

1 December 2022

The Hon Jason Clare MP  
Minister for Education  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Dear Minister Clare,

## Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia (AHISA) commends the speed with which the Australian Government has worked to generate a draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. We appreciate the opportunity to offer feedback on the Action Plan.

The Action Plan represents a comprehensive approach to leverage the Australian Government's capacity to contribute to and lead key responses to current critical challenges relating to Australia's teacher workforce. We recognise that the Action Plan also seeks to lay foundations to help realise longer-term aspirations, including increased diversity within the teacher workforce and improved responses to issues of supply and demand.

AHISA's feedback on the Action Plan focuses on strategies that hold the promise of greatest short-term gains in stabilising the teacher workforce. We believe that a more stable workforce is a precursor of success in attempts to attract a greater diversity of candidates to initial teacher education (ITE) and promote the status of the profession, and to deliver appropriate professional development and support for teachers to encourage retention.

Should you require further detail or clarification of the points raised, please contact me at telephone [REDACTED], or via email at [REDACTED]

Yours faithfully,

**(Ms) Beth Blackwood**

AHISA Chief Executive Officer

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## About AHISA

AHISA Ltd is a professional association for Heads of independent schools.

The primary object of AHISA is to optimise the opportunity for the education and welfare of Australia's young people through the maintenance of collegiality and high standards of professional practice and conduct amongst its members.

AHISA's 450 members lead schools that collectively account for over 450,000 students, representing 70 per cent of total independent sector enrolments and over 11 per cent of total Australian school enrolments. Some 20 per cent of Australia's Year 12 students attend AHISA members' schools.

AHISA's members lead a collective workforce of over 45,000 teaching staff and some 28,700 support staff.

The socio-economic profile of AHISA members' schools is diverse. Over 20 per cent of our members lead schools serving low- to very low-SES communities.

AHISA believes that a high-quality schooling system in Australia depends on:

- Parents having the freedom to exercise their rights and responsibilities in regard to the education of their children
- Students and their families having the freedom to choose among diverse schooling options
- Schools having the autonomy to exercise educational leadership as they respond to the emerging needs of their communities in a rapidly changing society.

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## Key points and recommendations

- The Action Plan must consider underlying issues that affect the long-term stability of Australia's teacher workforce as well as address teacher shortages.
- While initiatives to attract more and diverse candidates to the teaching profession are important, a focus on retaining those who have already taken their first steps toward a career in teaching or who are already working within the profession promises to offer more immediate gains in achieving greater teacher workforce stability.

### Section 1: Addressing teacher attrition and retention challenges

- AHISA supports the Australian Government's proposals that LANTITE be introduced in the first year of an ITE course and prior to commencing studies and that the number of permitted attempts at LANTITE be increased. (See Point 13 of the Action Plan.)
- While ITE providers actively support students to meet LANTITE requirements, consideration could be given to commissioning development of a federally funded online adult literacy and numeracy bridging program suitable for candidates to a wide range of tertiary courses, including ITE courses. The program could be made available through the target institution, which would be responsible for any ongoing support for students accepted into their courses.
- Failure of practical experience components of initial teacher education (ITE) program is a key factor in program attrition. A national teacher-mentor program would support course completion.
- Proposals to reduce teacher workload as outlined in the draft Action Plan are an important means to address the high levels of stress that contribute to teacher attrition.
- Supporting and protecting teachers' motivating desire to make a difference to their students will also address workforce stability. A national teacher-mentor program would help generate such support.

### Section 2: Achieving long-term workforce stability through a national teacher-mentor program

- A national teacher-mentor initiative has the potential to:
  - Provide professional support to ITE students on practical experience placements to promote professional efficacy and encourage ITE course completion
  - Support early career teachers move successfully from Graduate to Proficient status and increase their sense of professional satisfaction and personal and professional accomplishment
  - Help sustain experienced teachers' ongoing professional development and engagement with the profession.
- The Australian Government has a role to play in developing a national framework for mentor course accreditation and in laying the foundations for a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors.

- The Australian Government could encourage university ITE providers to develop accredited micro-credentials for teacher-mentor courses as part of its \$10 million allocation to develop teacher career pathways. (See point 28 of the Action Plan.)
- Given the current critical teacher shortage, Australian governments should consider a limited-life project to offer experienced teachers who have signalled their intention to leave the profession the opportunity to first train and then work as teacher-mentors across a group of schools or in conjunction with ITE providers.
- A teacher-mentor scheme could be a means to allow experienced teachers to take 'time out' from classroom teaching via special leave arrangements without exiting the profession. It could also encourage retiring teachers to retain registered status, thereby remaining within the pool of those teachers potentially on call at times of critical shortage.
- AHISA supports the Action Plan proposal that AITSL will develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders, including through mentoring and induction.

### Section 3: Strengthening middle school leadership

- A national policy focus on schools' middle tier of leadership could enrich the career pathway of school leaders and – due to middle leaders' close work with teachers – help in supporting teachers' sense of professional satisfaction and engagement with their work.
- To encourage the development of and enrolment in accredited post-graduate certificate and diploma courses for middle leadership roles, the Australian Government could increase the number of Commonwealth Assisted Places available for such courses.

### Section 4: Reforming teacher registration

- AHISA supports proposals in the Action Plan (point 22) to create greater efficiency and flexibility in teacher registration.
- Streamlining of teacher registration should be given priority for action in the new National School Reform Agreement, with the intent to facilitate teacher mobility, alternative teacher training pathways such as internships, transfer to the profession by mid-career professionals and re-entry to the profession.
- A national Working With Children Check scheme should be devised and implemented in tandem with teacher registration reform.
- The need for greater flexibility in certification of school-based teachers of VET should be considered in reform of teacher registration.
- Streamlining of registration processes for overseas teachers will be of significant help in facilitating overseas recruitment. If, however, streamlining of teacher registration and prioritising visa processing of overseas teachers are to have a significant impact on Australia's teacher workforce, they must be supported by inclusion of all school-sector related occupations on the Medium to Long-term Strategic Skills List.

### Section 5: Maximising time to teach

- AHISA supports a review of the role and function of ITE students, teaching assistants and school support staff to determine how they might best help in reducing teacher workload

- (Action Plan point 18). AHISA suggests that the review take account of the impact of any findings on preparation of ITE students and the training and ongoing professional development of teaching assistants, especially regarding support for students with diverse learning needs or students working remotely.
- The Australian Government could consider giving priority to enrolments in Certificate III or IV courses for teacher assistants within its provision of fee-free TAFE places.
- Resources for educators produced by National Education Architecture organisations are highly regarded. To support teachers' adaptation to hybrid education delivery and response to increased demand for personalised learning, these may need to be regularly reviewed and reconfigured.
- With greater uptake of online content and hybrid education delivery models, AHISA recommends that education ministers review and revive the Online Formative Assessment Initiative.

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## 1. Addressing teacher attrition and retention challenges

While initiatives to attract more and diverse candidates to the teaching profession are important, a focus on retaining those who have already taken their first steps toward a career in teaching or who are already working within the profession promises to offer more immediate gains in achieving greater teacher workforce stability.

### 1a. Attrition from initial teacher education programs

The Australian Government has already signalled its interest in boosting graduation rates from initial teacher education (ITE) courses. It has tasked the Teacher Education Expert Panel, appointed to conduct a review of ITE under Professor Mark Scott, to consider how to increase the current average completion rate of 50 per cent in ITE undergraduate degrees. The Expert Panel is also considering how to improve the quality of professional experience placements in teaching and improve postgraduate initial teacher education for mid-career entrants. (See point 10 of the Action Plan.)

In its *Australian Teacher Workforce Data Report No 1* on the National Initial Teacher Education Pipeline<sup>1</sup>, AITSL notes that:

Completion rates (over six years) for undergraduate ITE programs fell from 57% to 47% for programs commenced in 2006, compared to those commenced in 2012. For postgraduate ITE programs the completion rate (over four years) declined from 82% for programs commenced in 2006, to 76% for programs commenced in 2012 and 2013. (Page 10)

Research undertaken by Australian Catholic University (ACU) for the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment<sup>2</sup> has identified key points at which ITE candidates in both undergraduate and graduate ITE programs exit their course prior to completion and other factors which are correlated with course attrition.

While the study does not identify to what extent attrition of ITE students from their courses can be considered a valid 'sorting' mechanism for entry to the profession – that is, that students may discover during their studies that they do not wish to pursue a teaching career – several of the study's findings suggest there is unnecessary and avoidable leakage of candidates. The research report flags that adjustments to timing of assessments by ITE providers and improvements to school-based professional experience placements could assist course completion:

- Professional experience placements are integral to ITE progression and failure of these placements is the main assessment barrier to course completion.
- Failure of a professional experience placement most often leads to separation from the course.
- The timing and grouping of assessments are consequential for course completion. Risks of separation intensify where multiple assessments are undertaken concurrently in a single semester.
- Results from key assessments are largely underutilised for review and improvement purposes.

Findings of the ACU research regarding the impact of timing of the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) on ITE course attrition and on the time taken to complete ITE courses support the Australian Government's proposals that LANTITE be introduced in the first year of an ITE course and prior to commencing studies and that the number of permitted attempts at LANTITE be increased. (See Point 13 of the Action Plan.)

While ITE providers actively support students to meet LANTITE requirements, consideration could be given to commissioning development of a federally funded online adult literacy and numeracy bridging program suitable for candidates to a wide range of tertiary courses, including ITE courses. The program could be made available through the target institution, which would be responsible for any ongoing support for students accepted into their courses.

As described above, the ACU research findings indicate a correlation between practical experience placements (PEx) and failure of ITE students to complete their ITE courses. For those undertaking a Bachelor of Education (BEd) course, the study found that:

- Candidates who separate from the BEd (primary) program after passing the first PEx, typically do so after failing the second PEx in year 2.
- Candidates in the BEd (secondary) program typically separate later in the program after failing the second or third PEx attempt in year 3.

It should be noted, however, that 24.2 per cent of students in BEd programs separate from the program at the end of the first year before attempting any PEx units. That is, a significant loss of ITE students from Bachelor degree courses occurs before practical experience placement.

While schools are not the sole influence on the success or otherwise of ITE students' professional experience placements, their contribution is significant. While ITE providers typically assign a professional placement supervisor, the placement process could be enhanced for ITE students and its impost on school-based teacher supervisors could be smoothed through government support for a national teacher-mentor program. Such a program is discussed in Section 2 of this submission.

### 1b. Attrition from the profession

Actual attrition rates of teachers in Australia are not currently available through the Australian Teacher Workforce Data project<sup>3</sup>, and there is variation in estimates of teacher attrition in Australia.

In analysis of results from its Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the OECD uses the intention of teachers to remain in teaching as a proxy measure for the risk of attrition. The OECD reports in the Country Note for Australia on TALIS 2018<sup>4</sup> that 22 per cent of teachers surveyed indicated they would like to leave teaching within the next five years. The OECD average on this measure is 25 per cent.

AITSL's *National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report 2021*<sup>5</sup>, also based on 2018 data, found that 25 per cent of teachers indicated their intention to leave the profession before they retired, with 34 per cent indicating they were unsure about their intentions to leave.

In an Australian survey of teachers undertaken by Monash University in 2022<sup>6</sup>, 19.9 per cent of respondents reported they were planning to leave the profession in five years, which is less than both the TALIS and AITSL 2018 findings. AITSL's most recent release of data on its Key Metrics Dashboard<sup>7</sup>, incorporating data from 2018 to 2020, shows an increase in 2020 of teachers

planning to remain in the profession until retirement and a decline in those planning to leave before retirement. These data accord with data from AHISA's biennial Staff Retention & Recruitment Survey, which found that while turnover of teaching staff increased markedly in respondents' schools in 2021 over 2019 data, staff departures due to teachers leaving the profession (other than retirement) dropped by 50 per cent. The higher turnover rate was primarily influenced by a doubling of departures due to teaching/academic staff finding a position in another school, with wellbeing and work-life balance issues the main drivers of the increased mobility.

It is not yet clear what impact the last three years will have on teacher attrition, especially in the context of an uncertain national and international economic outlook. The Monash University study, AITSL's findings and AHISA's data suggest that COVID-19 may have depressed attrition but accelerated a change in workplace and type of teaching position sought.

According to a recent article posted by the Centre for Independent Studies<sup>8</sup>, Australia's teacher attrition rate is low, at around 4 per cent per year. While the article does not cite sources for this claim, an OECD study<sup>9</sup> of actual teacher attrition rates for 2016 among a very limited number of countries (possibly only those countries which had data available – Australia did not participate) found that attrition rates for teachers from pre-primary to upper secondary education varied from 3.3 per cent in Israel to 11.7 per cent in Norway.

While the OECD data suggest that the proportion of Australia's teacher workforce which leaves the profession is comparable with that of other OECD countries, there is little evidence available to indicate whether the reasons why Australian teachers choose to leave the profession differ markedly from those of teachers leaving the profession in other countries. An international literature review conducted on behalf of The Evidence Institute at the Association of Independent Schools of NSW<sup>10</sup>, identified that factors which are commonly reported as influencing both teacher attrition and retention are teachers' sense of professional satisfaction, school culture – including levels of collegial and leadership support – and workload intensification. Findings of the Monash University study already cited suggest similar factors influence Australian teachers. As reported on its Key Metrics Dashboard, AITSL's teacher surveys found that 'workload and coping' were the most cited reasons given by teachers for an intention to leave the profession in 2018, 2019 and 2020.

Without substantive evidence on actual attrition rates, AHISA suggests that a focus on factors that contribute to instability in the workforce – such as teacher dissatisfaction and engagement with their work – offers valuable insight on actions that might be introduced to counter instability or what the OECD terms 'risk of attrition'. There is a considerable body of evidence on teachers' attitudes to their work.

Findings from TALIS 2018 include:

- In Australia, 90 per cent of teachers report that, all in all, they are satisfied with their job, which accords with the OECD average.
- 78 per cent of Australian teachers report that they are satisfied with the terms of their teaching contract (apart from salary), a response significantly above the OECD average of 66 per cent.
- 67 per cent of teachers in Australia report that they are satisfied with their salaries, well above the OECD average of 39 per cent.

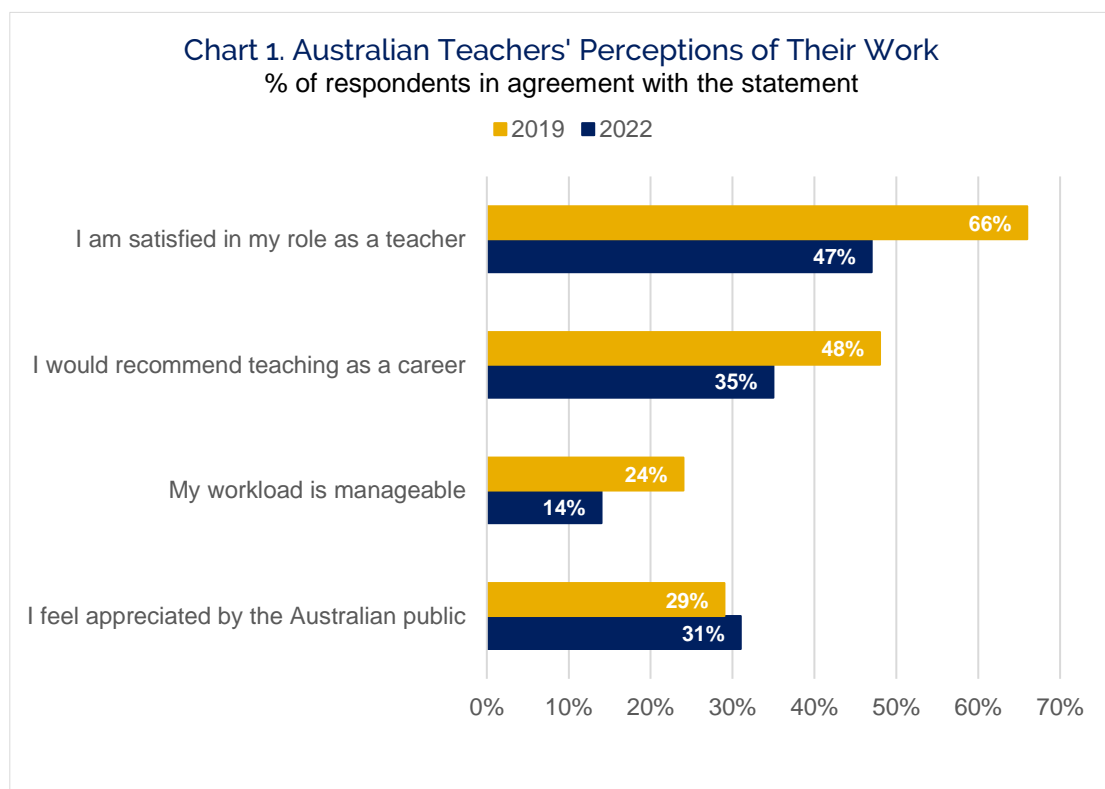


- 24 per cent of Australian teachers report experiencing stress in their work 'a lot', which is significantly higher than the OECD average of 18 per cent.

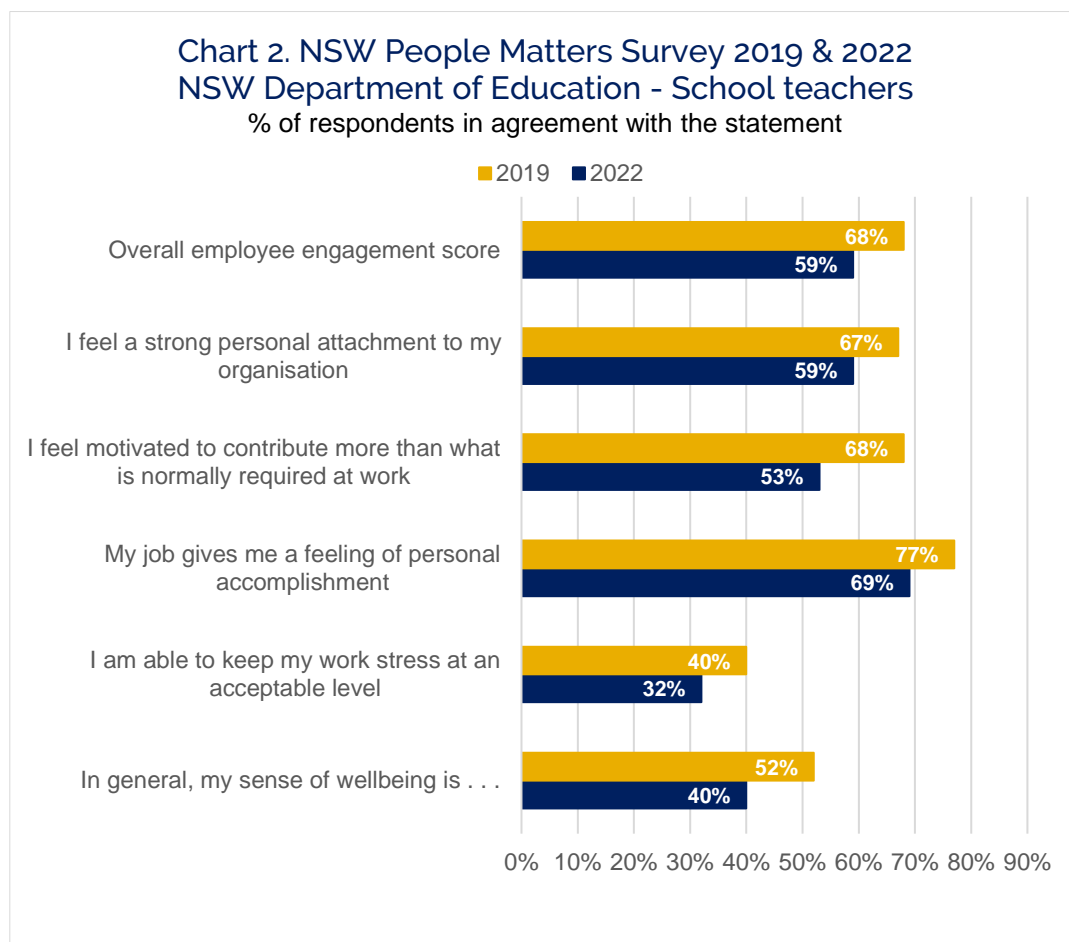
A further finding of TALIS 2018 was that, on average across participating countries and economies, teachers who report experiencing stress in their work 'a lot' are twice as likely as colleagues with lower levels of stress to report that they will stop working as teachers in the next five years. In Australia, teachers who reported experiencing stress at their work 'a lot' were 90 per cent more likely to want to leave teaching in the next five years.

The TALIS 2018 evidence suggests high levels of stress are a destabilising force in Australia's teacher workforce.

Australian research allowing comparisons of data from 2019 and 2022 point to exacerbation of teachers' stress levels and disengagement from the profession as a result of COVID-19 disruptions. The Monash study of teachers' perceptions of their work, already cited, found a significant drop in the proportions of teachers reporting satisfaction in their role as teachers and those reporting their workload as manageable between 2019 and 2022. In 2022, teachers were also far less likely to recommend teaching as a career. (See Chart 1 below.)



The NSW People Matters Survey of teachers employed by the NSW Department of Education<sup>11</sup> found that in 2022 only 14 per cent of teachers reported their workload as manageable, compared to 24 per cent in 2019. (See Chart 2 below.)



The teacher shortages experienced in 2022 have been exacerbated by COVID-19 infection in teachers or their near family and the need to isolate, and a similar decimation of the pool of casual relief teachers. Many relief teachers have also been employed in student mentoring programs to address COVID-related gaps in students' learning. While this suggests the current critical shortage of teachers may abate, irrespective of any interventions, available data indicate that pressure points in the workforce have deepened, threatening the sustainability of teachers' sense of purpose and intrinsic motivation and therefore the longer-term stability of the teacher workforce.

The NSW People Matters Survey findings charted above confirm the high level of intrinsic motivation among educators. Educators are driven by a deep sense of purpose: to make a difference to the lives of the young people in their care. The 2022 Survey results suggest, however, that the 'motivation to contribute more than what is normally required at work' has been undermined by ongoing COVID-19 challenges. At the same time, more teachers are reporting that they are unable to manage work-related stress.

AHISA supports proposals to reduce teacher workload as outlined in the draft Action Plan (see points 14 to 18), which will help address teacher wellbeing and work satisfaction. At the same time, we recommend consideration of professional development that also supports and protects

teachers' motivating desire to make a difference to their students. In the next section we discuss the potential of a national teacher-mentor initiative to:

- Provide professional support to ITE students on practical experience placements to promote professional efficacy and encourage ITE course completion
- Support early career teachers move successfully from Graduate to Proficient status and increase their sense of professional satisfaction and personal and professional accomplishment
- Help sustain experienced teachers' engagement with the profession.

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## 2. Achieving long-term workforce stability through a national teacher-mentor program

### 2a. Mentoring to support and transform the teaching profession

The induction and mentoring of beginning teachers have been of national interest for some time, and the subject of federal government consultation with educators. For example, in 2015 AHISA was invited to prepare a paper on mentoring, one of several developed by national principals' associations and commissioned by AITSL as an outcome of a review conducted by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG).

Since 2015, research continues to affirm the value of mentoring for teachers of early career teachers. The literature review undertaken for The Evidence Institute of the Association of Independent Schools of NSW, cited above, identified mentoring as a key factor in retention of beginning teachers.

Mentoring is also valuable for teacher professional development at all points in their career. Research undertaken by academics at Brown University and Harvard University in the United States, as reported recently in a post at One Schoolhouse<sup>12</sup>, found that 'traditional in-service models produced little uptake of new pedagogical or curricular initiatives, but by combining traditional in-service with follow-up coaching, uptake improved by more than eight times'.

As AITSL points out in its background paper, *Teaching futures*<sup>13</sup>, an 'ever-proliferating range of digital and learning technologies' has increased skills expectations of teachers. The experience of remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic and shift to hybrid forms of education delivery have served to reinforce this view. Teachers must now be expert in the development of online content and online delivery. As an effective means to accelerate uptake of new pedagogical and curricular initiatives, mentoring supports increased agility in schools and school systems as they adapt to rapid social and technological change.

AHISA advocates for a national teacher-mentor scheme to enrich the ongoing professional development of teachers as well as to support ITE students on professional experience placement and on their journey from Graduate to Proficient status. Key points we have presented to government since 2015 include:

- In interviews conducted in preparation for the TEMAG project paper, AHISA members reported that mentoring and/or observation and feedback are considered successful models for professional development of teachers at all stages in their careers.
- Among AHISA's members' schools there is increasing adoption of peer-to-peer models of teacher professional learning such as learning circles, action research projects and peer observation models, including pedagogical rounds and learning walks. Peer-to-peer models promote collaborative professional learning, which can accelerate the adoption of and help embed new and/or improved practices far more readily than attendance at external professional development courses alone. Trained teacher-mentors are seen as enriching this process.
- School-based mentors are the most appropriate model for maximising the effectiveness of school-based practical experience for a range of programs (such as clinical teacher education programs and internships) and for key stages of ITE students' development, as

well as to support the ongoing professional learning of graduates to achieve Proficient status and to support experienced teachers.

- The introduction of Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) arrangements for ITE students suggests a further benefit of teacher-mentors would be to assist ITE students on practicum placements develop and demonstrate the attributes and skills to be assessed, supporting course completion.
- A system of trained teacher-mentors in schools has the potential to support alternative pathways into teaching, for example for career-change professionals, including practitioners in the visual and performing arts or from VET-related industries, and for those in targeted areas of teacher shortage, including native speakers of languages other than English, or with a background in physics and chemistry, higher-level mathematics or design and technology.
- Mentoring of ITE students on practicum placement signals a greater commitment of time and expertise to students on the part of schools and teachers than supervision, and demands specialist training for the mentor.
- Selection of mentors should recognise that mentors must be outstanding adult educators, not just outstanding child and adolescent educators.
- Mentoring of pre-service teachers and colleagues cannot be an additional time burden on teachers' already intense term-time work schedules.
- The selection, training and support of teacher-mentors demand a considerable commitment of time and financial resources from schools and systems.

To support schools and systems, and to encourage adoption of mentoring as a key element of teacher professional development, AHISA advocates for a formalised approach to the training of teacher-mentors, through national accreditation of teacher-mentor training courses:

- As with accreditation of ITE providers, accreditation of teacher-mentor training courses gives assurance to those undertaking the courses as well as to their future mentees.
- Accreditation recognises the importance of the contribution of teacher-mentors to the profession.
- Consistency in mentoring approaches supports national consistency of Teacher Performance Assessments.
- Consistency in mentoring education and certification assists recognition of teacher-mentor training courses as professional development counting toward teachers' re-registration requirements.

The Australian Government has a role to play in developing a national framework for mentor course accreditation. The Government is also well-placed, through AITSL, to lay the foundations for a national approach to the training and certification of teacher-mentors:

1. Initiate a review of teacher-mentor training and certification already offered in Australia, and their supporting standards or frameworks and tools/resources. For example, the Victorian Department of Education and Training's Effective Mentoring Program encompasses a two-day mentoring course as well as online modules and is supported by a Mentoring Capability Framework.<sup>14</sup> Queensland University of Technology offers an online certificate

course, *Mentoring Beginning Teachers*<sup>15</sup>, rated for 13 hours of certified professional development.

2. Initiate a review of international teacher-mentor training and certification programs and/or related standards, tools or resources and any evidence of their impact. (It is worth noting that the Teacher Registration Board of South Australia commissioned such a review in 2016-17.<sup>16</sup>)
3. Develop draft standards for Australian teacher-mentors for consultation among ITE providers and the profession.
4. Identify resources or tools for teacher-mentors that could be developed nationally and which, along with existing resources or tools (such as AITSL's mentoring guide<sup>17</sup>), could be linked via a dedicated page on AITSL's website.
5. Establish and host an online professional support group for teacher-mentors via AITSL's website.

The Australian Government could also encourage university ITE providers to develop micro-credentials for teacher-mentor courses as part of its \$10 million allocation to develop teacher career pathways. (See point 28 of the Action Plan.)

Since its publication in 2016, AITSL's *Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession*<sup>18</sup>, has informed jurisdictions' frameworks and guides for the induction of initial teacher education (ITE) graduates in schools. The document also establishes the contribution of mentoring to graduate professional development.

More recently, evaluation of a mentoring program for Australian Catholic University ITE students<sup>19</sup> found that participants in the program experienced a significant drop in anxiety and an improved sense of belonging in the school environment as well as a significant improvement in feelings of competency against the Graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. Participants also reported greater spiritual literacy regarding the culture and values informing Catholic education.

AHISA acknowledges that professional efficacy can reduce stress while increasing professional satisfaction. We suggest that mentoring is a viable means not only to support professional development of teachers at all points of their career journey but, as the ACU program evaluation suggests, can intentionally support and protect teachers' sense of purpose and professional satisfaction and engagement and therefore help achieve longer-term stability of the teacher workforce.

Given the current critical teacher shortage, Australian governments might consider a limited-life project to offer experienced teachers who have signalled their intention to leave the profession the opportunity to first train and then work as teacher-mentors to early career teachers. The teacher could be nominated by their principal for acceptance to this scheme, which might take a range of forms, such as:

- The teacher-mentor could work under contract to the relevant state or territory and be funded by state/territory governments in partnership with the Australian Government through a matched grant scheme. If funded by a state/territory government in partnership with the federal government, the teacher-mentor would not necessarily be attached to one school, but be available to a group of schools in all sectors within a given area.

- The scheme could be funded directly by the Australian Government through arrangements with ITE providers, in which case the project would entail attachment of the mentor to the ITE provider and the provider's final-year ITE students as they prepare for Teacher Performance Assessment and could continue to be available to students as they progress from Graduate to Proficient status.

A teacher-mentor scheme could have the added benefit of allowing experienced teachers 'time out' from classroom teaching via special leave arrangements without exiting the profession. It could also encourage retiring teachers to retain registered status, thereby remaining within the pool of those teachers potentially on call at times of critical shortage.

AHISA also suggests that consideration be given to making teacher-mentor certification a pre-requisite for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification, given the role HALTs are expected to play in developing their teaching colleagues.

Such strategies have the potential to embed mentoring as a recognised support for teachers' ongoing professional formation. In the introduction to their paper, 'Mentoring in the New Millennium'<sup>20</sup>, published in 2000, Andy Hargreaves and Michael Fullan warned:

Mentoring practice may fall short of its ideals not because of poor policies or program design but because we fail to regard mentoring as integral to our approach to teaching and professionalism. Mentoring of new teachers will never reach its potential unless it is guided by a deeper conceptualisation that treats it as central to the task of transforming the teaching profession itself.

## 2b. Mentoring of early career school leaders

Like other principals' professional associations, AHISA offers an Advisor Program to support Heads in the first five years of principalship. The program matches new Heads with recently retired and experienced principals. AHISA members also receive collegial support through a range of programs and services. AHISA welcomes the Action Plan proposal that AITSL will develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders, including through mentoring and induction. (See point 25 of the Action Plan.)

AHISA believes the career pathway of school leaders could be enriched with a national focus on what is termed 'middle leadership'. As middle leaders typically have direct oversight of teachers' work through roles such as Head of Department and Year-level Co-ordinator, we propose that actions to strengthen middle leadership in schools will also be of direct help in stabilising the teacher workforce. We discuss this further in the next section.



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### 3. Strengthening middle school leadership

The disruption of schooling in 2020 and 2021 revealed the importance of school leadership structures to effect fast ‘pivots’ to remote learning and online delivery, ensure the ongoing health and wellbeing of both staff and students and, in 2022, manage staff and student absences. In particular, the role of the middle management tier of school leadership in implementing and embedding changes in practice has come into sharp focus.

As noted by AITSL in its Spotlight, ‘Middle leadership in Australian schools’<sup>21</sup>, ‘middle leaders are crucial to the effective functioning of schools and play an important role in shaping student outcomes’. Cultural change within schools is also more difficult and can become a lengthy process unless there is alignment of middle management with the goals of senior leaders.

In systems and associations of schools, training of teachers for middle leadership roles is typically provided for on a whole-of-system or whole-of-sector basis. (This is evident in the resource list of professional development programs for middle leaders included in the AITSL Spotlight mentioned above.) Independent schools are also active in developing middle leadership within their schools.<sup>22</sup>

The Australian Government also has a role to play in enlarging leadership capacity within schools. AHISA proposes that a national policy focus on middle leadership in schools will have a tangible and progressive impact on the quality of leadership in Australian schools, strengthen the leadership pipeline and have a substantive impact on the long-term stability of Australia’s teacher workforce.

AHISA recommends:

- To help build leadership capacity in Australian schools, the Australian Government should task AITSL to undertake a rapid literature review of effective professional learning for middle and upper school management and, if necessary, to refresh its list of professional learning options for Australian teachers in middle leadership roles.
- These projects could support extension of the Australian Professional Teaching Standards and Australian Professional Standard for Principals to create a map of excellence in school leadership to support leadership progression, and would also inform the creation of resources, short courses and post-graduate qualifications to support that progression. (In its Spotlight on middle leadership, already cited, AITSL notes that ‘In October 2022, the Queensland Department of Education partnered with AITSL to develop standards for middle leaders, aligned with the Australian Professional Standard for Principals.’)
- While current system/sector investment in developing teachers for middle leadership roles allows for targeted professional learning, to support the ongoing development of leadership capacity in schools, consideration could be given to the development of post-graduate certificates in middle leadership that would count toward graduate diplomas and encourage further tertiary study and qualification. Currently, the number of Commonwealth Assisted Places (CAPs) for a Graduate Certificate in Educational Leadership, for example, is limited. To encourage the development of accredited post-graduate certificate and diploma courses for middle leadership roles, the Australian Government could expand the number of CAPs available for graduate courses.



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## 4. Reforming teacher registration

AHISA supports proposals in the Action Plan to create greater efficiency and flexibility in teacher registration (see point 22). Although teacher registration was agreed for action under the current National School Reform Agreement (National Policy Initiative B(i)(a)), it is not clear from education ministers' meeting communiqués how this initiative is progressing. The current critical teacher shortage has served to make more visible the challenges and hindrances in registration regulation as experienced by the sector, and it is AHISA's hope that teacher registration can be leveraged as a platform for reform.

In its National Review of Teacher Registration<sup>23</sup>, AITSL identified the streamlining of registration processes as one of three key areas for reform, noting that 'interpretation and administration of teacher registration requirements vary across jurisdictions' and that registration processes required streamlining 'to improve teacher mobility across the nation, ensure rigor and consistency in judgements, and allow VET qualified people to teach'.

It is now apparent that registration processes must also facilitate overseas teacher recruitment, re-entry to the profession and alternative teacher training pathways such as internships, including those supporting transfer to the profession by mid-career professionals.

The interaction of teacher registration requirements with other factors affecting Australia's teacher workforce are discussed below.

### 4a. Diversity in employment conditions

AHISA recognises that set requirements for ongoing professional development as a condition to maintain teacher registration aim to maintain teaching quality in Australia. Two workforce management issues that act as countervailing pressures to this aim are casualisation of the teacher workforce and the increasing number of teachers seeking part-time employment to achieve greater work-life balance.

The difficulties of casual, contract and part-time teachers – and of teachers in regional and remote areas – in accessing professional development must be considered if teacher registration systems are to support teacher retention.

COVID-19 disruption has shown that we also need a teacher workforce that is agile enough to respond to critical demand. Consideration must be given to how teachers who step out from the profession, either through retirement or to take up non-teaching roles in education departments or professional associations, can maintain or regain registration status.

### 4b. Mobility across jurisdictions

While a mutual recognition scheme for teacher registration is currently in place, differences in teacher registration requirements in each jurisdiction (which typically apply at each stage of registration and re-registration) and the lack of portability of Working With Children Checks (WWCC) mitigate against the scheme's ability to improve the experiences of teachers who seek work in other jurisdictions and against the recruitment needs of teacher employers. Mobility challenges are intensified when schools are situated close to state/territory borders.

AHISA members report that difficulty in confirming the suitability of candidates to work with children is a major concern in recruiting teachers from other jurisdictions. To support teacher

mobility, AHISA recommends that a national WWCC scheme be devised and implemented in tandem with teacher registration reform.

#### 4c. VET provision in schools

To contribute to the Expert Review of Australia's VET System, in 2018 AHISA surveyed its members on key challenges in VET provision for students in their schools.

The survey revealed that, while staffing arrangements are influenced by the VET courses offered, the majority of survey respondents whose schools offered VET courses reported that VET staffing arrangements reflected a mix of staff members with teaching qualifications and those with industry experience and a Certificate IV in Training and Assessment. Several respondents commented that all VET staff were required to have both teaching and training qualifications, and might also be required to hold the VET qualification they were teaching.

Maintaining both teaching and training qualifications was noted as a significant staffing challenge for VET provision. One Head suggested that the Certificate IV training and assessment qualification should be recognised for at least five years, especially for staff who already have a university qualification in teaching.

Maintaining industry currency was also reported as a challenge, particularly in finding release time for staff members who also had to complete professional development requirements for their teacher registration.

AHISA recommends that the need for greater flexibility in certification of school-based teachers of VET be considered in reform of teacher registration.

#### 4d. Overseas recruitment

AHISA commends the Australian Government's prioritisation of teacher occupations for visa processing under temporary skilled and permanent migration programs. Streamlining of registration processes for overseas teachers will be of significant help in facilitating overseas recruitment (see Action Plan points 9 and 22). If, however, streamlining of visa processing and teacher registration are to have a significant impact on Australia's teacher workforce, they must be supported by inclusion of all school-sector related occupations on the Medium to Long-term Strategic Skills List (MLTSSL), including the occupations Middle School Teacher (241311), Primary School Teacher (241213) and Student Counsellor (272115), which currently remain on the Short-term Skilled Occupation List (STSOL).

With teacher shortages apparent across the world<sup>24</sup>, Australian schools in all sectors need maximum flexibility in their overseas recruitment options.

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## 5. Maximising time to teach

AHISA welcomes the focus on ‘Maximising the time to teach’ in the draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, including the Australian Government’s commitment to invest \$25 million to pilot initiatives to reduce teacher workload (Action Plan point 14) and to develop a Teacher Workload Impact Assessment to review initiatives in the next National School Reform Agreement (Action Plan point 17).

### 5a. Focus on teaching assistants

AHISA supports a review of the role and function of ITE students, teaching assistants and school support staff to determine how they might best help in reducing teacher workload (Action Plan point 18). AHISA suggests that the review be undertaken with a view to noting the impact of any findings on preparation of ITE students and the training and ongoing professional development of teaching assistants, especially regarding support for students with diverse learning needs or students working remotely.

AHISA also suggests the Australian Government consider giving priority to enrolments in Certificate III or IV courses for teacher assistants within its provision of fee-free TAFE places.

### 5b. Leveraging Australia's National Education Architecture

Action Plan point 16 rightly points to the capacity of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) and the Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) to support implementation of the Australian Curriculum and literacy and numeracy progressions.

AITSL, Education Services Australia (ESA), ACARA and AERO together form the National Education Architecture, and all have a well-deserved reputation for developing high-quality, evidence-informed resources for teaching, learning and professional development.

The shift to remote learning during COVID-19 has highlighted the complexity that digital delivery modes are bringing to the context of learning and teaching, and therefore to the nature of the resources that teachers require. Teaching is also highly contextual, and resource development must therefore support teachers’ professional autonomy to shape lessons and learning and teaching materials to ensure that teachers are able to meet the needs of their students in a way that is relevant to students’ lived experience. Resources must also be able to be quickly adapted to meet the challenges of hybrid modes of education provision.

In September 2022, Zoom released a commissioned report prepared by Intelligence Business Research Services (IBRS).<sup>25</sup> The report describes how teaching and learning resources can best be adapted for digital delivery if they are to support the work of both students and teachers online, noting the requirement for ‘highly granular, bite-sized, educational content that can be reused across multiple curricula and upgraded frequently’.

A further finding was that bite-sized digital content also supports equity of access to online learning when students may have connectivity or bandwidth challenges or are working from a mobile phone. The Zoom/IBRS report also notes that digitised content enabled sharing of content among teachers, which promoted collaboration on the creation of content and in turn encouraged peer review of content.

These findings suggest resources produced by all National Education Architecture organisations – already highly regarded – may need to be regularly reviewed and even reconfigured in the light of emerging demands for digital delivery of content, hybrid education delivery models and increased personalisation of learning. To support rapid upskilling of Australia’s teachers for digital delivery, consideration could also be given to producing online professional learning modules on use and adaptation of resources.

Given the requirement of some jurisdictions that teachers undertake accredited professional learning to qualify for re-registration, AHISA also recommends that, wherever possible, National Education Architecture organisations should seek accreditation of any professional development offerings to support their uptake by teachers.

Version 3 of the National Literacy and Numeracy Progressions was finalised by ACARA at the beginning of 2020 and is available on the Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI) website.<sup>26</sup> Although a project initially supported by all Australian state and territory education ministers, progress of OFAI appears to have stalled. The project concept and its Spindle prototype held great promise to support teachers in reaping full benefits of the learning progressions. With greater uptake of online content and hybrid education delivery models, AHISA recommends that education ministers review and revive the project.

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## Notes

- <sup>1</sup> Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports>.
- <sup>2</sup> Wyatt-Smith C, Haynes M, Day C, Spallek M & Smith A (2021) Quality of Initial Teacher Education Through Longitudinal Analysis of Linked Datasets. *Study 1: Examining performance trajectories from admission to graduation*. DESE. Accessed <https://www.education.gov.au/teaching-and-school-leadership/resources/quality-initial-teacher-education>.
- <sup>3</sup> Data gaps in Australia's teacher workforce data are discussed in AITSL's Spotlight, *Building a sustainable teaching workforce*. Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/building-a-sustainable-teaching-workforce>.
- <sup>4</sup> Accessed at [https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018\\_CN\\_AUS\\_Vol\\_II.pdf](https://www.oecd.org/education/talis/TALIS2018_CN_AUS_Vol_II.pdf).
- <sup>5</sup> Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/atwdreports>.
- <sup>6</sup> Longmuir F, Gallo Cordoba B, Phillips M, Allen KA & Moharami M (2022) *Australian Teachers' Perceptions of their Work in 2022*. Accessed [www.monash.edu/perceptions-of-teaching](http://www.monash.edu/perceptions-of-teaching).
- <sup>7</sup> AITSL (2022) ATWD Key Metrics Dashboard. Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/key-metrics-dashboard#kmd>.
- <sup>8</sup> Fahey G (2022) 'There is no great resignation of teachers', 10 July 2022. Accessed <https://www.cis.org.au/commentary/opinion/there-is-no-great-resignation-of-teachers/>.
- <sup>9</sup> As reported in *Education at a Glance 2021*, accessed <https://www.oecd-ilibrary.org/sites/bcc79d57-en/index.html?itemId=/content/component/bcc79d57-en>.
- <sup>10</sup> The review findings are presented in three parts, available at <https://www.aisnsw.edu.au/teachers-and-staff/research-and-data-in-schools/the-evidence-institute/growing-and-nurturing-educators>.
- <sup>11</sup> Accessed <https://www.psc.nsw.gov.au/reports-and-data/people-matter-employee-survey>.
- <sup>12</sup> Rathgeber B (2022) Traditional approaches to changing pedagogy don't work. *One Schoolhouse*, 4 November 2022. Accessed <https://www.oneschoolhouse.org/open-doors-blog/traditional-approaches-to-changing-pedagogy-dont-work>.
- <sup>13</sup> AITSL (2021) *Teaching futures*. Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachingfutures>.
- <sup>14</sup> Accessed <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/Documents/school/teachers/profdev/mentoringcapabilityframework.pdf>.
- <sup>15</sup> Accessed [https://professional-education.qut.edu.au/study/s/products/detail?p=Mentoring-Beginning-Teachers\\_01t8q000000Eu1T](https://professional-education.qut.edu.au/study/s/products/detail?p=Mentoring-Beginning-Teachers_01t8q000000Eu1T).
- <sup>16</sup> Accessed <https://www.trb.sa.edu.au/sites/default/files/PdfDocuments/TRB-Induction-and-Mentoring-Report-June-2018.pdf>.
- <sup>17</sup> Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/improve-practice/practical-guides/mentoring>.
- <sup>18</sup> Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/graduate-to-proficient-australian-guidelines-for-teacher-induction-into-the-profession>.

<sup>19</sup> Reported in *ACU News*, 2 November 2022. Accessed <https://www.acu.edu.au/about-acu/news/2022/november/program-boosts-pre-service-teachers-spirituality-and-skills>.

<sup>20</sup> Hargreaves A & Fullan M (2000) Mentoring in the New Millennium. *Theory Into Practice*, 39:1, 50-56, DOI: [10.1207/s15430421tip3901\\_8](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15430421tip3901_8)

<sup>21</sup> Accessed <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/spotlights/middle-leadership-in-australian-schools>.

<sup>22</sup> See for example Furey C (2017) Developing leaders of learning: The journey at Ruyton Girls' School. *Independence*, Vol 42, No 2. Accessed <https://independence.partica.online/independence/independence-vol-42-no-2-october-2017/flipbook/48/>.

<sup>23</sup> See <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teach/national-review-of-teacher-registration>.

<sup>24</sup> UNESCO media release, 4 October 2022, 'World Teachers' Day: UNESCO sounds the alarm on the global teacher shortage crisis'. Accessed <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/world-teachers-day-unesco-sounds-alarm-global-teacher-shortage-crisis>.

<sup>25</sup> Zoom/IBRS (2022) *The future of education: Lessons for educators*. Accessed <https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&rct=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&cad=rja&uact=8&ved=2ahUKEwi29ZnC5NH7AhVcv2MGHa72CzkQFnoECA4QAQ&url=https%3A%2F%2Fexplore.zoom.us%2Fmedia%2Fpub-lessons-in-education-v5.pdf&usg=AOvVaw3k0XJNu6M877iCvIBmKb0U>.

<sup>26</sup> Accessed <https://ofai.edu.au/>.