



*Australian Principals Federation*



**PRINCIPALS  
FEDERATION**  
OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

# National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

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This is a combined response submitted by the  
Australian Principals Federation (APF)  
Victorian and Western Australian Branches and the  
South Australian State School Leaders Association  
(SASSLA)

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# Introduction

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The APF and SASSLA commend Federal Education Minister Jason Clare on the development of the draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (the plan) aimed at addressing workforce shortages in education. The considered contributions and responses from a cross section of individuals and organisations within the sector, has led to the development of the plan, however disappointment must be expressed that neither the APF nor SASSLA were provided with opportunity to engage and partake in the round table consultation. As key organisations representing the principal class across three major southern states, we would have welcomed opportunity to have equal standing in discussion enabling contributions and perspectives on behalf of our respective members.

Nonetheless, opportunity to provide feedback on the plan has been afforded via the submissions process and we present for consideration the following items contained within.

It is acknowledged that the current teacher and principal shortages are the result of complex problems that have accumulated over an extended period. If the proposed actions are to be solution focussed then ongoing matters relating to excessive workloads, increasing complexities of the role (both teaching and leading), growing demands and expectations and administrative burdens must all be addressed. Furthermore, the lack of respect for the professional continues to prevail and this is particularly directed to staff working with the government school sector.

## PLAN HEADING – ELEVATING THE PROFESSION

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### Key points

- **If the aim is to lift the profile of teachers and their respective standing within communities, then this also needs to be encompassing of principals.**
- **With the above being said, if a new Australian Teacher of the Year Award is to be created, consideration should also be given for a new Australian Principal of the Year Award.**

We endorse the initiatives aimed at elevating the teaching profession and any campaign will require a multi-media approach that is achieved through sustained and targeted measures. Research conducted by [Monash University](#) demonstrates that:

- ❖ 70% of surveyed teachers felt the profession is disrespected by the public
- ❖ 90% of surveyed teachers felt that politicians do not respect teachers
- ❖ 80% of survey teachers felt that the media does not respect teacher.

Society has historically blamed educator quality for the problems in education. Now more than ever teachers and principals are required to account for their professional judgements and decisions through excessive data collection and copious accountability compliance measures. The lack of trust simply erodes commitment and passion. Needless to say, any measures aimed at raising the status of the profession must focus on teachers and principals as highly skilled experts who can be **trusted** to deliver the best for their students.

## PLAN HEADINGS– IMPROVING TEACHER SUPPLY & STRENGTHENING INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

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### Key points

- **Actions identified in this area of the plan co-align with other priority areas.**
- **Investment in improving teacher supply is a high value area with strategies required to be well supported.**
- **More time spent in the classroom for teacher trainees.**

As recently demonstrated in the 2021 National Census Data, as a study area, teacher education has a high attraction rate however, retention and completion rates are not commensurate with entry levels. Whilst bursaries provide monetary award, the consideration for teacher training to be counted as service (by way of studentship) offers greater incentive and award.

Amendment to LANTITE accreditation requirements within first year of the course will ensure supports are available early and provide individuals with opportunity to make informed decisions on whether to invest time and effort in pursuing a teaching career.

In relation to teacher training, the Melbourne University model of the MTeach (Master of Teaching) sets a benchmark in terms of effective preparation and learning for teacher trainees.

The model incorporates an extensive block of placement comprising two days a week in the school and three a week at university. This extended placement period provides greater opportunities in forging strong relationships with the students and mentor teacher. Furthermore, it facilitates comprehensive induction, observation and learning opportunities leading to better understanding of teaching as a craft.

The model is dependent on having access to a great mentor teacher and a school that is willing to accommodate such a heavy presence of pre-service teachers. Drawbacks for the schools do include the demands of the university course load by way of assignments, and the completion of sequences of lesson. These, however, outweigh the positives as trainees benefit immensely from so much time in the classroom.

## PLAN HEADING - MAXIMISING THE TIME TO TEACH

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### Key points

- **The excessive workload being placed on the Principal Class (School Leaders) is separate and independent of teacher workload and must be integral to the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.**
- **The quality of school leadership has a very high influence on school performance.**
- **Excessive school leader workload has created significant costs and risks on the schooling system that will continue to increase under current operating conditions.**

Case study literature highlights the key role the Principal Class play in school effectiveness and improvement and the demonstrated effect of school leadership in schools that experience more difficult circumstances. It naturally follows that how school leadership roles are designed, how leaders are supported in their roles and how their time is utilised and prioritised are important strategic questions.

The identification of excessive school leader workload has been clearly established in the longitudinal research undertaken by Prof Phil Riley through the Australian Principal Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Survey. Consistent feedback from School Leaders across Australia is that their workload has reached unsustainable levels.

The current levels of excessive workload are creating costs and risks across three domains:

- **People:** Detrimental effect on health, personal relationships, and family life.
- **Productivity:** Leaders are less able to prioritise critical elements of work that promote the growth of teaching, learning and practice.
- **Sustainability:** teachers are making alternative career choices away from leadership roles because of the excessive work demands.

Across Australia efforts to deal with excessive leader workload have primarily been piecemeal and sporadic and lack a cohesive and sustained strategic focus. The key costs and risks identified above are not being addressed in any systematic way.

Work currently being undertaken by the Victorian APF in partnership with Prof Phil Riley and by SASSLA in South Australia that focus on deeper system-based interventions, provide exemplars of new thinking of how to deal with excessive school leader workload.

## PLAN HEADING - BETTER UNDERSTANDING FUTURE WORKFORCE NEEDS

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### Key points

- **An improvement in the range and quality of forecasting tools to measure patterns of teacher and school leader demand and supply is urgently needed to better align workforce strategy to the current and emerging risk environment.**
- **There is evidence of changing behaviour in the teaching labour market such as reduced mobility and more emphasis on qualitative considerations in making employment decisions. These changes in behaviour will have a significant impact on the future teacher and school leader labour market and must be factored into future planning processes.**
- **Concerted efforts to be made in bridging the gender gap between female and male teachers in the workforce.**

The combination of plateauing growth in the number of new ITE graduates overall and tightening supply of qualified teachers in the market, deserve analysis of the future risk environment across education jurisdictions.

The impact of a tightening labour market will mainly be felt on the edges of the system – in rural remote and hard to staff locations, and subject areas. The impact will also tend to fall on the areas where the need for high quality public education is most needed to improve the life chances and social mobility of young people.

Forecasting is needed due to the long lead times required to put in place strategies to address imbalances in the labour market.

Experience across the education sector has been that forecasting is complex because of imperfect data and the complex variables that inform the working of the teacher labour market. The advent of improved national data may make forecasting more robust, and it is worthwhile to review what is now possible. This is now an urgent task and it recommended that a review of current State level forecasting models be undertaken to identify potential early applications that may be shared on the national stage.

In the absence of reliable forecasting models there is a very real possibility that strategic investments will be misdirected.

A further critical area of research and review needed is to develop greater understanding of workforce behaviour influenced by such factors as cultural and social change, economic considerations and preferences exhibited by new entrants to the labour market. An area of specific interest to the APF is the increasing lack of interest in teachers seeking careers in school leadership due to workload and flexibility considerations. The thinning of fields for leadership roles is a major but poorly understood future risk to public education.

A further area of interest is the low numbers of male teachers entering the profession particularly in primary schooling. A continuation of this trend limits the potential pool of talent entering the teaching profession and reduces diversity in the workforce.

Signed:



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