

# DRAFT NATIONAL TEACHER WORKFORCE ACTION PLAN SUBMISSION

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

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Independent Schools Australia (ISA) welcomes the opportunity to provide comment on the draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan objectives and actions. We are pleased these significant teacher workforce issues are receiving national attention and the national conversation about the challenges facing schools in attracting and retaining teachers is being amplified and elevated.

Teachers serve many stakeholders, therefore ISA encourages a coordinated action plan between the Australian government, state and territory governments and the non-government sector, national agencies, teacher registration authorities, universities and school educators themselves, to address these multi-layered issues and implement effective cross-sectoral strategies to effect wide-scale reform.

Although short-term incentives are welcomed, a long-term vision for the national teacher workforce from pre-service to experienced teachers, school staff and leaders is necessary for sustained impact.

## 2. ABOUT ISA

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Independent Schools Australia (ISA) is the national peak body representing the Independent school sector. It comprises the eight state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs). Through these Associations, ISA represents 1,187 schools and over 667,000 students, accounting for approximately 16 per cent of Australian school enrolments.

ISA's major role is to bring the unique needs and contributions of Independent schools to the attention of the Australian Government and to represent the sector on national issues.

Independent schools are a diverse group of non-government schools serving a range of different communities. Many Independent schools provide a religious or values-based education. Others promote a specific educational philosophy or interpretation of mainstream education. A number of Independent schools have been established by community groups seeking to meet particular needs or to reflect the religious values of a community. Independent Catholic schools are a significant part of the sector, accounting for eight per cent of the Independent sector's enrolments.

Independent schools include:

- Schools affiliated with Christian denominations for example, Anglican, Catholic, Greek Orthodox, Lutheran, Uniting Church, Quaker and Seventh Day Adventist schools
- Non-denominational Christian schools
- Islamic schools
- Jewish schools

- Montessori schools
- Rudolf Steiner schools
- Schools constituted under specific Acts of Parliament, such as grammar schools in some states
- Community schools
- Indigenous community schools
- Schools that specialise in meeting the needs of students with disabilities
- Schools that cater for students at severe educational risk due to a range of social/emotional/behavioural and other factors.

Most Independent schools are set up and governed independently on an individual school basis. However, some Independent schools with common aims and educational philosophies are governed and administered as systems, for example Lutheran schools. Systemic schools account for 20 per cent of schools in the Independent sector. Four out of five schools in the sector are autonomous non-systemic schools.

### 3. ABOUT THIS SUBMISSION

ISA prepared this submission in consultation with the state and territory Associations of Independent Schools (AISs).

ISA makes the following points to contribute to this important national conversation.

<p><b>Elevating the profession</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.</p>	
<p><b>1. A targeted campaign to raise the status and value the role of teachers</b></p>	<p>ISA supports the development of a positive campaign, focused on the role of teachers and purpose of schooling, highlighting the many great initiatives and activities happening in schools.</p> <p>This action is critical as highlighted by Monash university's report October 2022: <a href="#">Teachers-Perceptions-of-their-Work-2022.pdf (monash.edu)</a>. This research provides analysis of teacher feedback, showing that teachers do not feel their profession is respected, particularly by parents, the media and politicians.</p>
<p><b>2. Creation of new Australian Teacher of the Year Awards.</b></p>	<p>Teacher of the year or similar awards can be short lived and open to subjective assessment of what is seen to be of the greatest value. These types of awards may not always capture the breadth of excellence across the profession. The administration of awards is invariably expensive and time consuming for little sustained impact. Such awards are also offered by State authorities and other organisations. ISA questions the value of adding a further award.</p> <p>ISA recommends scholarships or fellowships (similar to Churchill) be considered as an alternative to support innovative/excellent</p>

	teachers achieve professional goals and facilitate broader community recognition.
3. <b>Encourage members of the public to nominate teachers for Medals of the Order of Australia.</b>	ISA supports this positive action.
4. <b>Targets to increase the number of classroom teachers recognised as high achieving and highly accomplished.</b>	<p>ISA supports teacher regulatory authorities, systems and the non-government sector working with AITSL to streamline requirements for HALT accreditation while preserving the current rigour and national equivalence of the process and high standards of recipients.</p> <p>ISA supports the consideration of 'deeming' to acknowledge other equivalent certifications where the assessment is rigorous and consistent, such as the Experienced Teacher certification in Independent schools in NSW (note action 27).</p> <p>ISA advises that while individual Independent schools may choose to set a target for the number of HALTS recognised in their school, the Independent sector is not in a position to set a collective target for the sector.</p> <p>Appropriate resourcing to support schools and teachers in the accreditation process is likely to encourage greater uptake,</p> <p>ISA supports the trialling of HALT specialisations.</p>
<p><b>Improving Teacher Supply</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To increase the number of students entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE), number of students completing ITE and the number of teachers staying in and/or returning to the profession.</p>	
5. <b>More teaching places at universities in the right subjects and specialisations.</b>	<p>ISA welcomes the additional 4036 Commonwealth Supported Places for education courses, although recognises this number will fall far short of what is required.</p> <p>ISA suggests in-school and public marketing campaigns to promote the profession and attract best students to support this action.</p>
6. <b>5,000 bursaries worth up to \$40,000 each to help attract our best and brightest to the teaching profession.</b>	<p>ISA welcomes this action and notes this opportunity should be open to students from government and non-government schools.</p> <p>ISA requests consideration of other financial incentives such as reduction/cancellation of student debt to entice professionals with non-teaching undergraduate degrees, particularly from traditionally high achieving fields (engineering, maths, data science etc.).</p> <p>ISA notes that 'best and brightest' needs to include positive relational qualities, as key to being an excellent teacher.</p>

<p>7. <b>1,500 more places in the High Achieving Teachers program to encourage more professionals to switch careers to teaching.</b></p>	<p>ISA supports this action and the Independent sector looks forward to capitalising on the greater flexibility of Independent schools in employment related decisions, to contribute to an expanded High Achieving Teachers program .</p> <p>ISA notes that some states and territory based incentives favour government schools and advises to solve the workforce issue, support and incentives need to be cross-sectoral.</p>
<p>8. <b>Trial new ways of attracting and keeping teachers in the schools that need them most.</b></p>	<p>Building on existing initiatives and piloting new programs to attract additional teachers is welcomed. The Independent school sector would be keen to participate in these programs and has trial programs currently in place that could be evaluated and expanded including Growing and Nurturing Educators (GANE) being piloted by AISNSW.</p> <p>Consultation with other professionals and young people in schools will be vital to understand what might attract them to a career in education.</p> <p>ISA recognises initiatives to attract teachers to ‘difficult to staff’ regional and remote locations need to be multi faceted and are further complicated by subsequent difficulties to move back to urban areas . ISA sees attraction and retention of teachers in non-metropolitan locations as a critical issue for investigation.</p>
<p>9. <b>Prioritise visa processing for qualified teachers and prioritise teachers from State and Territory nominated visa allocations.</b></p>	<p>Any action to reduce visa processing time is strongly supported by ISA.</p> <p>Reducing teacher registration processing time is also necessary.</p>
<p><b>Strengthening Initial Teacher Education</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and delivers classroom ready graduates.</p>	
<p>10. <b>The Teacher Education Expert Panel, led by the Vice-Chancellor of the University of Sydney, Professor Mark Scott, is reviewing initial teacher education and will recommend ways to boost graduation rates, and broadly</b></p>	<p>ISA supports the strengthening of initial teacher education programs focused on developing teachers’ knowledge and understanding of evidence-based pedagogical approaches, as well as equipping teachers with practical, classroom management practices and skills.</p> <p>ISA supports a concentrated focus on assisting teachers’ understanding in meeting diverse needs of students and working in collaboration with parents/carers.</p>

<p><b>ensure graduating teachers are better prepared for the classroom.</b></p>	<p>To ensure graduating teachers are better prepared for the classroom, ISA supports improving the quality of teaching placements by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- providing clearer guidelines to supervising teachers as to their role and expectations of the student’s practicum</li> <li>- having additional and/or longer practicums where students are required to intensely focus on particular aspects to gain further experience eg, students with disability, classroom management, differentiation of teaching programs, working with parents and carers etc</li> <li>- greater student supervision, advice and support from universities when on placement</li> <li>- exploration of traineeships, mentoring and other initiatives so that graduates are well supported before embarking on their teaching career. Eg. First six months in a school graduates could be employed and paid as a teacher, though acting as teacher aide, observing highly experienced teachers, supported gradually into teaching their own class/es</li> <li>- removing financial barriers by providing financial assistance to students when on teaching practicums so they can afford to be absent from paid work for lengthy periods of time.</li> </ul> <p>It is important to note there will always be attrition in Initial Teacher Education. This is a result of students realising the profession is not for them, therefore it is essential for students to have enough early exposure in schools in their first year of study.</p>
<p><b>11. Recognise previous study, work experience and skills that may be transferable to teaching.</b></p>	<p>ISA strongly supports any action to recognise previous study/experience/skills, however cautions against any framework being unnecessarily complex and encourages some flexibility in application.</p> <p>ISA is committed to the need for all potential teachers to engage in some profession specific pre-service study and practical skills development.</p>
<p><b>12. Co-design actions to attract and retain more First Nations teachers.</b></p>	<p>ISA supports action to give voice to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander advisory groups and individuals in designing programs to attract and retain more First Nations teachers</p> <p>An existing collaboration between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander school support officers in NSW independent schools and a NSW ITE provider seeks to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers through pathways into recognised</p>

	ITE teaching qualifications. This program could act as a model for others.
<b>13. All teaching students will undergo initial assessment of their literacy and numeracy skills in their first year to ensure they can receive targeted support if they need it.</b>	<p>ISA strongly supports this action, ensuring preservice teachers have early access to LANTITE. ISA recommends consideration be given to mitigating unintended consequences of any early testing, such as costs involved in repeat testing and support available to students not yet enrolled in a tertiary institution.</p> <p>ISA suggests consideration be given to high achieving prospective students being exempt from having to sit the LANTITE.</p>
<p><b>Maximising the time to teach</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To improve retention and free up teachers to focus on teaching and collaboration.</p>	
<b>14. Pilot new approaches to reduce teacher workload through a Workload Reduction Fund to maximise the value of a teacher's time.</b>	<p>As teacher workload and associated factors such as burnout, work-life balance and exhaustion are highlighted as the most common reasons for teachers intending to leave the profession, ISA strongly supports the Workload Reduction Fund as an essential action and is keen to participate in trialling solutions.</p> <p>Teacher workload reduction initiatives must also consider workload burden on non-government schools, and seek to share resources across sectors.</p> <p>This action could be linked to action 17 as ISA recommends a Teacher Workload Impact Assessment should be considered for <i>all</i> the work teachers do, not just work related to initiatives in the National School Reform Agreement.</p>
<b>15. Build on work already underway to maximise teachers' time to teach, plan and collaborate and independently evaluate the effectiveness of these measures on teachers' time.</b>	<p>This action is greatly supported by ISA. It is critical to review the time it takes for teachers to implement curriculum changes, develop scope and sequences and plan effectively for student success.</p> <p>The Grattan report <a href="#">How to give teachers more time to prepare well for class - Grattan Institute</a> provides some interesting baseline data.</p>
<b>16. Examine how to support implementation of the national curriculum and literacy and numeracy progressions.</b>	<p>ISA supports action at the national and state/territory level to develop further resources to support the implementation of the learning progressions Eg. Development of subject scope and sequences that could be adapted to school context, linking NAPLAN proficiency levels to the literacy and numeracy progressions, providing formative assessment resources linked to</p>

	<p>the progressions, providing clearer linkages between the literacy and numeracy progressions and the Australian Curriculum.</p> <p>Consideration must be given to the workload impacts of Australian Curriculum review.</p>
<p><b>17. Each initiative in the next National School Reform Agreement will be subject to a Teacher Workload Impact Assessment.</b></p>	<p>ISA strongly supports this action and notes this could link to action 14 and not be limited in scope to NSRA initiatives.</p>
<p><b>18. Identify the most effective use of initial teacher education students, teaching assistants and other non-teaching staff.</b></p>	<p>Although Independent schools have autonomy in staffing arrangements, ISA supports this action.</p> <p>The use of para-professionals to support teacher workload needs is worthy of further investigations</p>
<p><b>Better understanding future teacher workforce needs</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> Improve the information available for teacher workforce planning.</p>	
<p><b>19. Develop and publish nationally consistent teacher workforce projections based on consistent standards, disaggregated at a regional level and by subject specialisation, to enable a national understanding of teacher demand.</b></p>	<p>ISA supports this action.</p>
<p><b>20. Develop and publish nationally consistent ITE graduate supply data, including disaggregated by subject specialisation and participation in ITE at the regional level, to enable a national</b></p>	<p>ISA supports this action in principle, cautioning the collection of accurate and consistent data may be challenging, particularly for the Independent school sector, and may impose a significant administrative burden. Mitigating collection, accuracy and workload barriers will be important</p>

<p>understanding of teacher supply.</p>	
<p>21. Establish a National Quality Framework to guide Teacher Regulatory Authorities in teacher accreditation and ensure nationally consistent standards for initial teacher education.</p>	<p>ISA supports this action.</p>
<p>22. Prioritise conditional or provisional registration to increase the supply of teachers.</p>	<p>ISA supports this action. We also note that existing provisions in place at the jurisdictional level in some states and territories, already provide flexible options to increase the supply of teachers. ISA strongly recommends that this flexibility not be compromised.</p>
<p>23. Develop and publish comprehensive data about why teachers leave the profession and what careers they move into and what would improve retention, as well as why other career leavers choose teaching.</p>	<p>ISA supports actions for monitoring and better understanding reasons why teachers leave the profession to inform workforce planning and future retention initiatives, however caution should be exercised about the usefulness of publishing this data and the potential to generate a negative public image and operate in opposition to the intent of action #1; elevating the status of the profession.</p> <p>ISA notes that some teachers leave the profession as they are better suited to other types of work.</p>
<p><b>Better career pathways to support and retain teachers in the profession</b></p> <p><b>Objective:</b> To improve career pathways, including through streamlining the process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation, and providing better professional support for teachers to retain them in the profession.</p>	
<p>24. Develop and support career pathways which value teachers and reflect transitions in the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.</p>	<p>ISA supports current and future career pathway initiatives and encourages they be accessible to all sectors (government, Catholic, Independent) where appropriate.</p> <p>ISA also acknowledges the autonomy of Independent schools to develop their own career pathways and associated employment terms and conditions within industrial law and would actively protect this freedom.</p>



	ISA notes there is potential data collection and reporting burden for Independent schools, where the school is the employing authority.
<b>25. Develop national guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders including mentoring and induction.</b>	<p>ISA supports the development of guidelines recognising that many Independent schools currently provide high quality and extensive induction programs. It is important any guidelines are seen as a supplement or support rather to current practices rather than a requirement .</p> <p>ISA strongly supports consideration of teacher traineeships to better prepare early career teachers transition into the profession.</p> <p>Many Independent schools have recognised the value of full time permanent contracts over casual employment options or fixed-term contracts. Incentivising this practice would be welcome.</p>
<b>26. Improve access to high-quality First Nations' cultural competency resources to ensure teachers are better prepared to teach First Nations peoples in culturally safe ways.</b>	ISA supports this action.
<b>27. Streamline HALT accreditation processes to make it less burdensome for teachers to be accredited and incorporate recognition of equivalent qualification and certification processes.</b>	<p>ISA supports the streamlining of the current process for HALT accreditation and exploration of other accreditation options to reduce burden/workload.</p> <p>(see response to 4)</p>
<b>28. Develop micro-credentials and expand the Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) to enhance teachers' access to quality professional development.</b>	ISA supports increased access to quality professional development being available across all three sectors, however recognises there are many options open to schools and would protect the right of Independent schools to chose professional learning most suited to their context and needs.