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**Australian
Teacher Education
Association**

ATEA Submission to the National Review of Teacher Registration

7 May 2018

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This submission to the *National Review of Teacher Registration* is made on behalf of the Australian Teacher Education Association (ATEA).

ATEA is the peak professional association for teacher educators in Australia. The **mission** of the Association is to promote:

- The preservice and continuing education of teachers in all forms and contexts
- Teacher education as central in the educational enterprise of the nation
- Research on teacher education as a core endeavour.

The Association enacts this mission, through its Constitutional **objectives**, to:

- Foster improvement in initial teacher education
- Promote and support the teaching profession
- Form strong links with individuals and organisations involved in educational change
- Improve the nature, quality and availability of professional development for teacher educators
- Promote and disseminate research, ideas and practices, innovation, and evaluation in teacher education.

The Association's scholarly journal, *Asia-Pacific Journal of Teacher Education*, publishes high-quality Australian and international research into pre-service and in-service teacher education and development.

The Association's Constitution, Executive, and activities are detailed on its website: <https://atea.edu.au>

This submission seeks to specifically address **how the current national registration framework is operating, including consideration of all elements of the framework, in terms of implementation, consistency, best practice, and challenges and barriers.**

1. Implementation

Registration of beginning teachers in casual, remote, and out-of-field positions

ATEA members are concerned about the failure of registration processes to account for the professional learning needs of beginning teachers employed in casual, rural and remote, and/or out-of-field positions as they move from Graduate to Proficient status.

Many Australian classrooms are staffed with teachers not qualified to teach the classes to which they are assigned (Lassig, Doherty & Moore, 2015; McConney & Price, 2009). This is due mainly to a shortage of secondary school teachers in several discipline areas and is compounded by the retention of staff (Azano & Stewart, 2016; Productivity Commission, 2012; NSW Department of Education, 2015; Weldon, 2015). However, teacher shortage data understates the magnitude of the situation. The scope of 'out-of-field' teaching by staff is not sufficiently accounted for in teacher shortage data. The reported data into out-of-field teaching suggests that more than half of Information and Communication Technologies and lower secondary mathematics teachers do not have a three-year qualification in the relevant discipline. Further, approximately 20% of those teaching physics, 25% teaching history, and 40% teaching geography are out-of-field teachers (McConney & Price, 2009; NSW Department of Education, 2015; Weldon, 2015).

Furthermore, staffing of rural schools in Australia has been a problem for 113 years' (Roberts & Downes, 2017). This entrenched issue reflects the long-standing struggle to address an anomaly in the provision of universal education in Australia. Despite government reviews generating a range of recommendations, and research findings identifying challenges and issues, staffing rural schools with an appropriately qualified teaching workforce remains an ongoing challenge (Ministerial Council on Education, et al. 2003; Productivity Commission, 2012; Roberts, 2004).

Creative solutions are required to ensure beginning teachers are suitably supervised and mentored, through strategies such as:

- **Peer-to-peer mentoring** within school clusters
- Innovative use of **remote technologies** to support rural/remote teachers and out-of-field teachers
- **Collaborative support structures** facilitated by senior staff, including pooling of resources **across schools** to ensure mentoring of beginning teachers is carried out by dedicated staff who can sustain these practices across time
- A professional learning approach such as **peer enhancement of teaching**, where quality mentoring, coupled with reflective practice, could form a strong reciprocal learning framework for Provisionally Registered teachers moving towards Proficient career stage, and more experienced teachers seeking to meet certification requirements for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers.

2. Best practice

The need for an evidentiary basis for the use of Teacher Standards

ATEA submits that the evidentiary basis for the relationship between the Teacher Standards and improved student learning outcomes is not robust, despite the commitment of government policy to Teacher Standards as a key influence on student learning. We also find the phrase ‘best practice’ problematic, since it implies a single solution to the same problem across differing contexts.

To ensure a sound relationship between the Teacher Standards and appropriate practice, further **research and evaluation** is needed to identify:

- How the Teacher Standards are functioning as a mediating variable in efforts to **reduce the attainment gap** in Australian schools
- How the Teacher Standards are functioning as a mediating variable in efforts to teach with and for the whole range of **student diversity** in Australia’s schools
- How the Teacher Standards are functioning as a mediating variable in efforts to achieve **reconciliation** between Australia’s contemporary schooling systems and Australia’s history of Indigenous education

Further research and evaluation needs to take place, specifically in relation to Graduate Teacher Standards, *Professional Standard 6: Engagement in professional learning*. Such research needs to explore what constitutes engagement in professional learning and how such engagements impact on the enactment of the other Professional Standards, particularly *Standard 1: Know Students and how they learn*, as well as the design and implementation of curriculum, pedagogy, and assessment for these students.

The terms ‘engagement’ and ‘application of professional learning’ do not capture the importance placed by other countries on teaching as a research-based, research active, and research-informed profession. An emphasis on teaching as a research-engaged profession needs to be mapped onto the national program standards for initial teacher education, particularly in relation to strong disciplinary knowledge around ‘knowing students and how they learn’ rather than just disciplinary curricular content knowledge.

3. Consistency

Registration of early childhood teachers

ATEA members recognise the lack of national consistency in relation to the registration of early childhood teachers. This is unsupportable in a context where there is consistent national recognition of early childhood teacher qualifications (through the Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority) and where qualifications are already portable for licensing purposes across state and territory boundaries.

ATEA recognises that there may be professional and industrial implications of consistent national registration of early childhood teachers. However, the recent recommendations of the *National Review to Achieve Educational Excellence* (Gonski 2018) recognise the critical role played by prior-to-school education and care settings in promoting positive student outcomes in schools.

ATEA urges resolution of early childhood teacher registration, **either through collaboration across ATRA members or by delegating this role to a suitable national body**. Current standards frameworks for accreditation of early childhood services are rigorous and research-based; standards for teaching in early childhood education have not kept pace.

4. Challenges and barriers

Appropriateness of the present registration process for early childhood teacher registration

Notwithstanding our appeal for resolution of national early childhood teacher registration, such a resolution must consider the appropriateness of the current Teacher Standards for early childhood curricular and pedagogical settings. It is anticipated that these concerns will be addressed in the forthcoming review of the Standards.

There is significant research evidence concerning the most appropriate curricular and pedagogical practices required for effective early childhood teaching, including close collaboration with parents. These practices must be actively recognised when considering the applicability of the Teacher Standards as they stand at present.

Casualisation of Australia's teaching workforce

AITSL (2016) acknowledges the inconclusiveness of statistics in research that measures the attrition rates of beginning teachers in Australian schools. Some studies suggest attrition may be as high 50 per cent of teachers leaving the profession within the first five years (Bennett, Newman, Kay-Lambkin, & Hazel, 2016). High casualization rates of beginning teachers are acknowledged in the consultation paper, with two out of three early career teachers in Australia beginning their careers as short-term casuals. When coupled with the roughly 25 percent higher workloads of Australian teachers, measured by the number of teaching hours per year, (particularly in pre-Primary and Primary Education), when compared with their counterparts in OECD countries (OECD, 2014), it is not surprising that time management and high workloads contributing to stress were identified as factors contributing to teacher attrition in Bennett, et al.'s (2016) study. It is important that teacher registration processes support the core teaching roles of beginning teachers and acknowledge, rather than exacerbate, the difficulties, pressures, and uncertainties of carrying high workloads in predominantly short term, casual, and transient teaching roles.

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