receive more work on decoding at the expense of other critical aspects of reading and literacy (Luke, 2010; Luke et al, 2011).

2) One could easily substitute any area of 'the basics' from former Minister Tehan's list (eg 'grammar') and find similar results to Luke's. Not only are the basics not neglected, they can easily become hardened into the fundamental curriculum that these students receive, especially under pressure from NAPLAN. Minister Tehan's list of students easily becomes the list of students receiving a 'basics only' curriculum.

3) Research continually shows that these students need – indeed deserve and respond to – the very opposite of this: an intellectually challenging curriculum. As another internationally respected educator, Linda Darling-Hamond has written:

> Decades of research have shown that teachers who produce high levels of learning for initially low-and higher-achieving students alike provide active learning opportunities involving student collaboration and many uses of oral and written language, connect to students' prior knowledge and experiences, provide hands-on learning opportunities, and engage students' higher-order thought processes, including their capacities to approach tasks strategically, hypothesize, predict, evaluate, integrate and synthesize ideas (2010: 55)

But who gets this education? Of the US, Darling-Hammond says, '**…** poor districts …offer stripped down drill-and-practice approaches to reading and math learning, rather than teaching for higher-order applications… critical thinking and problem-solving; collaboration…effective oral and written communication; accessing and analyzing information; curiosity and imagination. The kind of curriculum that supports these qualities has typically been rationed to the most advantaged students in the United States' (Darling-Hammond, 2010:52-54; see also Dudley-Marling & Michaels, 2015).

Australian research, too, has shown that particular principles are important for success in low-SES schools. These include:
• high intellectual challenge – NOT dumbed-down curriculum or busywork of the sort involved in continual NAPLAN practice. Why would we tolerate, for example, low-level literacy demands in contexts that require the complete opposite?
• whole-school approaches
• knowing the context well and working with that: locally developed resources, targeted professional development, often with specialist trainers and coaches, professional learning *teams* - NOT scripted teaching rituals and low-level, worksheet pedagogy.
• knowing that 'business as usual' does not work for students in these contexts

• funding spent on people, not programs - classroom practice is dumbed down when schools are prey to all manner of educational entrepreneurs

Moreover, there are additional payoffs for students when their teachers are also involved in sustained observation and inquiry into their own practice in collaboration with others (Joyce & Showers, 2002; see also references in the next paragraph).

In terms of equity, these are the principles that need to be in place to support Action 16.

Australian contexts in which teachers and academics work together in these settings around teacher inquiry into their practice have produced a number of projects which demonstrate the efficacy of these principles: in South Australia, for example, the RPiN (*Re-designng Pedagogies in the North*) and SILA (*Supporting Improve Literacy Agreements*) projects; turn-around pedagogies, culturally responsive pedagogies – and in Western Sydney, the *Fair Go* program. These, and related Australian research, are available in: Comber & Kamler, 2005; Prosser et al, 2010; Hattam et al, 2011; Munns et al, 2013; Comber, 2016; Hayes et al, 2017; Sawyer et al, 2018.

For the same reasons that schools and teachers cannot be blamed for either inequity nor decline, **nor can teacher education**. As, quite deservedly, teacher stocks have risen during COVID in the public mind, it has become less politically palatable to be directly critical of teachers, with media criticism of teacher education – a perennially 'safe' target – increasing even above its usual levels. Invariably, such criticism is based on myth – if for no other reason, because of the current degrees of performance standard compliance in teacher education. Specifically on this question of equity, for example, in terms of Action 10, the (Draft) Teacher Workforce Plan needs to recognise the important work being done by particular teacher education programs in the particular area of preparing teachers for disadvantaged schools, such as the NEXUS Program at La Trobe, the Bachelor of Education at Western Sydney University, the Access Quality Teaching program (AQT) in Victoria and the historical rollout of the National Exceptional Teachers/ing for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) program at a number of Australian universities.

ENGAGEMENT and HIGH INTELLECTUAL CHALLENGE

Professor Barry McGaw saw another problem with Australian education as manifested in PISA – and that had to do with decline. It is worth remembering that In PISA 2000, with its chief focus on reading literacy, 'only Finland scored significantly higher than Australia on the total reading measure' (Lokan et al, 2001: 21).   In fact, Australia had one of the highest proportions of students of any country at the highest proficiency level (Level 5) and one of the lowest proportions of students at the lowest level (below Level 1). All Australian states

and territories performed at or above the OECD average (Lokan et al, 2001). PISA 2003 repeated the 2000 results for reading literacy. Once again, only Finland performed significantly better statistically than Australia in reading literacy (Thomson et al. 2004: 104). By 2006 PISA, Professor McGaw was warning that 'among the countries with above-average performance levels only Australia has seen a statistically significant decline in their students reading performance, by 15 score points'. He went on to say that this 'was due to schools focusing more on basic achievement levels and not so much on the development of sophisticated reading of complex text'. McGaw continued those criticisms in later years (Tomazin, 2008; McGaw, 2009; Patty, 2010, 2011), arguing that Australia was concentrating too much on low level skills at the expense of intellectually challenging curriculum.

PISA focuses on reading. What of writing? When AERO produced its recent report on NAPLAN, publicised widely as tracking decline among Australian students as writers over time, *Writing Development: What Does a Decade of NAPLAN Data Reveal?* (Jackson et al, 2022), which we also refer to below, it perhaps should have been titled, *Writing Development: What has Fourteen Years of NAPLAN Delivered Us?* Much was made, for example, of lack of progress in particular areas of writing from Year 3 to Year 9. The tests taken by Year 3 and Year 9 in NAPLAN are the same 'genres' (with only two 'genres' ever tested) and writing is tested and marked to strict, reductive, formulae used to structure these genres – with the formulae unchanged from Year 3 to Year 9. Students are thus prepared for these very high stakes tests (with school results published on *MySchool*) on the same genre formulae for over seven years. It is a wonder that there is any commitment at all to writing by Year 9 students after seven years of practising the same two formulae.

A further critique is the degree of dumbing down that NAPLAN forces on writing. In NAPLAN 'Narrative' writing, the areas of 'Ideas', 'Audience' and 'Character/Setting'- those areas where students might grapple with rhetorical complexity - are allocated less than a third of the possible maximum marks, while more than half are allocated to structural elements, and to spelling and punctuation. We do not deny that spelling and punctuation are important for clear communication, but nevertheless, the clear message sent by NAPLAN is that the focus on the easy-to-mark lower-level issues, rather than working with students to grapple with ideas, rhetorical strategies and conceptual aspects of communication is of fundamental importance. The test is skewed towards lower-level skills and places a relatively weak emphasis on effective and engaging communication – a fact which AERO itself acknowledged (Jackson et al, 2022: 11-12). Perelman has correctly called the NAPLAN writing task 'reductive and anachronistic' (2018: 37). As Hayes et al argue, 'when students have limited opportunities to grapple with complexity, with finding their own authorial voice, with understanding the power of language, they are destined for limited outcomes' (2017: 138). NAPLAN foregrounds low-level features of language as the primary purpose of schooling rather than assuming that literacy is about making meaning - positioning students as

'spelling-punctuation-grammar producing machines', rather than as 'communicating beings' (Wilkinson, 1987: 3).

This might matter less if curriculum time wasn't being given over to NAPLAN, but it seems that it is. Thompson's well-known survey of over 900 Australian teachers revealed mostly a narrowing of curriculum focus with felt pressure to teach to the test to improve scores, but with the real-world consequence that actual student improvement in literacy was being impeded, not assisted (Thompson, 2016). Preliminary survey findings in Western Australia and South Australia by Thompson & Harbaugh (2013) found that NAPLAN:
(a) had required teachers to prepare for the tests
(b) changed their teaching style
(c) not improved literacy and numeracy
(d) lowered student motivation and engagement and
(e) created a less inclusive classroom environment for students, particularly those who come from the least advantaged circumstances.

In Thompson's overall survey, when asked about the positive impact of NAPLAN, Thompson's biggest single response from teachers was, 'none' (2016: 67). Similarly, Carter et al (2018) surveyed English teachers in NSW, who reported consistent 'antipathy to, and robust criticisms of', the NAPLAN tests, and identified 'detrimental consequences for teachers, students, school culture and the integrity of the subject, English' (2018, 151). Similarly, in Queensland, Simpson Reeves et al found that only a minority of participants in their survey recounted practices that aligned with ACARA's advice that the 'best preparation for NAPLAN is to continue focusing on teaching the curriculum' (ACARA, 2018). Their data showed that the majority of the teacher respondents were unable to enact this advice from ACARA. Moreover, in a nation where data produced by NAPLAN has become an obsession, Carter et al (2018) found among teachers even a 'strong antipathy to the view that NAPLAN tests provide important information about the literacy skills of their students' ('I can diagnose student literacy levels with far greater precision.') (p.148)

It is hard not to conclude that policy through instruments like NAPLAN has again failed. NAPLAN seems to be failing even in its own terms. Designers of NAPLAN cannot simply keep saying 'We are measuring decline and we are aloof from any responsibility'. These approaches to literacy – both reading and writing – have consequences. Test-based accountability is just one part of the neoliberal ideology discussed further below, but our key point here is that that ideology 'has been dominant for so long that it is difficult to do anything other than ascribe to it the educational outcomes that have been achieved on its watch' (Reid, 2019: 27). **Downward trends in results in literacy are arguably symptomatic of policy failure.** AERO's own Report demonstrates Gannon's point that '(t)here is no evidence that NAPLAN has improved the teaching of writing in Australian schools, despite its heft as a policy lever' (Gannon, 2019: 45-46).

This commentary on NAPLAN is not to resist evaluation or taking the national pulse in some form, but to argue that high-stakes testing in the form in which Australia practices it, has consequences – consequences on curriculum time and curriculum resources and consequences for an intellectually challenging curriculum.

TEACHER DE-PROFESSIONALISATION

We turn now to the question of teacher de-professionalisation in relation to Action 15. De-professionalisation has been a hallmark of the Global Education Reform Movement (GERM) (Sahlberg, 2011). Teachers have the central expertise and should be regarded as the default sources of that expertise. One of the notable developments of GERM has been the shift of recognised expertise in education from those with knowledge, expertise and experience to those with management backgrounds, to edubusinesses, to think-tanks etc.

Areas such as test-based accountability, increasingly centralised curricula, standardisation of teaching, the growth of limited term contracts – all mark the de-professionalisation of teaching. As these accompany the obvious market-oriented reform ideas, such as school choice and competition between schools, that have led Australia into the inequity we have described above and that further characterise GERM – the overall message is sent that schools and teachers cannot be trusted to know their job. Teachers and schools are responsible for declining standards, so governments make school choice their central policy move. We suggest that one of the drivers leading to teacher shortage has been, until quite recently, unrelenting media criticism of teachers and teaching that gives a megaphone to this distrust and blame[1]. As schools are theoretically 'devolved' under the influence of new managerialism, a constant stream of curriculum reforms and standard(s)isation rains down to steer from a distance (Reid, 2019). When Australia looked around for models to follow in its reform agenda, it did not look to the country – Finland – which outscored us in reading literacy in PISA 2000 and 2003, but rather to those countries who had implemented neoliberal reform with the characteristics described above, and who had scored below us in PISA. Another policy failure. With this move, we also managed to avoid the defining characteristic of Finnish education pointed out by Sahlberg (2011): respect for its teachers.

This all leads us to our central point here, which is possibly the most pernicious of the de-professionalising moves – that in relation to pedagogy and curriculum development. Currently, for example, this is manifested in the transformation of teacher reaction against the managerialism described here (accountability requirements, data collection and data

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[1] As we argued above, teachers' stocks in the public mind were raised during COVID, so it has become a little less politically palatable to be critical of teachers directly. As we noted above, this has meant a ramping up of the always-present-and-always-safe critique of teacher education in its place.

entry, regular new curriculum initiatives, compliance, endless paperwork associated with professional standards) into alleged teacher complaints about curriculum planning.

We strongly welcome the wording of Action 15 as maximising 'teachers' time to teach, plan and collaborate', especially its focus on planning and collaboration. As we noted above, two key principles for success in low-SES contexts are :

• knowing the context well and working with that: locally developed resources, targeted professional development, often with specialist trainers and coaches, professional learning *teams*. Not scripted teaching rituals and low-level, worksheet pedagogy

• additional payoffs for students when teachers are also involved in sustained observation and inquiry into their own practice in collaboration with others.

These principles fit well into Action 15. We are moved to include this discussion as part of our submission since we view with some alarm an increasing tendency in public debate to transform teachers' complaints about the time given over to administration and compliance into a plea for having their classroom planning taken over by others. We do not believe teachers do want this and, given what research shows about the importance of knowing the context well and working with locally developed resources, any move towards the wholesale subjection of the profession to outside entrepreneurialism in the form of generic lesson plans and units of work would be a detrimental move. We cite the recent much publicised Grattan Report, *Ending the Lesson Lottery* (Hunter et al, 2022) as a case in point. The Report states early in its discussion that 'Teachers are struggling with the curriculum planning load' (p. 11). This clearly suggests that teachers are not coping with their planning load. But the paragraph continues:

> *A 2021 Grattan Institute survey of 5,442 teachers and school leaders across*
> *Australia sounded the alarm on the current situation in schools. A large*
> *majority (86 per cent) of teachers said they 'always' or 'frequently' feel like*
> *they do not have enough time for high-quality lesson planning*

This, of course, says the very opposite – teachers *want* more time for planning. The 'struggle' with the curriculum load in their eyes is *not* the curriculum load, but all of those things that get in the way of that planning. Manuel et al (2018) in surveying English teachers in NSW found that administrative, accountability and compliance demands, especially those associated with monitoring and reporting of teacher and student performance, were preventing a concentration on core work. These demands included high-stakes test preparation, associated data gathering, administration, and heightened expectations from the school executive, students, parents and the wider community. They were exacerbated by the speed of centralised curriculum change and policy reform, and by diminished

resources and support. Of key interest here, though, was what teachers regarded as the core work being affected by this administrative work. This core work was planning and preparation for lessons; providing feedback to students; and engaging in reflexive practice, creative and innovative teaching, professional learning, dialogue and collaboration. Teachers know that their planning for their students is central teacher intellectual labour – the core of their professionalism. They do not want planning outsourced.[2]

The Grattan Report argues that, '(a)s an immediate priority, governments should consider buying high-quality curriculum materials from overseas, and adapting them for the Australian context. Investment could also build off materials already made or under development' (p.46)[3]. We should pause at the notion that material 'from overseas' can simply be imported into local contexts with 'adaptation' (by governments, not teachers, apparently). We are not suggesting that there is no role for the production of curriculum resources from agencies outside schools. There are many high quality curriculum resources and publications written with national and state curricula in mind already produced, for example, by teachers' professional associations currently - written by teachers, usually out of their own practice. An organisation like *Reading Australia* produces curriculum material of the very highest quality which English Faculties or Primary grades are able to use to feed into their school-based programs with their own students in mind. But it is those Faculty/Year/ class-based programs that come first at the school level. What we want to warn against is any sense that imported curriculum materials become the initial drivers of programs, with teachers simply becoming technicians in the role of delivering scripted content. AERO's resources, for example, are centred on videos which have its presenters speak directly to students. What is the role envisaged for the classroom teacher in this scenario apart from starting the video? **It is crucial that Action 15 sticks closely to its three areas defining teachers' core business: teaching, planning and collaborating** and that **Action 16 continues to emphatically define 'supports' as 'optional'**. Particularly in disadvantaged areas, this 'local' work is central to the success of Action 16, 'supporting implementation of the national curriculum'. Teaching by

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[2] The Grattan Report's authors would no doubt reply that the survey question 'How useful would a comprehensive bank of ready-to-use, high-quality instructional materials be for teachers?' had 50% of teachers responding 'extremely useful'. One problem – and there are a number – with this question asked in this way is that it followed questions specifically locating such resources 'within your school'. It is at least possible – and we would suggest highly likely – that this question was answered with this 'within your school' context still in mind, ie that teachers did not necessarily consider the resources about which they were now being asked would be imported from outside their school context, but would have been developed by them and their colleagues within their context

[3] The Grattan Report makes direct recommendations about who could be employed to do this work, including singling out one specific non-government provider, Ochre Education (p. 46). The Report also aligns with this provider conceptually (see the overlapping definitions of 'quality' curriculum materials [Hunter et al, 2022:9; Ochre Education, 2022]). That this provider is also partnered with AERO – that *any* non-government provider, even if NFP, should be partnered with a government-funded body such as AERO to provide such a central, fundamental service as curriculum/pedagogical provision– also raises for us questions about the need for independent quality control.

numbers or scripted pedagogy or bypassing the professional with expert knowledge of curriculum and their own students will not deliver equity – rather its opposite.

CONCLUSION

Our central argument about policy failure and the mis-direction of blame for inequity and decline is to say finally that, above all, this Plan should, in in approaching Actions 10, 15 and 16, **avoid the tendency to just keep pushing harder at what is already failing:** continued skewed funding arrangements**,** more surveillance of teacher education, more standard(s)ising, more dumbing-down, more de-professionalising of teachers, more NAPLAN and more GERM. Researchers such as Wilkinson & Pickett (2010), the OECD (2016c), Sahlberg (2011) and Chzhen et al (2018) are arguing that inequity is the key: **fix the inequity problem and we could improve student achievement**. That will not be done through teacher de-professionalisation.

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