



Australian Government
Department of Education

Issues Paper

Teacher Workforce Shortages

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Introduction

Teachers are the life-blood of the education system and have the greatest in-school impact on student learning. Ensuring an adequate supply of quality teachers is vital to the success of Australia's schools and the outcomes of our students. It supports equitable education delivery, the future skills needs of Australia and our national productivity.

Yet, Australian schools are facing unprecedented teacher supply and retention challenges, with workforce shortages one of the single biggest issues facing teacher employers in all school sectors and early childhood education settings across Australia. This is not just a problem in Australia. The world at large is experiencing challenges associated with the competitive global teaching market, and the ongoing impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Declining numbers of new graduate teachers, increasing demand from a growing student population and an ageing teacher and leadership workforce are all contributing to teacher shortages.

Previous modelling of teacher demand and supply has suggested that these shortages could worsen over the coming years, with the demand for secondary teachers to exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by around 4,100 between 2021 to 2025.¹

The existing shortages have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, with teachers working in a challenging environment and education systems and schools having had to innovate to manage illness and absences. However, COVID-19 related shortages are just one part of a broader and systemic issue. Other factors impacting on shortages include the status of the profession, workload pressures and initial teacher education (ITE) participation.

Addressing the issue of shortages is a shared responsibility, with policy levers affecting the supply of teachers divided between governments. The Australian Government is responsible for skilled migration settings and funding ITE, while the employment of teachers and school leaders, including workforce planning, are the responsibility of the states and territories and the non-government sector. The Australian and State and Territory Governments all have a role in raising the status of the teaching profession and making teaching an attractive career. Governments should work together with education stakeholders to do this.

Governments and education authorities have put in place a range of measures to address teacher shortages. Despite efforts, shortages exist, underscoring the fact that teacher workforce challenges cannot be addressed by any one jurisdiction alone.

This issues paper sets out the nature of the problem and responses to date, to prompt discussion on priority areas of focus at a strategic discussion on the teacher workforce. The issues paper includes evidence and data on teacher supply and demand; a discussion of the factors that contribute to teacher shortages; an overview of government and non-government responses to date and discussion questions on potential actions to address teacher shortages.

¹ Department of Education modelling

Why is teacher workforce supply an immediate national priority?

Teacher shortages are increasing due to multiple factors

High-level modelling previously undertaken by the Australian Government Department of Education indicates that between 2021 and 2025, the demand for secondary school teachers is projected to exceed the number of new graduate teachers by approximately 4,100 teachers.

This reflects strong growth in student enrolments:

- Both primary and secondary student enrolments have grown strongly over recent years, and this is projected to continue. Primary school enrolments are projected to grow by 11 per cent between 2021 and 2031, while secondary enrolments are projected to grow by 10 per cent.²

As well as declining ITE enrolments:

- Across Australia, annual commencements in ITE declined by eight per cent and completions declined by 17 per cent between 2017 and 2020.³

And an ageing teacher workforce:

- The Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) 2018 Teaching and Learning International Survey shows that 45 per cent of teachers aged 50 years and over intended to leave the profession in the next five years. Of teachers aged less than 50 years, 13 per cent intended to leave the profession in the next five years.⁴

The early childhood sector is also experiencing national workforce shortages.⁵ Analysis by the National Skills Commission for the June 2021 Skills Priority List indicated that there is a national shortage of early childhood (pre-primary School) teachers.

² Department of Education's school funding model as at Budget 2022-23.

³ Selected Higher Education Student Statistics www.dese.gov.au

⁴ Data refers to lower secondary teachers. OECD (2019) *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume II): Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris.

⁵ National Skills Commission Skills Priority List, published on 30 June 2021 (https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/sites/default/files/2021-12/24_Education_Professionals.pdf). Accessed on 20 July 2022

Drivers of teacher shortages

Raising the status of the profession

'The social status and relative attractiveness of the teaching profession were raised by many stakeholders as reasons for declining ITE commencements. [Submissions to the QITE Review] mentioned the need for greater efforts to elevate the status of the teaching profession as an important step towards attracting suitable candidates'.⁶

Raising the status of teaching can improve the attractiveness of the profession to prospective teachers. In surveys of the general public, teaching usually has a moderate level of social status, below doctors, nurses and engineers.⁷ The QITE Review Expert Panel heard that high-achieving school students are more likely to choose to study professions they consider more prestigious.

Teachers themselves also feel undervalued relative to public perceptions of teachers. In a 2019 study, 71 per cent of teachers did not think the Australian public appreciated teachers, while 82 per cent of the public felt teachers were respected.⁸

Highlighting the value and rewarding nature of teaching as a career and lifting community understanding of, and respect for, the role of teachers may raise the status of teaching. For example, perceptions of teachers' work had improved as a direct result of COVID-19. People who experienced remote learning first-hand were more likely to have a more positive perception of teachers' work as a result.⁹

Working conditions

'Perceptions of low salary and unfavourable working conditions constitute a barrier for school leavers, with 51 per cent of respondents to the QITE student survey identifying perceptions about low pay as among the most significant barriers to pursuing a teaching career'.

Working conditions play an important role in attracting and retaining teachers.¹⁰ Working conditions comprise a range of factors including workload, salary, career opportunities and employment conditions. Of respondents to the QITE student survey, 51 per cent identified perceptions about low pay as among the most significant barriers to pursuing a teaching career.¹¹

⁶ Unless otherwise stated, quotes are taken from *Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*.

⁷ Ingersoll and Collins (2018) 'The Status of Teaching as a Profession', in Ballantine J, Spade J and Stuber J (eds) *Schools and Society: A Sociological Approach to Education*, Pine Forge Press, California.

⁸ Heffernan A, Longmuir F, Bright D and Kim M (2019) *Perceptions of teachers and teaching in Australia*, Monash University

⁹ Heffernan, A., Bright, D., Longmuir, F., & Magyar, B. (2021). Perceptions of Australian schooling: What matters in 2021

¹⁰ Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., and Joiner, R. (2022). *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help*. Grattan Institute; accessed on 20 July 2022. [Review education policies - Education GPS - OECD: Teacher working conditions](#), accessed on 20 July 2022.

¹¹ Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Workload

Teacher workloads and their complexity have increased over time.¹² In 2018, Australian secondary teachers said they worked an average of 45 hours a week; six hours more than the OECD average of 39 hours a week and an increase of approximately 2 hours from 2013 to 2018.¹³

Teachers spend more time on general administrative tasks per week than teachers across the OECD (4.1 hours versus 2.7 hours).¹⁴ These changes have had significant implications for teachers' ability to plan, with most teachers (92 per cent) saying they 'always' or 'frequently' do not have enough time to prepare for effective teaching.¹⁵

Salary

Australian teachers begin their career on a competitive salary but pay scales are flatter than in comparable countries and teachers can reach the top pay points within 10 years. The OECD reports that Australia's top teacher salary is only 40 per cent higher than the starting salary, significantly below the OECD average of 80 per cent.¹⁶

Outside of the national Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) program there are limited career opportunities for teachers to be recognised and remunerated for their expertise, without moving to school leadership or education bureaucracy positions.

Respondents to the QITE Review general survey identified a perceived lack of career progression opportunities as a key reason for not considering teaching. The QITE Review general survey also found that better pay and career progression opportunities were cited as an attractor by many (31 per cent), particularly for mid-career professionals who may be passionate about a career change to teaching.¹⁷

Casual employment

The casual (relief teaching) workforce plays a role in supporting schools and has proven invaluable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic. Casual employment can impact the profession's attractiveness in two ways – making it attractive to some teachers by providing flexibility and higher pay rates, but can result in lower job satisfaction¹⁸ and retention in the profession.¹⁹ Casual employment arrangements are consistently more common for early career teachers (less than five years' experience). Between 2014 and 2018, an average of 20 per cent of early career teachers considered

¹² Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., and Joiner, R. (2022). *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help*. Grattan Institute

¹³ OECD (2019) *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁴ OECD (2019) *TALIS 2018 Results (Volume I): Teachers and School Leaders as Lifelong Learners*, TALIS, OECD Publishing, Paris.

¹⁵ Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., and Joiner, R. (2022). *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help*. Grattan Institute

¹⁶ Goss, P., Sonnemann, J., and Nolan, J. (2019) *Attracting high achievers to teaching*. Grattan Institute

¹⁷ Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

¹⁸ Chesters, J., & Cuervo, H. (2019). Adjusting to new employment landscapes: Consequences of precarious employment for young Australians. *Sage Journals (Online)*, 30(2), 222-240.

¹⁹ Mason, S., & Matas, C. P. (2015). Teacher attrition and retention research in Australia: Towards a new theoretical framework. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education (Online)*, 40(11), 45.

that their current main job was a casual one, compared with just 10 per cent of teachers with at least five years in the profession.²⁰

Casual and part-time staff are reported to face limited assistance and support needed during their formative teaching years; heightened classroom management problems; physical isolation with reduced opportunities for system-wide structured communication; along with little assurance of a continuing position.²¹ Teachers employed casually or on short-term contracts may also have less agency, resources, or training to engage in efficient lesson planning, potentially increasing the number of hours they must work.

Initial teacher education (ITE)

‘Although we know who we need to attract and why, data from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment’s Selected Higher Education Student Statistics shows that in 2019, the proportion of young high achievers (students aged 20 and under with an ATAR of 80 or more) choosing teaching has declined by nearly a third from 2006 and postgraduate completions have also declined’.

ITE pipeline

ITE is a critical component of the immediate and future supply of teachers, as it not only produces the future pipeline of teachers, but it influences when they will be available, how many will be available and at what standard. The current tight labour market has also led to increased competition for skilled professionals, which may make it even more difficult to attract and retain teachers.

The number of students graduating from ITE has declined by 17 per cent between 2017 and 2020.²² Six-year ITE completion rates of students commencing an undergraduate ITE course declined by eight percentage points between 2010 and 2015 (from 56 per cent to 48 per cent respectively, rounded estimates). Similarly, six-year ITE completion rates of students commencing a postgraduate ITE course declined by five percentage points over the same period (from 79 per cent to 74 per cent, rounded estimates).

ITE policies

Changes to higher education and ITE policy, at both the Commonwealth and state and territory level, can also impact the number of teachers enrolling in and graduating from ITE.²³ For example, through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS), the Australian Government subsidises tuition costs for higher education students across a wide range of discipline areas and qualification levels. In 2018, the Commonwealth capped the funding it would provide for Commonwealth supported places (CSPs).

Through the 2021 Job-Ready Graduates reforms, the Commonwealth has decreased the maximum student contribution amount for education courses by 42 per cent (from \$6,804 to \$3,950 in 2021) to incentivise more students to undertake ITE. To partially compensate for the reduction in student

²⁰ ABS Characteristics of Employment, 2014-2021, TableBuilder

²¹ Buchanan, J., Prescott, A., Schuck, S., Aubusson, P., Burke, P., & Louviere, J. (2013). Teacher Retention and Attrition: Views of Early Career Teachers. *Australian Journal of Teacher Education*, 38(3)

²² Selected Higher Education Student Statistics www.dese.gov.au

²³ The previous Government’s package of reforms to higher education aimed to align higher education delivery with skills needed by Australia’s future workforce. As part of this, Commonwealth Grant Scheme funding rates for units of study in different disciplines, and associated student contribution amounts were changed to incentive students to study in areas of workforce need.

contribution, the Commonwealth contribution increased by 15.6 per cent (from \$11,462 to \$13,250) in 2021.

Caps on CGS funding may have some impact on universities' decisions to enrol more ITE students, however there is little evidence of this happening at present. The JRG changes introduced a flexible funding "envelope" (the higher education courses maximum basic grant amount) which provides universities more flexibility to offer courses at different levels to meet student demand.

Policies to attract high quality candidates into the teaching profession may also have an impact on enrolments. In 2016, New South Wales introduced minimum benchmarks to commence an undergraduate teaching degree, while the Victorian Selection Framework introduced a minimum Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank for year 12 students entering undergraduate teaching programs.

Skilled migration

International migration is a primary driver of student population growth, increasing the demand for teachers. Population projections produced by the Australian Bureau of Statistics show the school student population is projected to grow by 11 per cent between 2022 and 2030 under a medium level migration scenario, compared to one per cent under zero migration.²⁴ This will place significant demand on the number of teachers required to support the school student population, at a time when the number of new teachers entering the profession is declining.

Skilled migration has also been a supplementary measure to increase teacher workforce supply in Australia but is relatively low compared to the number of ITE graduates. For January to June 2022, 1,396 applicants with overseas teaching qualifications were assessed, with a total of 1,332 applications assessed as suitable.²⁵ This included 680 early childhood teacher applicants, 107 primary school applicants and 517 secondary school teacher applicants. Border closures as a result of COVID-19 have recently restricted employers' access to teachers from overseas.

The current arrangements to allow suitably qualified migrants to work as teachers in early childhood or school settings are complex, involving various agencies across levels of government. The process includes skills assessment, qualification recognition, visa application and teacher registration.

Recruiting teachers in areas of need

Achieving a balance between total supply and total demand in the teaching workforce does not automatically ensure schools can recruit the teachers that they need, particularly in regional and remote areas, and in certain subject areas (such as science, mathematics, special/inclusive education, languages and design and technology). This is indicated by the high rate of subjects being taught by out-of-field teachers in maths 40 per cent of the time, science 29 per cent of the time and design and technology 46 per cent of the time.²⁶ Addressing these shortages is made more challenging by the lack of publicly available evaluations of initiatives to attract and retain teachers in hard-to-staff schools, making it difficult to determine what works.²⁷

²⁴ ABS, Population Projections, Australia, 2017-2066 (ABS.Stat Data Explorer). Age range is 5-18 years old, projection series used zero migration projection and medium migration projection.

²⁵ AITSL (2022) Assessment for Migration data

²⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (2021) *ATWD National Teacher Workforce Characteristics Report*.

²⁷ Lampert et al, 2021, Research into initiatives to prepare and supply a workforce for hard-to-staff schools.

Early childhood education sector

'Attracting, developing and retaining a children's education and care workforce continues to be a significant and increasing challenge across the sector. The challenge is more acute for specific parts of the workforce, notably the regional and remote workforce, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander workforce'.²⁸

Analysis released in June 2021 by the National Skills Commission for the Skills Priority List confirms that there are national shortages in early childhood occupations.²⁹ Additionally, the National Skills Commission projects employment growth of around 21,800 early childhood educators, teachers and child care centre managers in the five years to November 2026.³⁰

There are several factors contributing to the shortage of early childhood teachers: declining enrolments and completions in approved educator and early childhood teacher qualifications; comparatively lower pay and less favourable working conditions in some segments of the sector leading to attrition to other sectors; increased turnover rates due to COVID-19; and lack of community awareness and acceptance of the value and complexity of early childhood education as a profession.

Diversity

'[T]he lack of existing diversity in the teaching workforce can be a deterrent for future diversity, as potential teachers from diverse backgrounds may not feel they will be welcomed and valued in the workplace'.

A common concern about the teacher workforce is whether it reflects the diversity of the school student population. For example, Indigenous teachers are underrepresented in the teacher workforce. Estimates show that Indigenous students make up 6 per cent of the student population,³¹ while 2016 Census data shows that Indigenous teachers and school leaders make up one per cent of the workforce.³²

Indigenous students are also underrepresented in ITE, which flows through into underrepresentation in the workforce. Indigenous students as a share of total ITE commencements increased from 1.8 per cent in 2006 to 3.2 per cent in 2020. However, Indigenous student completions as a share of total ITE completions only increased from 1.5 to 2.2 per cent.³³

COVID-19 is compounding teacher shortages

Teacher shortages have been further exacerbated by COVID-19. In addition to restricting the migration of overseas teachers, it has increased staff absences and reduced the pool of casual relief teachers, a resource traditionally used to fill temporary vacancies. Education authorities have responded in various ways to meet supply challenges and to support continued face to face learning as much as possible. This has included engagement of preservice teachers using 'permission to teach' provisions.

²⁸ Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority (2021) *Shaping Our Future, National Children's Education and Care Workforce Strategy*.

²⁹ National Skills Commission, 2021. <https://www.nationalskillscommission.gov.au/publications/skills-priority-list-key-findings>

³⁰ See p. 25 at <https://australiainstitute.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Educating-for-Care-WEB.pdf>

³¹ Australian Bureau of Statistics (2022) *Schools, 2021*. Cat. No 4221.0.

³² ABS Census of Population and Housing 2016

³³ Selected Higher Education Student Statistics www.dese.gov.au

What is being done, and what needs to take place now, to address shortages and where are the gaps?

Improving data and evidence

'Despite longstanding reports of shortages facing the Australian schooling system, there is little systemic national data and modelling to assess the volume and nature of the supply and demand of teachers in Australia'.

Jurisdictions publish data on teacher supply and demand. For example, the Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report regularly publishes information about total teacher numbers, projected demand, and anticipated supply. The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative is building data on teacher supply by connecting ITE data and teacher workforce data from across Australia. The aim is to build a national picture of the teacher workforce, but there is no national approach to understanding teacher workforce supply, demand and deployment.

The QITE Review recommended developing a national approach to understanding teacher supply and demand to support national workforce planning, including information to support discussions between employers and ITE providers about workforce needs.³⁴

Questions for discussion

While the ATWD provides key insights into teacher supply, how can we improve the development of this collection? How can we develop better demand data by subject and location? What data and evidence are needed to better understand the drivers behind ITE students not completing their degree and early career teachers leaving the profession?

Raising the status of the profession is critical

A number of reforms have been introduced in recent years that have helped to raise the professionalism and status of the profession, including the introduction of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and reforms to ITE, such as the introduction of Teacher Performance Assessments. States and Territories have invested in communication activities to boost the profile of the teaching profession and attract new candidates to teaching degrees.

The importance of this issue was highlighted by the QITE Review, which recommended raising the status of the profession through a national recruitment campaign featuring expert teachers, celebrating the positives of teaching and debunking negative myths.

Questions for discussion

There is a role for all governments and education stakeholders in raising the status of the teaching profession and making teaching an attractive career. How could a national campaign to highlight the importance of the profession be effective in attracting and retaining teachers? What are other effective approaches to raise the status of the profession?

³⁴ Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review

Improving career pathways and working conditions

Career pathways and remuneration

The QITE Review found there were limited career paths for experienced teachers and recommended that jurisdictions, sectors, schools and unions should consider whether the existing career structure for teachers supports a modern high-performing workforce.

Jurisdictions are deploying different methods to increase the uptake of certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) levels of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*. The New South Wales Government has set an ambitious target to recognise at least 2,500 of the most talented teachers across the state at the highest levels of national accreditation by 2025. In addition to setting ambitious targets, the Australian Capital Territory has piloted and evaluated a modular approach to the HALT certification process to improve accessibility and scalability for HALT applicants. The Australian Government has committed to work with State and Territory Governments to “provide great career paths so excellent teachers have more opportunities to be recognised and rewarded as expert master teachers.”³⁵ This initiative recognises that experienced classroom teachers need more opportunities for development, to demonstrate expertise and to be rewarded financially.

In recent years, Victoria has established two new senior teaching positions (‘leading teachers’ and ‘learning specialists’), which strengthen the teaching career structure in Government schools in Victoria. The leading teacher role is designed to have a focus on leadership and management beyond curriculum and professional learning. The learning specialist role is intended to provide an opportunity for skilled classroom teachers to remain in the classroom, while supporting their colleagues to improve their teaching practice.

Questions for discussion

The skills of teachers are also increasingly valuable in non-teaching roles, particularly in a labour market where competition for skills is fierce. How should governments support the professional development and specialisation of the teaching workforce to attract and retain teachers, particularly for those that wish to remain in the classroom?

Workload

The impact of administration and compliance reporting on the attractiveness of teaching was an issue identified by the QITE Review. The Grattan Institute report, *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy could help* also highlighted the need to let teachers teach, by better utilising the wider school workforce, helping teachers work smarter by reducing unnecessary tasks and rethinking the way teachers’.³⁶

Jurisdictions are implementing initiatives to lower workloads. For example, New South Wales has introduced the ‘Quality Time’ program which seeks to simplify and modernise administrative processes and practices.³⁷ In Victoria through the 2022 Victorian Government Schools Agreement, primary and secondary teachers will see a reduction of one hour in maximum face-to-face teaching

³⁵ Labor’s Plan to Fix Teacher Shortages and Stop the Slide in School Results | Policies | Australian Labor Party (alp.org.au). Accessed 20 July 2022.

³⁶ Hunter, J., Sonnemann, J., and Joiner, R. (2022). *Making time for great teaching: How better government policy can help*. Grattan Institute.

³⁷ *Quality Time: Action Plan to simplify administrative practices in schools*. September 2021. www.education.nsw.gov.au Accessed 20 July 2022.

time in 2023, then a further half-hour reduction in 2024. Queensland is also piloting a Teacher Rapid Response Team, which establishes a pool of temporary and permanent state school teachers who can be deployed at short notice to temporarily fill specific teaching vacancies in priority geographic areas.

Questions for discussion

How can we reduce administrative burden to give teachers the time to deliver high quality learning and support for students and their school communities? What promising approaches to reducing teacher workload could be piloted, such as deploying administrative or support staff more effectively to take on tasks that do not require teaching expertise or qualifications?

Professional development

Investing in the existing teacher workforce is also important to support quality and retention. State and territories also provide a range of supports to teachers, such as induction and mentoring for early career teachers to combat attrition at this career stage. For example, Teacher Learning Centres are embedded across Queensland to support preservice, beginning and early career teachers during their teaching journey. The QITE Review found that mentoring is a key element of support for early career teachers and recommended the development of a set of national standards to be used by jurisdictions and schools.

The Australian Government has committed \$10.8 million over 2022-23 to 2025-26 to support evidence based professional learning for teachers: expanding Quality Teaching Rounds and designing and delivering micro-credentials in areas of need: phonics, explicit instruction and classroom management.

Questions for discussion

How can all governments and universities work collaboratively to enhance supports such as induction and mentoring for early career teachers to combat attrition at this early career stage?

Initial teacher education

Australian, state and territory government have a range of policies to attract people into teaching. These include scholarships, training allowances, completion bonuses, study support, job guarantees and bonuses for taking hard to fill roles. For example, Queensland's *Turn to teaching* program provides financial support to eligible individuals while they study a postgraduate teaching degree.

The Australian Government has committed to providing 20,000 commencing CSPs over 2023 and 2024, target national priorities and skills needs, including teaching. Additional CSPs created under this measure will be directed towards study areas that align with skills shortages and occupational growth areas as identified by the National Skills Commission. The Australian Government has also committed \$50.8 million for 5,000 bursaries to attract high achieving school students to choose teaching as a career. It will also commit \$71.5 million over four years to boosting the High Achieving Teachers Program to support 1,500 qualified professionals swap careers for teaching.

The Victorian Government is also investing in innovative ITE models including accelerated and employment-based degrees. These will provide opportunities for recent graduates and career changers to enter the profession.

Questions for discussion

What interventions are needed to address declining interest in teaching and declining ITE completion rates?

What innovative ITE arrangements could be considered to attract a diverse and high-quality pool of students to teaching, and support them into the profession? How should they be designed to meet specific areas of need?

How do we ensure the combined efforts of all jurisdictions in the provision of ITE scholarships, bursaries and other incentives work together to attract more students to teaching?

Skilled migration

Arrangements to allow suitably qualified migrants to work as teachers involve Commonwealth and state and territory governments. The Australian Government is clearing the backlog of nearly one million visa applications. This includes prioritising 60,000 permanent visa applications by overseas skilled workers to fill urgently needed jobs, including teaching.

Questions for discussion

The Australian Government is prioritising the processing of existing visa applications for teachers. What other methods could be used to attract skilled teachers from overseas? What supports are needed to ensure new teachers thrive once relocated to Australia?

Recruiting teachers in areas of need

Australian, state and territory governments have policies to both attract and retain teachers to address teacher shortages in particular subject areas and locations. For example, the Victorian Government is investing in attracting more teachers to fill hard-to-staff positions in Government schools across the state. Incentivised roles are available for teachers of hard-to-staff subjects, positions in rural and regional areas, and/or positions in schools with a high proportion of disadvantaged students.

Queensland's *Rural and Remote Teacher Experience Program*, which provides potential urban teachers and pre-service teachers an opportunity to experience a rural or remote school through a short visit. In the Northern Territory, the Remote Aboriginal Teacher Education (RATE) program supports existing and aspiring Aboriginal educators to undertake tertiary ITE courses and progress their teaching career while living on country. Since 2019, eligible teachers teaching in very remote areas of Australia can access an Australian Government initiative, Reduction of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) debts for teachers in very remote areas, to either waive indexation on accumulated HELP debt or reduce accumulated HELP debt.

Questions for discussion

What more needs to be done to attract staff to particular subject areas and hard to staff schools? How can we upskill teachers in particular subject areas?

Early childhood education

Broader labour market and workforce issues, including teacher workforce challenges, have implications for early childhood teachers. Early childhood reforms and commitments from a number

of jurisdictions including New South Wales and Victoria will increase demand for high quality early childhood educators and teachers. The co-designed 10-year National Children’s Education and Care Workforce Strategy (Strategy) was released by the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA), in October 2021. The strategy supports the recruitment, retention, sustainability and quality of the early childhood workforce. The ten-year timeframe for the strategy recognises the complexity of the workforce challenges faced by the sector and provides a framework for all stakeholders to work collaboratively towards the strategy’s goals.

Questions for discussion

How do we ensure joined up approaches to address teacher shortages common across the early childhood and schooling sectors, where addressing shortages in one sector does not worsen shortages in the other?

Conclusion

Teacher shortages are impacting schools across the country and are being experienced globally.

This paper outlines the main factors impacting and driving teacher shortages.

In drawing out the challenges faced by governments, systems, sectors and schools, this paper highlights that addressing teacher shortages cannot be solved by one jurisdiction or sector alone.

Ultimately, how we respond to the teacher shortages in the short, medium and long term will impact the adequate supply and retention of quality teachers in Australian schools for the future.