

NATIONAL CATHOLIC EDUCATION COMMISSION SUBMISSION QUALITY INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION REVIEW

Introduction

The National Catholic Education Commission (NCEC) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (the Review).

The NCEC is the representative body of Australia's Catholic schools. Working closely with State and Territory Catholic Education Commissions, the NCEC advocates at the national level on behalf of the Catholic sector and the hundreds of thousands of Australian families who entrust the education of their children to our schools.

Catholic Education is currently celebrating 200 years in Australia, marking the bicentenary of the first Catholic school established in Parramatta in October 1820.

Catholic schools are the nation's largest provider of education outside the government. Australia's 1,755 mostly low-fee Catholic schools educate one in five, or 777,000 students and employ more than 100,000 Australians, including 65,00 teaching staff. This makes Catholic education a key partner in the delivery of quality teaching and learning and excellence in schooling together with the government and Independent sectors.

The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

The Review is a significant opportunity to build on the strengths of current initial teacher education (ITE) programs and practices, and the substantial initiatives which were recommended and implemented following the *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) in 2014.

The reforms introduced following the TEMAG report are generally well-regarded and appear to be having a considerable, positive effect. The introduction of the next phase of policy developments should allow for previous initiatives to be fully implemented and 'bedded down'.

In launching the Review, the Australian Government Minister for Education and Youth, the Hon Alan Tudge MP, stated that the Review would address two key questions: how to attract and select high-quality candidates into the teaching profession, and how to prepare them to become effective teachers.

The NCEC applauds the Minister's acknowledgment that "Australia's teachers are some of the most dedicated and hard-working in the world and the review would help grow and support the workforce". Significantly the Minister also specifically noted that that the quality of teaching is the most important in-school factor influencing student achievement.

Representatives from NCEC met with members of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Expert Panel for a consultation session to provide advice in the early stages of the Review.

This submission, and the advice provided to the Expert Panel at the consultation session, represents consultation and discussion which the NCEC undertook with initial teacher educators and researchers from Australia's two Catholic universities, the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA), and with colleagues who work in Catholic schools from the Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (ACPPA) and Catholic Secondary Principals Association (CaSPA).

While the NCEC consulted with representatives from other Catholic education institutions and organisations from across Australia, the views expressed in the submission should not be taken to reflect the formal position of institutions and organisations other than the NCEC.

This submission does not attempt to respond to all of the questions or address all of the issues raised in the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review Discussion Paper (the discussion paper). Rather, the NCEC has focused on the following issues raised in the discussion paper:

- Supply and demand in the teacher workforce
- Pathways into teaching
- Integration of initial teacher education with schools, particularly to support beginning and early career teachers.

Catholic schools and commissions across Australia value the importance of our partnerships with Catholic universities. Catholic education, from pre-school to post-graduate, emphasises the importance of educating the whole person, including their spirituality. The NCEC, therefore, strongly supports the vision reflected in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration* that

Education plays a vital role in promoting the intellectual, physical, social, emotional, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development and wellbeing of young Australians, and in ensuring the nation's ongoing economic prosperity and social cohesion.

The NCEC looks forward to working with schools, systems, universities and other higher education providers, and governments to deliver highly effective initial teacher education for quality teaching, in support of this vision.

Supply and demand in the teacher workforce

Sourcing and employing educators with the required skills and knowledge is an ongoing issue for Catholic schools. Teachers employed in Catholic schools are required to meet the same education and registration conditions as their colleagues working in the government and Independent sectors. As the discussion paper highlights, quality teaching is the most significant in-school driver of student outcomes.

All representatives of Catholic education in schools and Diocese, in state and territory Commissions and at the national level, in principal associations and tertiary institutions are therefore strongly interested in policies and conditions to ensure there is a steady flow of well-prepared teachers - beginning, early career, and experienced - to lead and support student learning in Catholic school communities.

The view of teacher shortages in the discussion paper

The discussion paper acknowledges reports of teacher shortages in regional, rural, and remote schools, disadvantaged schools, and in learning areas such as STEM, languages, and VET in schools.

Evidence of such shortages are cited from sources such as the 2019 Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the 2015 Programme for International Student

Assessment (PISA). Both of these international studies demonstrate that significant number of Australian middle school students are taught mathematics and/or science by teachers whose major qualification was in a learning area other than mathematics or science.

Recognition of the ongoing, long-term shortages that schools experience in employing teachers in these learning areas, and the potentially large achievement difference between students taught by expert teachers and students taught by out-of-field teachers, is welcomed.

The discussion paper also recognizes that the 2018 Independent Review into Regional, Rural and Remote Education, undertaken by Emeritus Professor John Halsey demonstrated the difficulties that schools in these locations experience in employing teachers.

However, the discussion paper also cites the 2019 Survey of Employer Recruitment Experiences (SERA) to suggest that there are not widespread shortages of teachers across Australia. The results of the 2019 SERA are not in keeping with other anecdotal or data-based sources of evidence.

Other evidence of current and future teacher shortages

State and territory government systems

Government school systems are large employers of teachers and other educator professionals across all stages of their careers. State and territory Department of Education websites provide further indication of shortages of teachers.¹

These high demand, high priority areas not only comprise, but often go beyond, the learning areas highlighted in the discussion paper to include teachers in Early Childhood Education, Special and Inclusive Education, and Senior School English, as well as leadership positions and school counsellors.

Job Outlook website

Evidence of the broader current and expected shortage of teachers is provided through Australian Government sources, data sets, and publications other than SERA. The Job Outlook website², which is an initiative of the Australian Government National Skills Commission, provides information about Australian careers, labour market trends and employment projections. The website provides a snapshot, based on official Australian Government collected data about industries and careers that are currently in demand, and those likely to be in demand in 5 years.

Information on Job Outlook shows that the numbers of people working in early childhood teacher, education aide, and school principal roles grew very strongly over the most recent five-year data collection. Over the same period, the number of people employed as primary school teachers grew moderately, and those employed as secondary school teachers grew strongly.

More significantly, Job Outlook indicates that the demand across a wide range of educator related careers will continue over the next five-year outlook. Demand for primary school, middle school, and secondary school teachers, as well as school principals, is expected to show strong growth. Demand for early childhood teachers and education aides, as well as education advisers and reviewers, is predicted to show very strong future growth.

¹ See for example, NSW Department of Education www.education.nsw.gov.au/teach-nsw/explore-teaching/high-demand-teachers, Queensland Department of Education www.teach.qld.gov.au/become-a-teacher/high-demand-teaching-areas, NT Department of Education www.education.nt.gov.au/careers-in-education

² www.joboutlook.gov.au/

Skills Priority List

The predicted growth in demand for these education professionals is also reflected in the Australian Government's Skills Priority List (SPL), most recently updated in June 2021³. The list offers labour market analysis on occupations to provide a detailed view of shortages as well as the future demand for occupations across Australia.

The SPL identifies shortages when employers are unable to fill or have considerable difficulty filling vacancies for an occupation or specialised roles within that occupation, with current remuneration and conditions, and in accessible locations. The purpose of the SPL is to provide a key input to a range of Australian Government policy initiatives, including the targeting of skilled migration, apprenticeship incentives and training funding.

The June 2021 SPL indicates that there is, in the main, no current shortage of generalist teachers across a range of levels of schooling in most jurisdictions. The exception to this is early childhood teacher in every jurisdiction across Australia.

Unfortunately, the SPL mainly provides information regarding generalist primary, middle, and secondary school teachers. The SPL does not provide information on teachers working in various specialisations such as languages and STEM. As the discussion paper identifies, these specialisations are learning areas of significant teacher shortage in many metropolitan and non-metropolitan locations across Australia.

Significantly however, the SPL also forecasts that there is moderate to strong indicative future demand for every teacher occupation category, in both regional and metropolitan locations, over the coming five-year period.

Demographics

Some of the strong growth predicated for education professionals in the SPL and on Job Outlook may be due to changes in the provision of education in Australia, the demographics of the Australian community, particularly the teacher workforce. Data on Job Outlook provides information about the age profile of occupations, including education professionals.

The Job Outlook data identifies that the average age of both primary school teachers and secondary school teachers is older in comparison to that of the average age for workers in all jobs. Additionally, the age profile indicates that around 1 in 5 primary school and secondary school teachers are 55 years or older. A further 20 percent to 23.5 percent of the teacher workforce is aged 45 to 54.

The most recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) *Retirement and Retirement Intentions* in Australia data⁴ (2018-19 financial year) shows that the average age of retirement in Australia is 55 years and the average age that people intend to retire is 65 years.

These data suggest that a sizeable proportion of the teacher workforce is highly likely to retire or reduce their working hours in the short to medium term. The transition of such a significant percentage of experienced teachers out of the fulltime workforce will be challenging to replace.

³ National Skills Commission, *Skills Priority List - June 2021* www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-06/Skills%20Priority%20List%20Occupation%20List_0.pdf

⁴ Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Retirement and Retirement Intentions, Australia* www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/employment-and-unemployment/retirement-and-retirement-intentions-australia/latest-release

As the discussion paper indicates pathways to teaching careers generally involve two to four years of full-time study (or part-time equivalent), the exception being certain accelerated pathways that may be completed within one and a half years.

The length of time required to complete an ITE degree together with the demand for teachers over the next five years predicted by the SPL and Job Outlook suggests that there is strong reason to think that currently observed and forecast teacher shortages will be exacerbated, and Australian schools will increasingly find it difficult to employ the teachers they require.

[Teacher shortages in Catholic schools](#)

Broadly speaking, the experience Catholic schools face regarding teacher shortages reflects that of schools in the government and Independent sectors. However, Catholic schools also require a distinctive set of skills, knowledge, and ethos of the teachers, school leaders, and other education professionals that they employ. While also seeking to contribute to the common good of Australian society, Catholic education supports the special nature and mission which is particular to Catholic schools.

In addition to educators and school leaders who are able to support teaching and learning of students in learning areas and key perspectives and capabilities, such as those required by the Australian Curriculum, Catholic schools need qualified and knowledgeable religious education teachers. Employing educators who are willing to engage in the Catholic identity and formation inherent to Catholic education is vital to the distinctive ethos and character of Catholic school communities.

[Catholic education research](#)

The NCEC is currently supporting research being undertaken by the Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association (ACPPA) together with the Australian Catholic University (ACU) and the University of Notre Dame Australia (UNDA). While data for the research is still being collected and interrogated, early results indicate that principals are experiencing shortages of teachers and applicants for leadership positions across a range of learning areas and locations in a variety of school communities.

While these shortages may be experienced most acutely in certain specialised learning areas and regional, rural, remote, and disadvantaged Catholic schools, it is increasingly being observed more broadly.

[The importance of reliable teacher workforce data](#)

The range of additional sources of evidence outlined above, which includes national, state and territory, system, and individual school level information contrasts with the single source used in the discussion paper to suggest that there are not widespread shortages of teachers across Australia.

The issue of divergent analyses of the current and future demand for teachers in Australia and the ability of schools to employ the teachers they require shows the need for better data to provide evidence on the actual situation.

Separate research by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)⁵ and Dr Paul Weldon⁶ of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have in recent years noted the lack of reliable data to determine retention and attrition rates of Australian teachers.

The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD), which was a key recommendation of the 2014 review of ITE by the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG), is intended to address this deficiency. The ATWD will unite and connect ITE data and teacher workforce data from around Australia. It will provide nationally consistent data on subjects like how many teachers we have, how many graduates get jobs, the types of contracts teachers are employed under, teacher career paths and experiences, and how many teachers are entering and leaving the profession.

The NCEC supports this initiative to provide solid, reliable, ongoing data regarding the teacher workforce which will support evidence-based decision making by governments, systems, sectors, and schools.

Pathways into teaching

Catholic schools employ 100,000 Australians, including 65,000 teachers and other education professionals.

Through the two Australian Catholic universities, Catholic education makes a substantial contribution to ITE and the career development of the education profession across Australia. The ACU is the largest provider of ITE in Australia and UNDA also educates a considerable number of ITE students.⁷

Graduates of ACU and UNDA ITE pathways, as well as other teaching and education qualifications, are employed in schools in the Catholic, government, and Independent sectors in all states and territories, regions and locations across Australia. Catholics schools also employ many teachers and school leaders who have been educated in other universities and higher education providers.

Flexible pathways to teaching required

To address the current and predicted future shortage of teachers highlighted above, the NCEC supports the need for flexible ITE pathways to attract and prepare educators for employment in schools.

The discussion paper states that Australian schools are some of the most diverse across the OECD. Not only are schools educating a progressively more diverse population of students but the background and life experiences of Australians seeking to become teachers are also increasingly diverse. Providing alternative pathways, particularly for mid-career aspiring teachers is an important strategy for building a workforce of teachers with rich backgrounds and life experiences.

Alternative pathways to support ITE students from a range of diverse cohort, including cultural and socio-economic backgrounds, knowledge, and experiences is important to enable the teacher workforce to reflect this diversity.

⁵ AITSL (2016) Spotlight - *What do we know about early career teacher attrition rates in Australia?* www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/spotlights-attrition.pdf

⁶ Weldon, Paul. (2018) *Early career teacher attrition in Australia: evidence, definition, classification and measurement*. Australian Journal of Education, 62:1, 61-78.

⁷ Department of Education, Skills and Employment, *2019 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses*. Section 8, table 8.3

ITE pathways need to be available and accessible in a variety of locations for prospective students from a range of educational, vocational, and professional backgrounds and a variety of career stages, seeking to enter through diverse pathways with face to face and hybrid options.

Ideally, these multiple, flexible pathways would provide opportunities for entry to ITE pathways based on secondary education, previous tertiary study in VET or university, professional background or other recognition of prior learning. Greater support for dual qualified teachers/trainers and assessors would also improve the quality and consistency of VET delivered in schools.

The discussion paper recognises that some governments in Australia have implemented programs, such as the Australian Government's High Achieving Teachers program and the Victorian Government's Accelerated Learning Programs, to attract and recruit mid-career and high achieving professionals to the teaching profession. These programs, such as the Nexus Program at La Trobe University and the Teach for Australia program, not only seek to provide an accelerated pathway to complete a teaching degree, but also offer an employment-based learning experience.

The discussion paper also refers to the relatively recently introduced Now Teach model in the United Kingdom. The information provided in the discussion papers provides a positive indication of the initial success this model is showing in working with mid-career professionals, particularly with working experience in learning areas that report teacher shortages, to transition to teaching.

Other examples of flexible pathways

In addition to these alternative models of pathways to teaching identified in the discussion paper, some ITE providers in Australia are investigating or implementing models which deliver integrated methods of providing ITE with school-embedded pathways.

Under these models, ITE is delivered as a collaboration between the higher education provider and a partner school or schools. ITE students are immersed in the professional life of a teacher by becoming a member of the partner school community. These models combine the theory-based foundation required for a successful teaching career at the same time as putting that study into regular practice through an apprenticeship-style professional learning experience in which the ITE student works closely over time with an experienced practicing mentor teacher.

The NCEC encourages governments and ITE providers to engage in further investigation and trials of these type of school-embedded pathways to teaching.

Furthermore, it may be useful to consider a model which articulates a one-year Graduate Diploma type provisional qualification within a two-year Master of Teaching degree. Such a program would offer post-graduate ITE students with formal previous qualifications and relevant knowledge and skills temporary eligibility to teach, on the proviso that they complete the full Master of Teaching qualification within a specified period of time (perhaps 2-3 years) to gain full registration and employment.

Under such a model, the ITE student would maintain their connection to the ITE provider as well as working, possibly for a slightly reduced early career teacher salary. This would enable these ITE students to become provisionally qualified and employed relatively quickly and reduce their loss of income while studying.

The strength of pathway to teaching models that emphasise embedding ITE students in school locations is also demonstrated by programs that include more extensive than the minimum necessary supervised professional experience.

The Accreditation Standards and Procedures for ITE programs in Australia currently require no fewer than 80 days in undergraduate and double-degree teacher education programs and no fewer than 60 days in graduate-entry programs. Some ITE providers include more than these minimum requirements. Such formal and informal professional experiences during ITE often have a powerful impact on ITE student learning and professional formation, as well as easing the transition to the profession.

However, professional experience opportunities are expensive, sometimes ad-hoc, and often rely on champions and key person relationships to be sustainable. Funding is needed to support ongoing issues such as the availability of places for professional experience and to ensuring ITE students have a quality experience.

Integrating students into schools earlier in their degrees so they experience the life cycle of a school year, participate in professional learning with teachers, support school activities, and perhaps work as a teacher aide for one or two days a week, could be a useful way to support the development of profession ready graduates.

While these models may not provide a faster pathway to teaching, a more integrated and extensive professional experience will potentially provide a stronger foundation for ITE graduates and early career teachers.

The NCEC encourages governments to work with universities and other higher education providers to investigate and implement alternative models and pathways to provide ITE programs. Some of these alternative pathways may require increased public funding. Increasing public funding may be required to support the Australian Government's ambition to further develop quality teaching through highly effective ITE in order to lift student achievement.

Integration of initial teacher education with schools

There are considerable other opportunities for ITE providers to work with systems and individual schools for mutual benefit. The NCEC supports models of ITE which seek to further integrate provision of ITE with schools, particularly to support early career teachers in the five to seven years after graduation.

As mentioned above, both AITSL and Dr Paul Weldon of the ACER have in recent years identified the lack of reliable data to determine retention and attrition rates of Australian teachers. Media reports commonly state that "somewhere between 30 and 50 per cent of teachers give up their job within their first five years in the profession".⁸

While, as the research by Weldon and AITSL indicate, these claims may or may not be accurate, there is strong agreement by education professionals about the value of supporting beginning and early career teachers.⁹

Anecdotally, many school leaders, including in Catholic schools, observe that there needs to be greater support provided to beginning and early career teachers. More needs to be offered to work with beginning and early career teachers, not only on professional practice, but also on their mental health, resilience, and wellbeing. Principals and other school leaders report that teachers may be

⁸ See for example www.abc.net.au/news/2016-01-18/fears-of-looming-teacher-shortage-as-student-population-soars/7096102, www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2019/jun/20/sending-new-teachers-to-difficult-schools-could-be-driving-them-out-of-the-profession, and www.smh.com.au/education/why-up-to-half-of-all-australian-teachers-are-quitting-within-five-years-20170605-gwks31.html

⁹ AITSL (2016) Spotlight - *Induction of beginning teachers in Australia - What do early career teachers say?* www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/spotlight/spotlight---induction.pdf

lost to schools as they see the expectations of teaching as unrealistic and unsustainable in its present form.

The discussion paper highlights the importance of induction and mentoring for beginning teachers which has been emphasised by AITSL,

The best induction programs include practice-focused mentoring, leadership contact, participation in collaborative networks, targeted professional learning, observation and reflection on teaching, practical information and time allocation.

However, the discussion paper also notes that the 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) indicates that a minority of Australian teachers with less than five years' experience report having a mentor.

Catholic systems and schools across Australia provide a range of induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers, as well as other educators at different stages of their career.¹⁰ Many schools and systems in the government and Independent sectors provide similar programs.

In addition to the programs provided by systems and schools, there is capacity for greater involvement of ITE providers in the professional lives of early career teachers whether the beginning teacher are graduates of their courses or of other providers. Ideally, these provider programs would work collaboratively with and in support of the induction and mentoring developed and delivered by systems and schools.

Induction and mentoring frameworks and programs that support the integration of ITE with schools would encourage formal and informal professional learning, but also positively influence ongoing ITE provider-school relationships and collaboration. Identified teachers working towards their teacher accreditation at HALT level could be mentors as part of their accreditation process to support and mentor recently graduated teachers.

Such a model could work particularly well to offer the participation in collaborative networks, targeted professional learning, and observation and reflection on teaching that have been identified by AITSL as being important for beginning teachers. This type of collaboration would potentially work to address some of the areas of weakness beginning teachers reported,¹¹ such as pedagogy, design and implementation of the curriculum, assessment and feedback, and classroom management, which are outlined in the discussion paper.

Neither ITE providers nor schools are currently funded to develop and deliver this type of induction and mentoring model. However, limited, directed, specific public funding to investigate and trial such a model could be provided as a government commitment to the improvement of induction and mentoring for early career teachers.

¹⁰ See for example, Brisbane Catholic Education www.bne.catholic.edu.au/bce-employment/graduate-information/Pages/Early-Career-Teacher-Program.aspx, Catholic Education South Australia registrationcentre.cesa.catholic.edu.au/earlycareerteachers, Catholic Education Western Australia www.cewa.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/2020.10_Leadership-Program-Booklet.pdf, Melbourne Archdiocese Catholic Schools www.macs.vic.edu.au/Work-in-our-schools/Beginning-Teachers.aspx, and Catholic Education Diocese of Wollongong www.dow.catholic.edu.au/employment/early-career-teachers/.

¹¹ Mayer, D., Allard, A., Bates, R., Dixon, M., Doecke, B., Kline, J., Kostogriz, A., Moss, J., Rowan, L., Walker-Gibbs, B., White, S., & Hodder, P. (2015) *Studying the effectiveness of teacher education: final report*, Deakin University, Geelong.

Conclusion

The Review is a significant opportunity to build on the strengths of current ITE programs and practices, and the substantial initiatives which were recommended and implemented following TEMAG in 2014.

The suggestion in the discussion paper that there does not appear to be a widespread teacher shortage across Australia is not in keeping with other anecdotal or data-based sources of evidence. These other sources of evidence indicate that demand for educational professionals, including teachers is predicted to show very strong future growth.

The NCEC supports initiatives to provide solid, reliable, ongoing data regarding the teacher workforce which will support evidence-based decision making by governments, systems, sectors, and schools.

The NCEC encourages governments to work with universities and other higher education providers to investigate and implement alternative models and pathways to provide ITE programs. Increased public funding may be required to support the Australian Government's ambition to further develop quality teaching through highly effective ITE in order to lift student achievement.

The NCEC supports models of ITE which seek to further integrate the provision of ITE with schools, particularly to support early career teachers in the five to seven years after graduation. Development and implementation of this type of induction and mentoring model will require additional public funding.

The NCEC looks forward to working with schools, systems, universities and other higher education providers, and governments to deliver highly effective initial teacher education for quality teaching, in support of the vision for Australian education reflected in the *Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration*.