

Australian Education Research Organisation submission to the Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

November 2022

The Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) welcomes the opportunity to provide comments on the draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (TWAP). The draft TWAP includes a range of important initiatives to support recruitment and retention of teachers as well as actions that can improve the quality of teaching.

At an overall level, AERO notes:

1. There are a range of actions in the draft TWAP that correspond to actions in the [National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy](#). These strategies could benefit from coordinated implementation to prevent duplication and working at cross purposes. For example, both strategies include actions on a national campaign to raise the status of the profession, prioritising visa processing for qualified education practitioners, and developing more comprehensive data about workforce trends in recruitment and retention.
2. The draft TWAP includes in its list of actions several pilots to trial new approaches, for example, piloting ways to attract and keep teachers in schools that need them the most, and piloting approaches to reducing teacher workload. AERO recommends that the design of these pilots be informed by a review of the best available existing evidence on how to achieve these objectives and that they be rigorously evaluated to provide valid and actionable insights that can contribute to the national evidence base.

Below are AERO's comments on some of the individual action items within the draft TWAP.

Action 4 Targets to increase the number of classroom teachers recognised as high achieving and highly accomplished.

Action 24 Develop and support career pathways which value teachers and reflect transitions in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

Action 27 Streamline HALT accreditation processes to make it less burdensome for teachers to be accredited and incorporate recognition of equivalent qualification and certification processes.

AERO supports actions to improve teaching quality in schools by making better use of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) and HALT accreditation processes.

AERO recommends that actions 4, 24 and 27 be considered together in the TWAP. A cohesive approach to increasing the number of teachers recognised as highly accomplished will include both streamlining current accreditation processes and making accreditation more attractive by ensuring it links with opportunities for better remunerated roles, where expert teachers' skills can be better utilised. Further detail about developing and supporting a teacher expert career path using the HALT accreditation process and APST can be found in [AERO's submissions to the Productivity Commission review of the National School Reform Agreement](#).

Action 12: Co-design actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers.

Action 23: Develop and publish comprehensive data about why teachers leave the profession and what careers they move into and what would improve retention, as well as why other career leavers choose teaching.

AERO could support actions 12 and 23 by conducting analysis using data from the [Multi-Agency Data Integration Project](#) (MADIP). MADIP contains extensive data (including education, health, employment, taxation and population demographics) that could provide invaluable information on teacher retention.

Specifically, AERO could use MADIP to investigate:

- The destinations of students who commence initial teacher education (ITE) but do not complete, and those who complete ITE but do not end up teaching. This could provide insights into improving the ITE to classroom pipeline.
- The destinations of teachers who leave teaching, including characteristics of different cohorts, which may help inform targeted retention strategies.
- Changes over time in the recruitment and retention of education staff who identify as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, including teacher aides, education support officers, teachers and school leaders. This could provide insights into which parts of the career pipeline need the greatest attention.

AERO has built capability in using MADIP via its current research agenda and has the expertise to do the work outlined above. However, workforce issues sit outside AERO's existing remit and AERO would require additional resourcing to complete this work.

Action 16 Examine how to support implementation of the national curriculum and literacy and numeracy progressions.

AERO supports action 16 and notes that EMM may task the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and AERO to examine ways to progress it.

This examination will need to consider the resourcing required to deliver this project, a governance structure that will allow for effective implementation, and the relationship with existing initiatives like the Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI).

Action 26 Improve access to high-quality First Nations' cultural competency resources to ensure teachers are better prepared to teach First Nations peoples in culturally safe ways.

AERO supports actions that ensure teachers are better prepared to teach First Nations students in culturally responsive ways. AERO recommends that action 26 be updated to reflect recent work on cultural responsiveness as outlined below:

AERO would like to highlight a report published by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) in June this year: [Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce](#). In 2019, the then Federal Minister for Education commissioned AITSL to undertake a four-year project to build or enhance the cultural competency of the Australian teaching workforce and increase cultural safety in Australian schools. Through the course of extensive consultation across jurisdictional systems and sectors, the term 'cultural responsiveness' was deemed a more appropriate term than 'cultural competency'.

The project resulted in the development of a suite of professional learning resources for teachers and school leaders including a self-reflection tool, an intercultural development continuum and a capability framework. AERO worked in collaboration with AITSL on the development of the continuum and capability framework, and continues to complement the work through synthesis of existing evidence and research on teacher and educator approaches to cultural responsiveness, and investigating ways to implement and measure cultural responsiveness in classrooms and early childhood education.