

Australian Catholic University

Submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession

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Submission to the Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession

Executive Summary

Australian Catholic University (ACU) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession (the Inquiry).

ACU is a leading provider of initial teacher education (ITE), educating more teachers than any other university in Australia and producing world class education research. ACU's vice-chancellor, Professor Greg Craven, chaired the Australian Government's Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group (TEMAG) report, *Action Now, Classroom Ready Teachers*, the recommendations of which are currently being implemented and show great promise in raising the status of ITE.

Academically high achieving school leavers commonly state they are deterred from pursuing careers in teaching by the salary and conditions.¹ Once in the profession, however, the main reason teachers give for leaving teaching, particularly in their first five years, is the intense workload and, to a lesser extent, the relatively low pay and status.²

As a result, teaching is approaching a moment of crisis, both in terms of the increased exit from and reduced entry to the profession. Early career teachers are leaving the profession in "epidemic proportions",³ while there has been a collapse in the number of students opting to pursue teaching as a first choice of study at university. This submission shows in its introduction that the collapse in the social standing of the profession has been partly driven by concerted political attacks on ITE that have occurred over the past several years.

The negative and facile debate about the calibre of entrants into ITE is driving away good applicants, while the intrinsically difficult work of being a teacher, made worse in Australia by heavy face-to-face teaching loads, is causing a crisis of confidence within the profession itself.

ACU submits that the ill-informed political attacks on ITE should cease and then, among other measures necessary to improve the status of the profession, teachers should be given more time and space within their workload allocations to collaborate with colleagues on professional development and to reflect on their own practice to improve their expertise. This is best practice in other comparable countries but is less available to Australian teachers.

¹ Ingvarson, L., Reid, K., Buckley, S., Kleinhenz, E., Masters, G., Rowley, G. *Best Practice Teacher Education Programs and Australia's Own Programs*. (Sept, 2014). ACER report. Canberra: Department of Education. p. 48.

² U.K. House of Commons Education Committee, "Recruitment and retention of teachers," 8 February 2017.

³ Andrea Gallant and Philip Riley, 'Early career teacher attrition: new thoughts on an intractable problem,' *Teacher Development*, Routledge: 2014. See also Reid, James, 'Confronting the decline in teacher morale,' *The Educator*, 16 April 2015

In total, ACU provides ten recommendations in response to the Inquiry's terms of reference (TORs).

In response to the first TOR, *Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures*, ACU makes four recommendations:

1. Reduce the face-to-face teaching hours of teachers to bring them into line with other Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) countries so as to allow opportunities for professional development, reflection, observation of other classes and, in the case of early career teachers, meetings with mentors.
2. Prioritise nationally consistent reporting of early-career teacher attrition rates via the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) project.
3. Commission the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to conduct a detailed, national research project on the reasons why early-career teachers leave the profession, including sectoral, state and territory differences, and annual follow up to monitor policy interventions' efficacy.
4. Develop more sophisticated career pathway structures for teachers that reflect diverse opportunities for advancement either within or outside school teaching roles.

In response to the second TOR, *Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources*, ACU makes three recommendations:

5. In order to permit them to focus primarily on teaching, teachers should be freed from the excessive burden of non-core activities through the increased delegation of non-core tasks to para-professional staff and final year student teachers working part-time as paid interns.
6. Teachers should be afforded more professional collaboration time to develop communities of practice and undertake continuous professional learning as a routine activity.
7. All teachers should develop a greater understanding of assessment processes and methodologies as part of their on-going discipline knowledge.

In response to the third TOR, *Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced*, ACU makes two recommendations:

8. Teachers should be given the time within existing working hours to complete all their duties rather than being expected to complete them in their own time as unpaid work.
9. AITSL should conduct a detailed review of the extent and nature of teachers' out-of-hours, at-home work and whether such work could be delegated to para-professional or administrative staff.

Finally, in response to the fourth TOR, *Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching profession, and avoid 'burn out' among early-career teachers*, ACU makes one recommendation:

10. More Highly Accomplished and Lead (HALT) teachers should work across schools and universities to mentor early-career teachers and create effective communities of practice.

ACU anticipates that the inquiry will receive some submissions that seek to focus, unhelpfully, on entry requirements to ITE. ACU submits that the status of the teaching profession will only be damaged by rhetoric that implies teaching is a career pursued overwhelmingly by academically mediocre students. Such suggestions are not only inaccurate but also serve to pour cold water on the ambitions of academically high achieving students who may otherwise harbour a passion and interest to join the teaching profession.

ACU submits that a more considered public discourse in respect of those aspiring to be teachers, combined with the implementation of the TEMAG reforms and improved conditions for teachers in the workforce, have the greatest potential to inspire a positive impact on the status of the teaching profession in Australia.

Introduction and inquiry context

In recent years, the status of the teaching profession has suffered from a number of sustained political attacks, together with regular sensationalist media commentary around the calibre of those entering the teaching profession.

For many years, former NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli, in particular, sought to paint students commencing ITE as low-achievers, claiming that there was a perception that “anyone can get into teaching”.⁴ This, he argued, necessitated the imposition of rigid minimum entry requirements,⁵ which resulted in the introduction in NSW of a policy entitled *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning*.

This unfortunate narrative was spurred on by regular media reports of outlier cases of students entering ITE courses with low Australian Tertiary Admission Ranks (ATARs).⁶ Reporting tended to overlook the point that such cases were invariably due to extenuating circumstances, such as significant factors that had interrupted the student’s year 12 studies, and also generally ignored the fact that less than 20 per cent of students entered ITE on bases other than an ATAR, such as prior tertiary study.

In 2016, the Victorian Government followed NSW’s lead and announced the imposition of minimum ATARs for entry into ITE courses.⁷ In the process, Victorian Education Minister James Merlino perpetuated the narrative of teaching having become a profession for low achievers.⁸

Having been delivered repeatedly over several years, the message that teaching has become a profession pursued by those with low ATARs has embedded its way into public consciousness. In turn, it has contributed significantly to an increased reluctance among academically high achieving students to pursue teaching in preference to other, more prestigious disciplines.

The number of students selecting ITE as their first preference course in NSW has plummeted since the negative public discourse commenced in NSW in late 2012.

⁴ Amy McNeilage, “Adrian Piccoli says teacher selection criteria should be more strict”, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 January 2014.

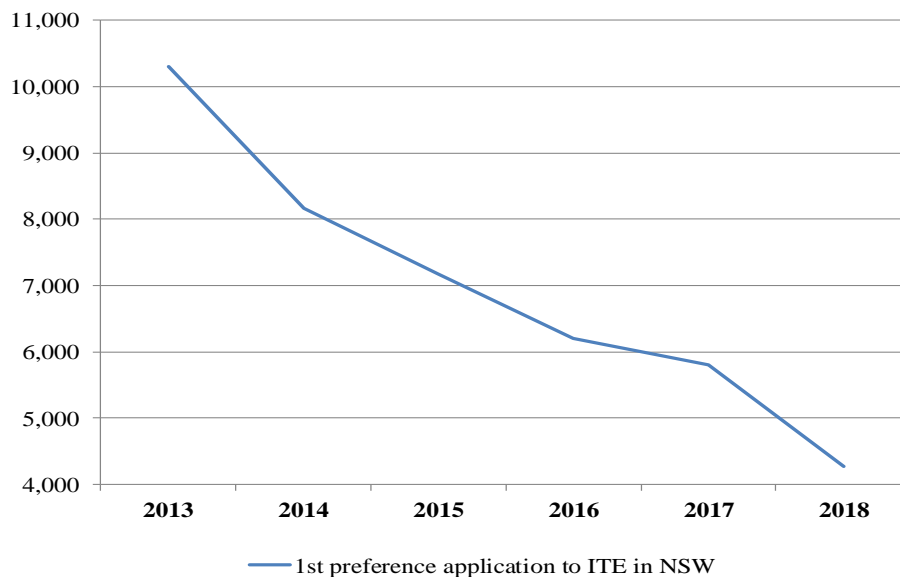
⁵ For example, see: Eryk Bagshaw, “NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli warns HSC students over teaching standards,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 September 2015; Eryk Bagshaw, “ATAR charade: Bring back student caps, says NSW Education Minister Adrian Piccoli,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 February 2016.

⁶ See, for example, Ashley Argoon, “Victoria’s low ATAR scoring students still let into university teaching courses,” *Sunday Herald Sun*, August 11, 2018.

⁷ Minister for Education, “Raising The Bar: Top 30 Per Cent Of Students For Teaching,” 23 November 2016

⁸ “You can have an ATAR of 30 and get into a teacher course today. Those people are just not ready to be teachers,” Minister Merlino told ABC News. See Stephanie Anderson, “Entry scores for teaching courses in Victoria increased to ATAR of 70 by Andrews Government,” *ABC News*, 23 November 2016.

Figure 1: ITE first preference applications in NSW, 2013-18



Source: Universities Admission Centre (UAC) data provided to universities

However, the fall in applications and enrolments has occurred among students with higher ATARs as well as those with lower ATARs. Indeed, enrolments in NSW of students with ATARs over 70 have dropped by over 16 per cent since Mr Piccoli’s intervention, from 2013 to 2017.⁹

The *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning* policy has therefore failed in its stated goal to “attract more of the brightest and motivated school leavers” to teaching,¹⁰ instead contributing to an overall “talking down” of the profession.

A drop in applications to ITE courses in Victoria has also gathered pace since Deputy Premier Merlino announced his *Excellence in Teacher Education* reforms in 2016.¹¹ From 2016 to 2017, Victorian commencing domestic student enrolments in ITE dropped by 10 per cent.¹²

A consequence of the growing negative perceptions around teaching and the consequent fall in enrolments is likely to be a shortage of teachers in the medium term, particularly in already hard-to-staff subject or geographical areas.

Both NSW and Victoria in particular are reducing the future supply of teachers in their states just as their school-aged populations are booming.

⁹ 2017 is the latest data available. See Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, Higher Education student data collection, NSW commencing domestic Bachelor students who are school leavers admitted based on their ATAR only.

¹⁰ NSW Government, *Great Teaching, Inspired Learning: A blueprint for action*, March 2013, Page 7

¹¹ ACU analysis of publicly available Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) data.

¹² Commonwealth Department of Education and Training. Higher Education student data collection, 2015 to 2017.

The NSW Government's latest budget outlines spending of \$6 billion over four years on new and upgraded schools to handle what it describes as “unprecedented” enrolment growth – an additional 164,000 students in government schools by 2031.¹³

The Victorian Department of Education and Training forecasts potential teacher shortages at some levels in the next few years, and vacancies are already proving difficult to fill in a number of regional and remote areas.¹⁴

Australia also has one of the oldest teaching populations in the world, with over 37 per cent of Australian teachers aged 50 years and above, one of the highest proportions in the OECD.¹⁵

The consequences of looming teacher shortages include larger class sizes, more teachers teaching out of their fields and the need to import teachers from overseas.

Consequently, the narrative that teaching is a profession for low achievers is increasingly harming the status and future of the profession in Australia.

This is despite the existence of an evidence-based blueprint, contained in the 2014 TEMAG report, which ensures that ITE graduates entering Australian classrooms are of a high standard.

Few professions in Australia now contain as many formal hurdles and registration requirements as teaching. These include nationally agreed reforms arising from the TEMAG report that have the potential to raise the status of, and inspire community confidence in, teaching degrees.

Recently, this Committee endorsed TEMAG's recommendations and observed that “suggestions such as ‘raising the university entrance score for teaching’ may not, without a change in remuneration and attitudes to teaching result in better teachers”.¹⁶ This finding echoes the views of experts in the field.¹⁷

ACU submits that a more considered public discourse in respect of those aspiring to be teachers, combined with the implementation of the TEMAG reforms and improved conditions for teachers in the workforce, have the greatest potential to inspire a positive impact on the status of the teaching profession in Australia.

¹³ NSW Budget 2018-19.

¹⁴ Department of Education and Training (2018). *Victorian teacher supply and demand report 2016*. Melbourne: DET. “There is a potential for an under supply of available secondary teachers to occur” before 2022 and there is “an above average no appointment rate for vacancies in outer regional and remote areas” (p. 5).

¹⁵ This rate is higher than all other OECD countries except for Italy, Estonia, Bulgaria, Latvia and Sweden. (see Freeman, Chris; O'Malley, Kate; and Eveleigh, Frances, *Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013: Final Report* (2014)).

¹⁶ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (May 2018), *Unique Individuals, Broad Skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*, p. 19.

¹⁷ See Ingvarson, L., et al (Sept, 2014), note 1 above.

Responses to the Review's Terms of Reference

1. Increasing the attractiveness of the profession for teachers and principals, including workplace conditions, and career and leadership structures

Teaching remains a highly demanding yet under-remunerated profession with a corresponding perceived lack of status. In fact, only 38.5 per cent of Australian teachers believe that teaching is a valued profession in our society.¹⁸

Unlike many professions, most teachers in Australia will reach their maximum earning capacity within seven years' post-graduation employment.¹⁹ Across Australia, teachers' maximum salary is only 43 per cent higher than their starting salaries.²⁰

Despite modest salaries, Australian teachers work more hours than the OECD average.²¹ This face-to-face teaching pressure is likely driven by Australian students having the highest compulsory instruction hour requirement in the OECD.²²

A 2017 parliamentary report in the United Kingdom found that, while pay levels and relative professional status are contributing factors, the primary driver for teachers to leave the profession is work intensity.²³ This is particularly the case in respect of early career teachers, and experts have made similar observations about the unmanageable workload of Australian teachers.

The OECD has criticised Australia's overcrowded, content-heavy curriculum, delivered by overworked teachers. Mr Andreas Schleicher, director-general of the OECD's Directorate for Education and coordinator of the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), has observed that, due to their heavy workloads, Australian teachers were not given the same opportunities to collaborate with colleagues, research literature on best practices, and reflect on their own practice and experience that exist in other high-performing countries.²⁴

¹⁸ OECD (2014), *Talis 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, Figure 7.3, p. 187.

¹⁹ OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D3. How much are teachers and school heads paid? Table D3.3a and D3.6 (web only) and p. 363 of report.

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D4. How much time do teachers spend teaching? Figure D4.2. p. 383

²² OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D1. How much time do students spend in the classroom? Figure D1.1. p. 334

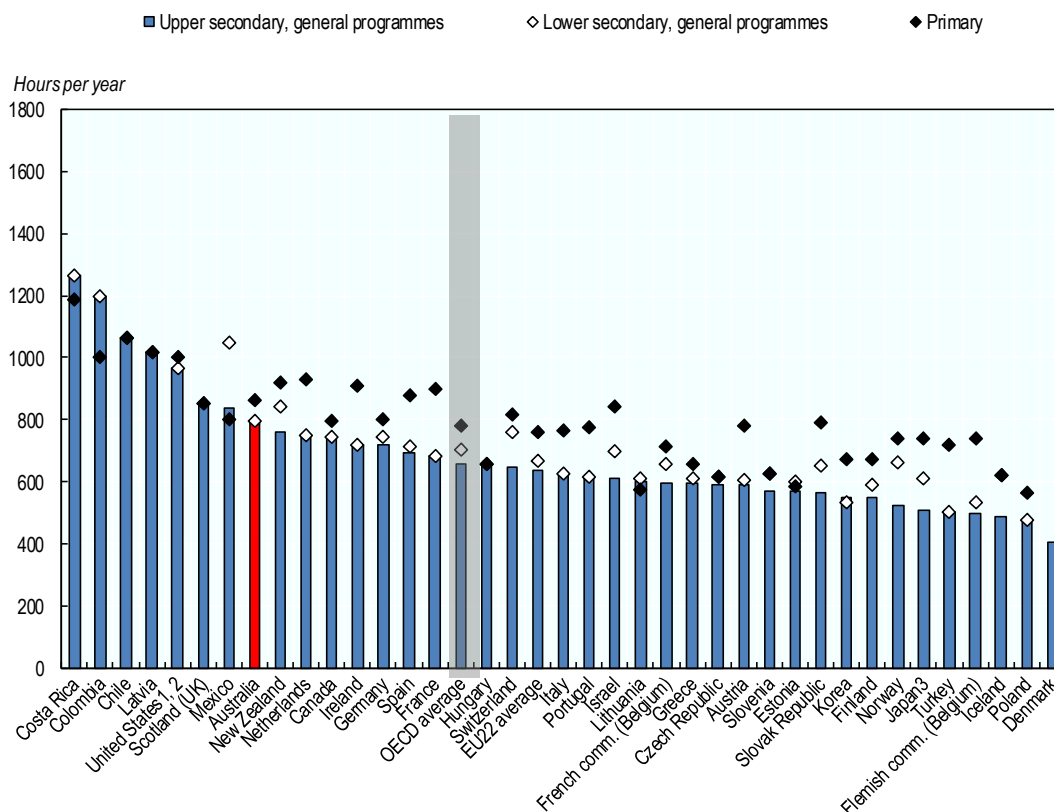
²³ U.K. House of Commons Education Committee, "Recruitment and retention of teachers," 8 February 2017.

²⁴ Eryk Bagshaw and Alexandra Smith, 'Education policy not adding up: OECD asks what's wrong with Australia's schools?' *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25th March 2016.

Mr Schleicher stated that the challenge for the Australian education system is “to make teaching intellectually more attractive”²⁵ and that employers need to provide “intelligent pathways for teachers to grow in their careers”.²⁶

Australian teachers spend longer hours teaching than their international counterparts and less time in professional learning. The workload is greater than Scandinavian countries such as Finland, Norway, Iceland, and Denmark, as well as countries such as Japan and Belgium. It is also greater than the OECD average (see Figure 2):

Figure 2: Number of teaching hours per year, by level of education (2017)



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D4. How much time do teachers spend teaching? Figure D4.2. <http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018-data-and-methodology.htm>

An Australian primary teacher provides 123 more face-to-face teaching hours than their Japanese counterpart (both working the same 40-week teaching year), while Australian lower secondary teachers provide 187 more hours and upper secondary teachers 286 more hours per year than in Japan.²⁷ Japan performs better than Australia on PISA yet their teachers have far fewer face-to-face teaching hours than in Australia.

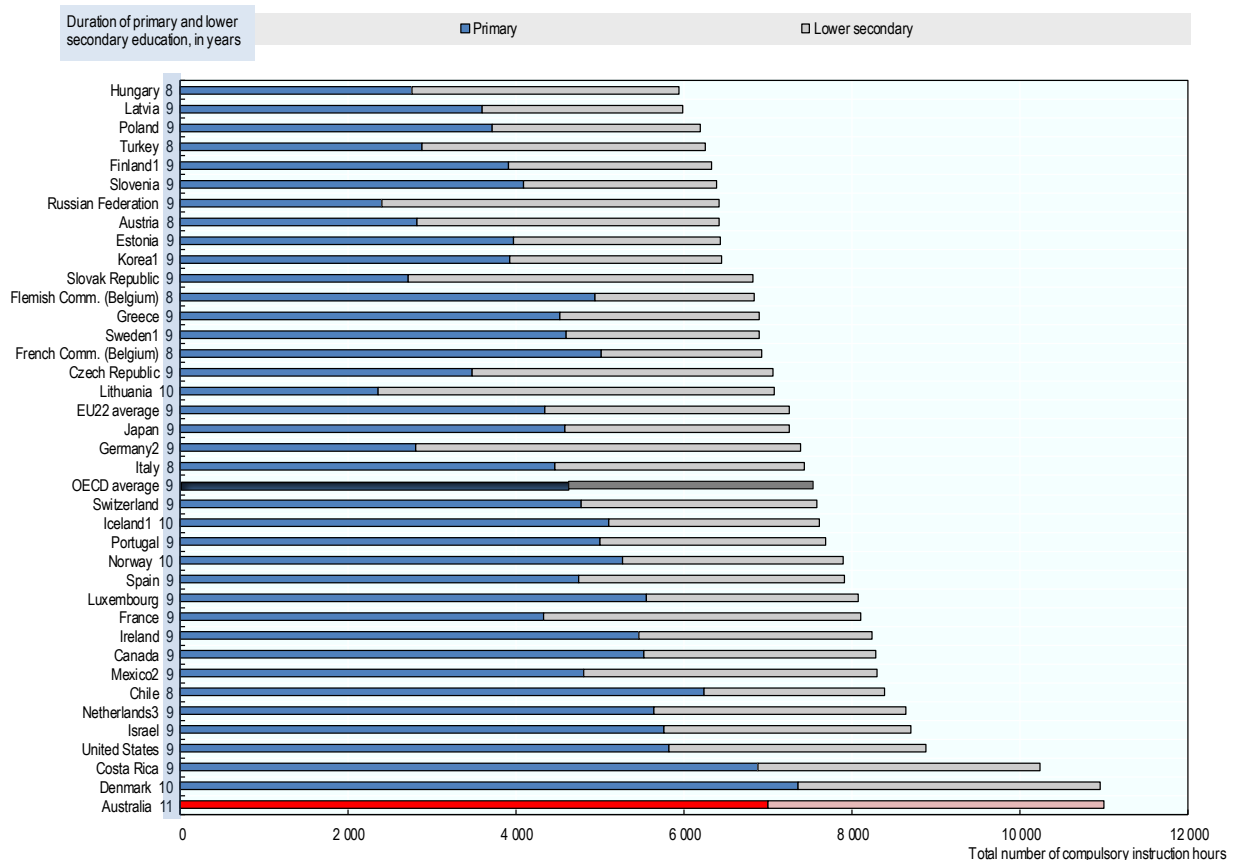
²⁵ Andreas Schleicher, “Lessons to be learned from the world’s education leaders,” *The Australian*, 27 September, 2017.

²⁶ Schleicher, see above note 25.

²⁷ OECD, *Country Note: Australia*, p. 6. & Country Note: Japan, p. 9. <http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance/>

The higher face-to-face teaching hours of Australian teachers are likely driven by Australian students having the heaviest workload, in terms of statutory requirements for instruction, than any other country in the OECD. Australian students undertake 11,000 hours of compulsory instruction time over the course of their primary and lower secondary schooling, which is double some other countries and significantly higher than the OECD average of 7,533 hours (see Figure 3):

Figure 3: Compulsory instruction time in general education (2018)



Source: OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D1. How much time do students spend in the classroom? Figure D1.1. <http://www.oecd.org/education/education-at-a-glance-2018-data-and-methodology.htm>

Australia has the highest number of compulsory years of schooling (eleven years of primary and lower secondary) but, even on a per-year basis, Australia has the fourth highest number of compulsory instruction hours per year (1,000) after Costa Rica (1,138), Denmark (1,096) and Chile (1,049) and just above the United States (987 hours).

What this means is that Australian students are required to be focused and concentrate for longer periods of time than most other OECD countries and, in terms of total instruction time, all other OECD countries. Despite this – or perhaps as a consequence of it:

- i) Australia has not outperformed on international tests of student achievement. This supports the research that shows spending some time outside the classroom during the school day in activities other than instruction can help improve students' performance in the classroom.²⁸
- ii) Australian teachers spend an excessive proportion of their time meeting the statutory obligation placed on students for an unusually high level of face-to-face teaching.

The problem of Australia's overworked teachers has long been known to Australian governments.

For example, a 2007 report from the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training recommended that a National Teacher Induction Program be established in Australia, modelled on the Scottish Teacher Induction Scheme, to relieve the intense workload on beginning teachers. Such a program would invest a sum equivalent to 10 per cent of a beginning teacher's salary towards the cost of a twelve-month induction program. This investment would provide, for example, a 20 per cent reduction in the beginning teacher's face-to-face teaching load to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meetings with mentors.²⁹

This recommendation was never pursued, however, and the report observed that similar recommendations made in the past had also been ignored:

Since at least the early 1980s, successive reports on teacher education have called for more attention to be given to the induction of new teachers into the profession. These reports have consistently called for beginning teachers to be given a reduced teaching load, to be assigned to appropriate schools and classes, and to be provided with a mentor who would support them in their first year of teaching. Recommendations have also called for those teachers acting as mentors to be given proper preparation for their role and to receive, in turn, appropriate recognition. While induction processes have improved in recent years, much more needs to be done in this area.³⁰

In the absence of such action, early career teachers continue to exit the profession in "epidemic proportions".³¹

²⁸ OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, p. 338.

²⁹ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, "Top of the Class: Report on the inquiry into teacher education," February 2007, Canberra, p. xvii

³⁰ House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, *ibid*, p. 83.

³¹ Andrea Gallant and Philip Riley, 'Early career teacher attrition: new thoughts on an intractable problem,' *Teacher Development*, Routledge: 2014. See also Reid, James, 'Confronting the decline in teacher morale,' *The Educator*, 16 April 2015

ACU recommendation 1:

Reduce the face-to-face teaching hours of teachers to bring them into line with other OECD countries so as to allow opportunities for professional development, reflection, observation of other classes and, in the case of early career teachers, meetings with mentors.

There is a lack of accurate data on the number of teachers leaving the profession in Australia. A 2013 literature review on teacher attrition found huge variability in Australian estimates of the proportion of teachers who leave within the first five years, ranging from 8 per cent to 50 per cent.³²

Current workforce planning practices across the country have also resulted in an increasing casualisation of early-career teacher employment. Attrition data, however, generally overlooks this increasingly large cohort of casual teachers.

In 2013, the NSW Auditor-General estimated that casual teachers provided over one million teaching days, or eight per cent of total teaching days, in NSW government schools each year and that figure had remained stable over the previous six years.³³ That proportion would likely have increased in recent years as non-permanent, part-time appointments become a standard feature of employment for commencing teachers. These casual teachers are often not counted in existing attrition datasets, which significantly compromises the value of such datasets.³⁴

Consistent reporting of teacher attrition figures should include an agreed scope of collection, methodology, and definitions (such as, for example, the correct denominator to calculate the attrition rate). If this were to occur, Australia's teacher attrition figure would likely be closer to 50 per cent than 8 per cent.³⁵ In Britain, which has more reliable figures on teacher attrition, the figure is about 30 per cent.³⁶

ACU supports the aggregation of teacher employment and attrition data in a single national repository in order to better define and understand the extent of attrition in the profession.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is implementing the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) project to track teachers throughout the

³² Queensland College of Teachers, *Attrition of Recent Queensland Graduate Teachers*, November 2013

³³ New South Wales Auditor-General's Report, Performance Audit. *Management of Casual Teachers: Department of Education and Communities*. October 2013.

³⁴ See, for example, the resignation rates described in the NSW Department of Education's *Workforce profile of the NSW teaching profession 2015*, December 2016, p.12 and p.53

³⁵ See also Pallavi Singhal, "Why up to half of all Australian teachers are quitting within five years", *Sydney Morning Herald*, 7 June 2017.

³⁶ The U.K. House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training found that almost one-third of teachers who qualified in 2011 had left the profession by 2016. See also Michael Savage, "Almost a quarter of teachers who have qualified since 2011 have left profession", *The Guardian*, 9 July 2017.

teaching life cycle. This will monitor teachers' progress through their ITE, registration and careers, including their ultimate exit from teaching. The ATWD fulfils the objective of a single national repository of teacher employment data but should prioritise the consistent reporting of early-career teacher attrition data.

ACU recommendation 2:

Prioritise nationally consistent reporting of early-career teacher attrition rates via the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) project.

Accurate data about teacher attrition is a first step to acknowledging that, for some teachers, teaching can be an unrewarding and even a demoralising profession. Such data will help to develop an accurate picture of the reasons why early-career teachers leave the profession, whether temporarily or permanently.

ACU therefore recommends that the Commonwealth government commission AITSL to conduct a research project that produces both qualitative and quantitative explanations for teacher attrition. This would help in the development of policy responses to reduce attrition rates in the profession, including through the better targeting of teacher support.

ACU recommendation 3:

Commission AITSL to conduct a detailed national research project on the reasons why early-career teachers leave the profession, including sectoral, state and territory differences, and annual follow up to monitor policy interventions' efficacy.

ACU is concerned by the number of early-career teachers who are leaving the profession. The lack of support for teachers is affecting supply in both the increased exit from and reduced entry to the profession; more teachers are leaving the profession and fewer students are choosing to study ITE.

A recent analysis of public attitudes to the teaching profession in Australia found that the perception of the status of teachers and teaching is falling, which is affecting the capacity for Australia to provide enough teachers to meet growing demand.³⁷

In its May 2018 report, *Unique Individuals, Broad Skills: Inquiry into school to work transition*, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training correctly observed that imposing additional entry requirements to ITE would not produce superior teachers, stating that: "evidence suggests that, whatever the

³⁷ Bahr, N., Graham, A., Ferreira, J., Lloyd, M., & Waters, R. (2018). *Promotion of the profession*. Southern Cross University: Bilinga, Australia.

university entrance score, a teaching degree allows students to learn and grow into the role of a teacher”.³⁸

To the contrary, it found: “Suggestions such as ‘raising the university entrance score for teaching’ may not, without a change in remuneration and attitudes to teaching result in better teachers.”³⁹

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has similarly found that “there is no point in lifting entry requirements for teacher education courses without ensuring that teachers’ salaries and working conditions are commensurate to those of other professions competing for similar graduates”.⁴⁰

Australian teachers have relatively low pay and a flat career trajectory. On average, teachers’ salaries plateau after seven years in the profession, compared with an average of 27 years across OECD countries. Moreover, teacher salaries only grow by an average of 43 per cent from commencement to their peak, compared with 80 per cent growth on average across OECD countries.⁴¹

Australian teachers who want to go beyond this flat structure tend to leave classroom teaching to pursue a career as a school principal or education administrator.

The recognition of Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers (HALT) in Australia and the gradual adjustment of pay scales as a consequence is a welcome initiative. But the well-worn path of excellent teachers moving out of classroom teaching in Australia remains, particularly for those who do not wish to, or cannot be bothered applying for, HALT certification.

Other countries have a more sophisticated approach to teacher advancement that is embedded in their system rather than being reliant on individual application forms. For example, Singapore’s Enhanced Performance Management System recognises that teachers have different aspirations and provides for three career tracks:

- (a) the “Teaching Track”, which allows teachers to remain in the classroom and advance to Master Teacher level;
- (b) the “Leadership Track”, which provides an opportunity for teachers to take on leadership positions in schools and the Ministry’s headquarters; and

³⁸ See House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (May 2018), note 16 above.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ See Ingvarson, L., et al (Sept, 2014), note 1 above.

⁴¹ OECD, *Education at a Glance, 2018*, Indicator D3. How much are teachers and school heads paid? Table D3.3a and D3.6 (web only) and p. 363 of report.

- (c) the “Senior Specialist Track”, where teachers join the Ministry’s headquarters and become specialists with deep knowledge and skills in specific areas in education.⁴²

Australia would benefit from a more structured approach to teacher advancement that recognises individual excellence and capacity either within or outside the classroom.

ACU recommendation 4:

Develop more sophisticated career pathway structures for teachers that reflect diverse opportunities for advancement either within or outside school teaching roles.

⁴² Christine Kim-Eng Lee and Mei Ying Tan, “Rating Teachers and Rewarding Teacher Performance: The Context of Singapore,” Paper presented to the APEC Conference on Replicating Exemplary Practices in Mathematics Education, Koh Samui, Thailand, 7-12 March 2010.

2. Provision of appropriate support platforms for teachers, including human and IT resources

Human resources

The best way to support teachers is to enable them to devote themselves more fully to their profession by freeing them from the excessive burden of non-core activities. In other words, teachers should be allowed to spend more of their time doing what they do best: teach.

ACU recommends a greater use of para-professional staff and final year teaching students (working part of their final year as paid interns) to allow more time for teachers to focus on teaching and learning activities. These ancillary staff could, for example:

- monitor and record student assessment tasks;
- provide technology and connected learning support for teachers in the classroom;
- help with home, school and community partnerships;
- help to develop and implement data management systems;
- assist teachers to plan and modify curriculum and learning activities for individual students;
- help with extracurricular programs and activities, such as road safety, nutrition, etc.; and
- assist with the coordination of professional experience placements for teacher education students and assist to strengthen partnerships between the school and ITE providers.

In 2017, the NSW government recognised the importance of ancillary staff by committing \$50 million to free up principals from work that takes them away from instructional leadership.⁴³ ACU recommends similar support should be extended to all teaching staff through a greater use of para-professional staff and final year teaching students working as interns.

ACU recommendation 5:

In order to permit them to focus primarily on teaching, teachers should be freed from the excessive burden of non-core activities through the increased delegation of non-core tasks to para-professional staff and final year student teachers working part-time as paid interns.

⁴³ NSW Government, “School Leadership Strategy,” NSW Department of Education, September 2017.

A Community of Practice has been defined as “a group of teachers who are bound together by a common interest (domain) that links them together and allows them to share their practice and support each other.”⁴⁴ These communities allow teachers to engage in effective professional dialogue and create a culture of growth. Combined with year-long mentoring programs, they can improve a school’s culture and its level of support for beginning teachers.

All teachers should be afforded more time to collaborate on core business and share best practices within and across school settings. Collaboration through communities of practice promotes the profession in formal and informal ways and, relative to cost, should provide a significant return on investment in the support of teachers through the inevitable difficult periods of professional challenge. This will provide greater frontline support and elevate the professional learning component of the role.⁴⁵

ACU recommendation 6:

Teachers should be afforded more professional collaboration time to develop communities of practice and embed continuous professional learning as a routine activity.

IT resources

ACU supports the recommendation of the Australian Government’s *Through Growth to Achievement* report (the Gonski 2.0 report) that there should be more low-stakes, low-key, and regular assessment to measure how students are progressing.

The report noted that:

*Few assessment tools or tests currently exist in Australia to measure an individual student’s learning growth over time. The available assessments do not provide teachers with real-time or detailed data on a student’s growth, nor do they provide teachers with information or resources about suggested next steps to improve student outcomes. Teachers in Australia would benefit from a new online formative assessment tool—calibrated against the learning progressions—that measures student attainment and growth in attainment levels over time. The tool could also suggest, for consideration by the teacher, potential interventions to build further progress.*⁴⁶

ACU supports this initiative but, to implement it, teachers need stronger training in the elements of assessment to monitor its effectiveness and impact on students.

⁴⁴ Mercieca, B. “Want to keep early career teachers in the job? Do this.” *EduResearch Matters*, 19 Nov 18, <http://www.aare.edu.au/blog/?p=3339>

⁴⁵ PricewaterhouseCoopers Australia. (2014). “Creating a mentally healthy workplace: Return on investment analysis.” Retrieved from <http://www.headsup.org.au/creating-a-mentally-healthy-workplace/the-business-case>). website: www.headsup.org.au

⁴⁶ David Gonski et al, (March 2018), *Through Growth to Achievement: Report of the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*, pp. 62-63.

ACU recommends that teachers develop a greater understanding of assessment processes and methodologies as part of their on-going discipline knowledge. The TEMAG report recommended that pre-service teachers be better equipped “with data collection and analysis skills to assess the learning needs of all students”. Yet ensuring that such skills in assessment methodology are held by all teachers, not just graduates, would benefit all students. Teachers across the board should be given the capacity to make better use of assessment tools to guide their student instruction.

ACU recommendation 7:

All teachers should develop a greater understanding of assessment processes and methodologies as part of their on-going discipline knowledge.

3. Identifying ways in which the burden of out-of-hours, at-home work can be reduced

Teachers undertake a significant amount of unpaid work after hours and at home in order to be able to perform their duties to a high standard, and this should be formally recognised in workplace arrangements. Currently, employers are taking advantage of the high levels of personal commitment many teachers feel towards their vocation.

For example, a national survey recently found that 93 per cent of Australian teachers use their own money to purchase supplies for their school or students and 25 per cent of those – mostly primary teachers – spend more than \$1,000 a year.⁴⁷ This could be seen as a personal desire on the part of individual teachers to better resource their lessons, or it could be seen as a reflection of chronic under-resourcing in schools.

Similarly, surveys have found that full-time primary and secondary teachers in Victoria work on average 53 hours a week⁴⁸ and in England 60 hours a week,⁴⁹ with many teachers working longer than the average. A recent survey in NSW found that, over the past five years, most teachers felt their working hours had increased.⁵⁰

The type of work teachers generally complete at home after work includes:

- planning and preparation of lessons;
- marking and correcting student work;
- communicating with parents, students, and colleagues (usually via email); and
- general administrative work (including paperwork and other clerical duties a teacher undertakes).

The main reason work spills into the home setting is because there is not enough time to complete these activities at school. There are also extracurricular activities many teachers are committed to outside of school, such as sports teams, drama clubs, homework clubs, summer school, etc.

ACU's recommendations, such as reduced face-to-face teaching hours and greater use of paraprofessional staff, should naturally lead to a reduction in this burden. But the burden itself should be understood as a symptom of structural issues rather than an expression of an individual's preference.

⁴⁷ Insync Research, on behalf of the Australian Education Union (AEU), *State of our Schools* online survey, 20-31 August 2018.

⁴⁸ ACER, *School Staff Workload Study*, October 2016. Study completed on behalf of the AEU Victorian Branch.

⁴⁹ James Tapper, "Burned out: why are so many teachers quitting or off sick with stress?" *The Guardian*, 13 May 2018,

⁵⁰ Susan McGrath-Champ, et al, *Understanding Work in Schools: The Foundation for Teaching and Learning. 2018 Report to the NSW Teachers Federation*, University of Sydney and Curtin University, June 2018.

ACU recommendation 8:

Teachers should be given the time within existing working hours to complete all their duties rather than being expected to complete them in their own time as unpaid work.

Most surveys on out-of-hours, at-home work are conducted by teacher unions drawing attention to members' unpaid yet essential work. Without ignoring the value of these efforts, a more objective review should be conducted to ascertain:

- a) the precise extent of teachers' out-of-hours, at-home work;
- b) the nature of this work, and especially whether it is largely administrative in nature or primarily pedagogical; and
- c) the extent to which this work could be completed by para-professional or administrative staff.

ACU recommendation 9:

AITSL to conduct a detailed review of the extent and nature of teachers' out-of-hours, at-home work and whether such work could be delegated to para-professional or administrative staff.

4. Investigating ways to increase retention rates for the teaching profession, and avoid 'burn out' among early-career teachers

One of the major barriers to enhancing teacher retention and effectiveness is the limited opportunities that all teachers have to observe excellent teaching in practice, including effective feedback mechanisms for teachers about their own practice.

Superior approaches exist in overseas jurisdictions. In Shanghai, for example, all teachers have mentors, while new teachers have several mentors who observe and give feedback on their classes.⁵¹ In many other high performing East Asian countries, teachers regularly observe each other's classes, providing instant feedback to improve each student's learning.⁵² In Singapore, for example, Reporting Officers monitor, review and assess teachers' performance at the end of each academic year.⁵³

In contrast, registered teachers in Australia can spend their entire careers never having observed, or having their own teaching observed by, another teacher.

New initiatives are improving this situation. For example, a new, successful model for teacher development has been developed by an Australian academic working with teachers using video capture and analysis, an approach that has been applied in multiple contexts with very promising results.⁵⁴

But the proliferation of expert teachers located in schools and universities is often talked about in Australia but rarely implemented in practice. The result is that there is often no co-ordinated or consistent approach to teacher mentoring, or consistent or systematic training in the skills needed to be a good mentor.

ACU sees effective mentoring within communities of practice as vital and has launched an ACU Mentoring Hub to this effect. There has also been a formal recognition of mentoring through AITSL's Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, Australian Professional Standards for Principals, and National Certification of HALT, which is a good first step.⁵⁵ But more needs to be done.

ACU recommends that the Australian government encourage expert teachers to disseminate mentoring, peer auditing and feedback via communities of practice. Currently, Australian teachers have limited access to observe excellent teaching and require more access to feedback from experts as well as professional learning to support their own monitoring of practice.

⁵¹ Jensen, B. et al., *Catching up: learning from the best school systems in East Asia*. Grattan Institute. (2012).

⁵² Ibid.

⁵³ Christine Kim-Eng Lee and Mei Ying Tan, "Rating Teachers and Rewarding Teacher Performance: The Context of Singapore," Paper presented to the APEC Conference on Replicating Exemplary Practices in Mathematics Education, Koh Samui, Thailand, 7-12 March 2010.

⁵⁴ Gallant, A. (2013). "Self-conscious emotion: How two teachers explore the emotional work of teaching." In M. Newberry, A. Gallant, & P. Riley (Eds.), *Emotion in schools: Understanding how the hidden curriculum influences teaching, learning and social relationships*. Bingley: Emerald Group.

⁵⁵ See <http://www.aitsl.edu.au/australian-professional-standards-for-teachers/standards/list>

ACU recommendation 10:

That more HALT teachers work across schools and universities to mentor early-career teachers and create effective communities of practice.

ATTACHMENT A: AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC UNIVERSITY PROFILE

Australian Catholic University (ACU) is a publicly-funded Catholic university, open to people of all faiths and of none and with teaching, learning and research inspired by 2,000 years of Catholic intellectual tradition.

ACU operates as a multi-jurisdictional university with seven campuses across four states and one territory. Campuses are located in North Sydney, Strathfield, Canberra, Melbourne, Ballarat, Brisbane and Adelaide. ACU also has a campus in Rome, Italy.

ACU is the largest Catholic university in the English-speaking world, and is ranked in the top 500 universities globally.⁵⁶ Today, ACU has more than 35,000 students and 2,400 staff.⁵⁷

ACU graduates demonstrate high standards of professional excellence and are also socially responsible, highly employable and committed to active and responsive learning. ACU graduates are highly sought-after by employers, with a 93 per cent employment rate.⁵⁸

The University has four faculties: Health Sciences; Education and Arts; Law and Business; and Theology and Philosophy. ACU has built its reputation in the areas of Health and Education, educating the largest number of undergraduate nursing and teaching students in Australia⁵⁹ and serving a significant workforce need in these areas. Under the demand driven system, ACU sought to focus and build on these strengths.

As part of its commitment to educational excellence, ACU is committed to targeted and quality research. ACU's strategic plan focuses on research areas that align with ACU's mission and reflect most of its learning and teaching: Education; Health and Wellbeing; Theology and Philosophy; and Social Justice and the Common Good.

In recent years, the public standing of ACU's research has improved dramatically. The 2015 Excellence in Research for Australia (ERA) assessment awarded ACU particularly high ratings in the fields of research identified as strategic priorities and in which investment has been especially concentrated. These include selected areas of Health, as well as Education, Psychology, Theology, and Philosophy, in which ACU's research was rated as "above" or "well above" world standard.

⁵⁶ Times Higher Education University Rankings 2019.

⁵⁷ Student numbers refer to headcount figures while staff numbers refer to full-time equivalent (FTE).

⁵⁸ Quality Indicators for Learning and Teaching, 2018.

⁵⁹ Department of Education and Training, 2016 Higher Education Data Collection – Students, Special Courses. Section 8, table 8.3