

## State of Victoria - submission to the Commonwealth Government's Teacher Education Expert Panel

### **Executive Summary**

Teaching is a rewarding career which provides an opportunity to make a powerful difference to the lives of our next generation. The best way to lift student outcomes is to provide access to high quality teaching. This involves attracting a sustainable number of candidates with relevant subject expertise, and supporting their access to quality initial teacher education that prepares them to teach in the schools that need them most. Teachers need to be supported to deliver high quality classroom practice at all stages of their teaching career.

Victoria's experience in developing initial teacher education (ITE) initiatives has highlighted the importance of productive collaboration between government, ITE providers, the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) and schools to achieve effective reform. The Victorian Government is contributing the experience of implementing these reforms with other jurisdictions in a range of projects to implement the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (NTWAP). For example, under Action 11, the Victorian Government is working closely with Victorian ITE providers and the governments of the Northern Territory and the Commonwealth to establish a pilot that reduce non-academic barriers to graduation faced by future teachers in the current operation of the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE).

There are further opportunities for the Commonwealth Government to partner with state and territory governments to raise the status of the teaching profession, highlight the rewards of a career in teaching, encourage enrolments in ITE and make teaching a career of choice. There is also more the Commonwealth Government can do to increase the number of high-achieving undergraduates and mid- or senior career changers entering the teaching profession, by making teaching programs more accessible. Victoria's experience in leading innovation in ITE presents an evidence base, a network of established stakeholder relationships and a depth of corporate experience that can effectively support Commonwealth-State partnerships in piloting further innovations.

Victoria has implemented a range of nation-leading ITE reforms to attract and support teachers at the start of their professional journey. These reforms balance the dual imperatives of increasing teacher supply and supporting teacher quality. Many are echoed in the actions of the (NTWAP), as annotated below. They include:

- introducing a multi-year Teach the Future campaign to attract the best and brightest to the teaching profession (NTWAP Actions 23, 24)
- establishing the Victorian Selection Framework, including an ATAR threshold of 70 for school leavers, and reforming legislation to enhance quality assurance frameworks of entry into ITE, Victorian ITE programs and Victorian pathway programs into ITE
- establishing the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership to provide high quality professional development opportunities for teachers, raising the status and impact of the profession (NTWAP Action 18)
- a Memorandum of Understanding between the Victorian Department of Education (the department) and Victorian ITE providers to improve access to high quality pre-service teacher (PST) placements in Victorian government schools
- investment in the Access Quality Teaching program (AQT), which provides high performing PSTs with tailored support to teach effectively in disadvantaged, regional, rural and remote school settings
- the Teaching Academies of Professional Practice program, which aims to deliver an immersive preparation experience for PSTs, test innovative approaches to ITE and strengthen the links between theory, research and practice to enhance ITE program effectiveness
- partnerships with ITE providers to develop and implement innovative employment-based ITE programs that work towards achieving the key objectives of reducing barriers to entry into the teaching profession and increasing the supply of Victorian secondary teachers (NTWAP Actions 1, 3)
- the Career Start graduate pilot program which accelerates the professional development of graduate teachers and their transition from university to the classroom (NTWAP Action 14)
- reducing the maximum time that Victorian teachers spend in face-to-face teaching (under the Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2022) so that teachers have more time available of impact teaching activities, including lesson preparation, tailoring learning, professional development and collaboration (NTWAP Actions 12, 13)
- an Information Sharing Agreement between the Victorian Government, Victoria's ITE providers and the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), to establish a nuanced, shared understanding of Victoria's ITE pipeline and its interaction with forecast teacher workforce demand (NTWAP Actions 25, 26).

The Victorian Government welcomes the Teacher Education Expert Panel's Discussion Paper and looks forward to working with the Commonwealth Government to strengthen the pathways into ITE to ensure that nationally we have a sustainable supply of teachers.

## **Response to the TEEP Discussion Paper Reform Areas:**

### **Reform Area 1: Strengthen ITE programs to deliver effective, classroom ready graduates**

The department supports an evidence-based approach to improving teaching and learning methods. Currently, all ITE programs must meet the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) quality standards. In Victoria all ITE programs are accredited against these standards by the VIT. The Victorian Government supports this quality assurance architecture, working effectively with both AITSL and the VIT. It acknowledges the contribution of the VIT in accrediting a variety of ITE pathways in Victoria that offer students a greater degree of choice.

The academic capability and personal attributes of a candidate for ITE are a strong predictor of the quality of teacher they will become. High performing international education systems select the candidates for ITE from among their top academic achievers, with a focus of several jurisdictions on their "top 30%". In 2018, the Victorian Government and Victorian ITE providers introduced new criteria for applicants to ITE: the Victorian Selection Framework (VSF). Under the VSF, candidates must pass a personality assessment that tests for the attributes most suitable for teaching, and demonstrate their academic capability and performance, for example by achieving an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 70 or above if entering following school.

On average, Victorian ITE students perform strongly in the LANTITE. There are also indications that the 70 ATAR threshold has contributed to the profession's improved community status. When Victoria introduced this change through the VSF, it did so alongside a number of other workforce initiatives which ensured that there has been no impact on workforce supply due to this change, while lifting the overall quality of ITE selection processes. The Paper's contemplation of incentivising higher ATAR thresholds for ITE selection needs careful examination to determine whether any qualitative benefits in further tightening eligibility would outweigh the impact on workforce supply.

In March 2021, Victoria amended the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (the Act), to complement and reinforce the entry requirements of the VSF. The legislation clarifies and enhances the VIT's powers to regulate ITE programs. It also introduces new powers for the VIT to regulate programs or courses of study that are identified or marketed as pathways to entry into an approved ITE program. These powers extend the VIT's quality assurance of entrants to ITE programs to include those entering from pathway programs. The legislative reforms also provide students and ITE

providers with confidence that VIT-accredited pathway programs prepare their participants to study a bachelor-level ITE program effectively.

The Victorian Government created the Victorian Academy of Teaching and Leadership (the Academy) in 2021. The Academy provides high quality professional development opportunities for teachers to raise the status and impact of the profession. One of its professional development offerings is the flagship Teaching Excellence Program (TEP) which is designed for highly skilled classroom teachers to support high quality professional practice, disciplinary knowledge and deeper understanding of the science of learning. TEP graduates are empowered to influence and advance teacher practice in their area of specialisation and share their expertise and knowledge into new cross sectoral networks and within their school communities. The Academy's professional learning opportunities for highly skilled teachers supports their career pathways while the enhanced public profile of the Academy raises the status of the teaching profession and supports attraction and retention of highly skilled teachers.

The Victorian Government supports the quality assurance architecture afforded jointly by AITSL and the VIT and is committed to working effectively with the quality standards offered by both organisations.

### **Reform Area 2: Strengthen the link between performance and funding of initial teacher education**

The Victorian Government welcomes greater transparency in ITE data to inform a shared understanding and strategic planning by stakeholders in the profession. The Victorian Government signed an Information Sharing Agreement with the state's 12 ITE providers and the VIT in September 2022. The Agreement aims to inform a more timely, comprehensive and nuanced understanding among parties to the Agreement of Victoria's ITE pipeline and its interaction with forecast teacher workforce demand. The Agreement is also designed to reduce the burden of multiple and ad hoc data requests and clarify data usage and protection. The first collection under the Agreement was initiated in October 2022. In the medium term, the Information Sharing Agreement will support more effective responses to workforce demand across the state. The department is working with Victorian ITE providers to gain a better understanding of Victorian ITE completion rates, and the key reasons some ITE students do not complete their ITE program. This includes analysis of data received under the ITE Information Sharing Agreement.

The Victorian Government welcomes recognition from the Commonwealth Government of the impact of increasing cost of living pressures on ITE students' completion rates. There is an opportunity for the Commonwealth Government to increase its financial supports to students, in particular while they undertake their placements. The Victorian Government's innovative employment-based ITE pathways address cost of living pressures by providing scholarships to ITE students during periods of study and paid employment as paraprofessionals or education support staff for the remainder of their accelerated graduate degree (see further detail under Reform Area 3 below), however these degrees are only available at the postgraduate and secondary level. There is opportunity for these employment-based ITE programs to be extended, as is discussed in the final section of this submission. Research from the Grattan Institute found that offering cash-in-hand scholarships would substantially increase the number of school leavers choosing to study teaching.<sup>1</sup> The final report of the Commonwealth Government's Quality Initial Teacher Education (QITE) Review made similar findings.<sup>2</sup> Victoria's existing innovative ITE programs have shown that scholarships are a key factor in supporting career changers to make the decision to undertake a teaching degree, and Victoria welcomes the Commonwealth Government's commitment to consider opportunities to fund ITE bursaries (NTWAP Action 2) and explore additional models of innovative ITE (NTWAP Action 3).

While Victoria is, in principle, supportive of rewarding excellence and innovation in ITE with additional funding, there is a risk that this could operate to reduce the funding of providers who are in need of additional support. For example, if a provider has a comparatively high attrition rate, a reduction in funding would further reduce the provider's capacity to support students and could result in further increased attrition. The Victorian Government recognises that some ITE providers have higher representation of diverse cohorts. Those providers that support diverse cohorts through ITE should be supported to do so and should not have their funding reduced on account of potentially comparatively high attrition rates or slower completion rates.

The Victorian Government would encourage a more transparent and expeditious sharing of data between the Commonwealth Government and state and territory governments, including enrolment and completions data and other workforce related data.

### **Reform Area 3: Improving the quality of practical experience in teaching**

---

<sup>1</sup> Grattan Institute, *Attracting High Achievers to Teaching* (2019) p. 25.

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education, Skills and Employment, *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review* (2022), p.14.

Professional practice placements provide a crucial setting for ITE students to link academic theory to classroom practice, developing their autonomy and capacity to realise their full potential as graduate teachers. Connections built between ITE students and schools during placements can also enhance ITE students' future employment opportunities. Access to high quality mentors during placement, and experience of diverse school contexts during ITE, helps graduate teachers to enter their first classroom with confidence, better prepared for their professional role and at less risk of early career attrition.

Some schools experience greater challenges in recruiting staff than others. A series of recent Victorian initiatives (outlined below) are designed to connect ITE students with these schools, to increase ITE students' employment prospects on graduation, and meet an identified workforce needs in rural and regional schools or in schools with high levels of disadvantage.

### **Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on Placements**

In 2020-21, the Victorian Government and ITE providers developed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to strengthen Victorian government schools' capacity to host high quality PST placements, by:

- streamlining the administration of placements, for example by establishing designated placement booking windows in Terms 2 and 4 to facilitate schools' planning
- introducing one standard placement assessment template for all ITE students, used by all ITE providers
- clarifying the roles and responsibilities of schools, ITE providers and ITE students during placement, so each party knows what to expect, and ITE students receive the support they need, and
- supporting schools and ITE providers to build new relationships, particularly in areas of high forecast workforce demand.

Coordinating ITE providers' initial communication with schools is designed to support schools' planning for the next semester. Increased transparency and predictability of this communication period, year on year, aims to support schools to allocate staff resources to arranging PST placements during these periods.

The MOU has been implemented since Term 3, 2021. The MOU also included a commitment that the department and Victorian ITE providers will continue to work together to strengthen the strategic distribution of placements. From 2023, each government school is allocated a minimum number of placement days to host, depending on school size and location. This system-level delivery model is designed to share responsibility for hosting PST placements more equitably and provide fairer access

to graduate recruits. Schools have an annual opportunity to tell the department which ITE providers they are open to working with, and the department passes this on to the relevant ITE providers, supporting schools and ITE providers to develop new relationships or build upon existing ones.

### **Teaching Academies of Professional Practice (TAPPs)**

A Teaching Academy of Professional Practice (TAPP) is a partnership between a cluster of schools and one or more universities for the purpose of improving ITE. Membership includes government, Catholic and independent schools. The Victorian Government has assisted with setting up the TAPPs.

The TAPP initiative aims to deliver an immersive preparation experience for ITE students, test innovative approaches to ITE, and strengthen the links between theory, research and practice to enhance ITE effectiveness. Participating principals and teaching staff have reported increased professional learning opportunities, with teachers identifying strengthened mentoring skills. The initiative has also enabled universities to draw on the experience of schools to enhance ITE program delivery.

As part of the TAPPs initiative, Victoria has partnered with La Trobe University and the Melbourne Graduate School of Education to place a dedicated cohort of ITE students at Greater Shepparton Secondary College as part of the TAPPs initiative. These students receive additional supports and accommodation during their placements.

### **Teach Rural**

The Victorian Government has partnered with Country Education Partnership (CEP) to pilot a new Teach Rural program to attract and support a total of 200 PSTs to undertake placements at rural and regional Victorian government schools over 2023 and 2024.

Teach Rural involves coordinating participating PSTs to undertake placements in groups, each located at a cluster of rural and regional government schools. Teach Rural provides participants with a suite of supports to facilitate practical placements and welcome them into the local school and community, including tailored welcome events to welcome the PSTs to the school and the community; subsidised placement accommodation; and funding for a clustered peer network event and CRT time release for each mentor teacher to support induction of the participating PSTs.



### **Access Quality Teaching (AQT)**

The AQT program continues the work of the successful National Exceptional Teaching for Disadvantaged Schools (NETDS) program to identify 300 high performing pre-service teachers and provide them with specific preparation and ongoing support to teach effectively in disadvantaged, regional, rural and remote school settings. The program develops mutually beneficial professional networks between schools and tertiary education organisations. AQT aims to facilitate targeted teaching practice placement experiences that attract quality teachers for hard to staff school communities, leading to graduate teacher employment and improved learning outcomes for students.

In addition to reducing financial barriers for prospective teachers through the bursaries proposed under the NTWAP (Action 2), the Commonwealth Government could build on the above initiatives to further mitigate the cost barriers for ITE students to undertake placements in the highest need (often most remote) locations.

The Victorian Government has implemented a range of reforms to better support ITE students for their placements in schools and to attract ITE students to placements in regional, rural and remote schools. The Commonwealth Government could increase its support for students to undertake placements.

### **Reform Area 4: Improve postgraduate ITE for mid-career entrants**

Market research commissioned by the Victorian Government into the drivers and barriers for entry to the teaching profession found 7.9% of the Victorian population was considering switching careers to teaching, with 43% of this cohort interested in secondary school teaching. The research found that the greatest barriers to potential career changers entering the teaching profession were the perceived length of time and cost involved in retraining as a teacher. The costs include course fees and lost income while studying. Victoria leads the nation in investment in models of ITE designed to mitigate time and cost barriers, while continuing to meet AITSL's existing nationally-agreed quality thresholds.

### **Teach Today and Teach Tomorrow employment-based programs**

In the 2022-23 State Budget the Victorian Government invested a further \$33.5 million in employment-based teaching degrees which will see up to 1,200 additional student teachers between 2023 and 2026 in secondary school classrooms. In these *Teach Today* and *Teach Tomorrow* programs, participants are employed in schools as paraprofessionals or education support staff while completing

a postgraduate teaching degree across 18-24 months. These employment-based programs focus on areas of need, including schools with higher levels of disadvantage; priority subject areas such as science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM), languages, specialist education and applied learning; and priority geographic areas including schools in outer-metropolitan, rural, and regional locations across the state.

*Teach Today* and *Teach Tomorrow* programs offer Victorian government secondary and specialist schools a valuable opportunity to address their short-term staffing needs and invest in their future workforce. Their employment and scholarship elements and flexible program delivery remove cost and time barriers for people who have the qualities to make a great teacher but could not otherwise afford to spend the time out of the workforce to obtain the qualification.

### **Career Start**

The Career Start Pilot is a structured pilot program for graduate teachers which aims to improve their experience as they are inducted into the profession. It provides new graduate teachers with additional time and support to focus on preparation, learning from others including mentors, targeted professional learning, network opportunities with other graduate teachers through area-based alliances.

The pilot is being delivered in primary, specialist, P-9 and P-12 schools in the areas of North Eastern Melbourne, Western Melbourne and Inner Gippsland. Since 2021, intakes of graduate teachers in the pilot areas have been provided with additional time release and support, as have their mentors. Evaluations of the Career Start pilot have demonstrated that the program effectively addresses graduate teacher retention, their transition into the workplace and their classroom readiness.

Potential career changers offer a key contribution to a high-quality teaching workforce. Research indicates that perceived time and financial barriers potential career changers from retraining as a teacher. Victoria's highly successful employment-based ITE programs offer a model to mitigate time and cost barriers and these innovative programs could be an area for increased Commonwealth Government engagement with the Victorian Government.

### **Opportunities for the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments to work together**

The Victorian Government has implemented a number of successful initiatives in recent years to increase the supply and quality of teachers in Victoria, including, for example, the expansion of employment-based teaching degrees and the development of additional innovative teaching degrees

that fast-track future teachers into classrooms; a graduate teacher induction and mentoring program; and a number of programs focussed on improving the effectiveness of ITE placements. While implementation of these initiatives has had a positive impact in supporting Victorian government schools with teacher supply in recent years, the scale of teacher demand requires an increased focus on building sustainable teacher supply. A sufficient supply of teachers to meet the demand forecast in coming years will not occur without further Government intervention. A clear strategy to increase the number of ITE students and teachers in Victoria is required to support cohesive teacher supply across the government school system.

Victoria welcomes the opportunity to continue to work with the Commonwealth Government on the actions in the NTWAP and additional strategies to improve the quality and supply of teachers. In particular, Victoria is ready to work with the Commonwealth on initiatives that raise the status of the teaching profession, and expand access to innovative employment-based ITE programs that offer flexible delivery and opportunities to reduce the time and cost of undertaking an ITE program while retaining focus on building graduate teacher quality and classroom readiness.

Raising the status of the teaching profession is vital for success in attracting high quality candidates to the teaching profession. Commonwealth-state collaboration on initiatives that publicly recognise and communicate teachers' important contribution to future generations would expand the reach of these messages across the community.

Victoria would welcome the opportunity to work with the Commonwealth Government to further expand access to high quality, innovative ITE programs. This could include:

- aligning the provision of CSPs to data driven state-based workforce need
- co-funding universities to develop innovative bachelor-level ITE programs for undergraduate students who want to work in schools while they study. Victoria considers that this innovation would be particularly useful in regional areas, where students with existing ties to the local community could study and work in their communities.
- the Commonwealth increasing its contribution to employment-based ITE programs (Teach for Australia and La Trobe Nexus) that it co-funds with Victoria
- the Commonwealth joining the Victorian Government in funding Victoria's suite of employment-based innovative ITE programs, with a potential innovation tailoring supports to later career changers.

### **Unique opportunities for the Commonwealth Government to increase the supply of a high-quality teaching workforce**

While states and territories manage teacher workforces and education systems across Australia, the Commonwealth Government is responsible for the funding and policy settings for ITE providers. Victoria encourages the review panel to consider the levers uniquely available to the Commonwealth Government to contribute to the national pipeline of high-quality teachers.

### **Conclusion**

Victoria welcomes the Teacher Education Excellence Panel Discussion Paper, and an increased national focus on improving ITE. This submission highlights a range of Victorian initiatives to increase the equitable access of all Victorian students to excellent teachers. Victoria encourages the review panel to consider the range of reforms and initiatives in Victoria, and how learnings from these reforms and initiatives could inform approaches in other parts of Australia.

The Victorian Government has focused on the dual imperatives to improve teacher quality and increase teacher supply, guided by the importance of both in raising student educational outcomes. Victoria recommends that considerations of both supply and quality guide any proposed national ITE reforms.

Victoria's experience illustrates the benefits of productive collaboration between government, schools, ITE providers and the profession's regulator. Victoria encourages the Commonwealth to develop and implement proposed ITE initiatives in partnership with key education system stakeholders and to be cognisant of the need to increase teacher supply in the short and medium term, while maintaining quality standards that support the long-term retention of effective teachers in the profession, attract high achievers to join it, and enable our teachers to deliver excellent educational outcomes for the nation's future.

There are opportunities for the Victorian and Commonwealth Governments to work together to improve ITE. Victoria welcomes the opportunity to collaborate with the Commonwealth on raising the status of the teaching profession and increasing access for high quality candidates from diverse backgrounds to the teaching profession.

In addition to areas of joint responsibility, the Commonwealth Government has a unique role in funding and regulating ITE providers. There are a number of ways that the Commonwealth could

strengthen ITE providers' capacity to deliver quality ITE to an increased number of participants, including in areas of high workforce demand. Victoria encourages the review panel to consider opportunities available to the Commonwealth to enhance the access of all Australian students to a high-quality teaching workforce.