

I have decided to participate in this national review of teacher registration as I wanted to share my views on how the national registration should work. I have always believed that with teaching being such a transient profession, it should be an easy process for teachers to obtain registration. It makes sense that we now have an Australian Curriculum that has been implemented across all states and territories (with some adjustments in some states to match their syllabuses), that we should also have a national registration for teachers.

In this paper, I will be expanding on discussion points 1,2, 4 and 5. I chose not to discuss discussion point 3 due to the fact that while it is important and I am not discounting the impact that VET has on teachers, it is not relevant to my situation. I will be discussing:

- How the implementation of the eight elements of the Framework is working
- How I have found moving from different states and having different levels of registration
- Improvements that can be made, while acknowledging different legislative, regulatory and resourcing contexts
- Whether early childhood educators should be part of the national approach to teacher registration
- Ways in which the Teacher Standards can be applied for early childhood registration
- How graduates are supported when they enter the teaching profession
- How they can achieve and maintain their teaching accreditation status while working in a variety of settings (e.g. full-time, temporary or casual)
- The barriers/challenges that graduates face when entering the profession and how to overcome these
- Ways to support graduate teachers before they enter the profession with their initial registration
- How teacher registration processes can support a nationally consistent approach to satisfying fit and proper person requirement of registered teachers, at the point of registration and throughout their teaching career

How is the national teacher registration framework working across Australia?

While I have moved from state to state due to my husband being in the Army, and there have been different requirements in terms of registration, I have found that having a nationally implemented Framework assisted with the transition process. The Framework with the eight standards has been written in such a manner that the language is easily transferred between each state and territory, so that there can be no grey area when it comes to implementation. The Framework has made it clear what is expected to register as a teacher in each state, and that is due to the fact that the language is clear and concise. I have also found that the website has also been updated effectively and efficiently to reflect any changes that have occurred to the Framework, as well as answering any questions that may have lingered over the standards and the Framework.

I have found that having mutual recognition is a great feature of the Framework as it allows for easier transition for teachers across the country.

The embedding of the Teacher Standards in the Framework has supported teacher quality because as teachers we are all being held to higher standard, and it is clear what is expected of us. And due to the transient nature of our profession, we must have a clear Framework that is recognised across the country.

Improvements can be made to the implementation of a national teacher registration system, as the states and territories still have jurisdiction over how teachers are registered. I remember writing to the Hon. Christopher Pyne (then the Education Minister) in 2014 about having a national teacher registration. I felt it was long overdue that a national teaching registration process, as nurses were in the process of obtaining a national registration system. I have included an excerpt of his reply:

As you aware, the responsibility for the delivery of school education, including teacher registration, rests with the state and territory education authorities. This is an agreement between jurisdiction to move to a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration that requires teachers seeking registration in all jurisdictions to demonstrate that they meet the proficient level of the...Standards. However, registration of teachers continues to be the responsibility of states and territories.

-Christopher Pyne, May 2014

Now, while I was appreciative of the Minister responding to my letter, I don't believe that he had a full understanding of what it means to register in different states as a teacher, especially with the differences between each state. In order for the national registration to work, all states and territories need to have a unified approach to how teachers can register. I will provide an example.

As mentioned above, I am a Defence spouse, which means due to the nature of my husband's work, we move around every two years. In the last ten years, I have moved 7 times and been registered in five different jurisdictions, each with different requirements for registration, and having to pay registration fees in each state (a couple of times I was registered in two states so paying double the fees). At times I have found the registration process a little confusing. I understand that there needs to be a high standard that we hold our teachers to, and there are things that every teacher must have in order to teach (such as qualifications, working with children checks and police checks, first aid certificates etc.) However, I will provide some of the different requirements I've had to complete in order to be registered:

- VICTORIA: Needed to obtain new First Aid Certificates, despite only getting recertified the year before. I also needed to have two written character references supplied with all my certified documents
- SOUTH AUSTRALIA: I had to fly from Melbourne to Adelaide to complete a responding to abuse and neglect training, and my registration would not be completed unless I completed it (I couldn't complete it when I moved to South Australia). This was a little difficult for me to complete as I had to leave my 10 month old son with my parents in Melbourne as my husband was overseas. I had full registration here.
- TASMANIA: Fully registered
- NSW: Despite completing a Bachelor of Arts/Education degree and providing the exact same documents as I had in previous jurisdictions, I was only provisionally registered and I also had to complete two extra units of study. Their reason was that my Arts degree didn't meet the requirements of being an Infants and Primary Teacher in NSW. NSW does not do mutual recognition in terms of registration status, so even though I was fully registered in Tasmania (I was also registering in the ACT where I was given full registration) previous to moving to NSW, I was only provisionally registered.

- ACT: Again, provided the exact same documents as in previous jurisdictions, and I am fully registered here (I currently teach in the ACT). I had been away for 5 years interstate, but due to the fact that I reinstated my accreditation status before 31st March 2017, I was given my previous registration status, without having to go through the accreditation process.

It does make it a complicated process to move interstate as a teacher when there is so many different requirements to complete registration, which is why we need a national registration.

Should early childhood teachers be part of a national approach to teacher registration?

Early childhood is considered the most critical years in a child's development, so it would make sense for early childhood teachers to be considered as part of the national approach to teacher registration. They are still teachers, and while they have their own curriculum with the Early Years Learning Framework to follow, they can still be recognized nationally for their qualifications. In NSW, it is now a requirement that all Early Childhood Teachers (ECTs) are accredited, this was not a requirement before. The ECTs in NSW must now go through the same accreditation process moving from provisional to full registration as the other teachers in the state. Western Australia is another state that requires all teachers who teach from early childhood right through to Year 12 to be registered with the WA Teaching Board. With a push for all teachers to be accredited in their states, again it comes back to being part of the teaching collective and being recognised nationally with their registration.

ECTs can follow the same steps for registration as primary and secondary teachers. They can be judged to be provisional until they meet requirements for full registration, and once they obtain their proficient status, they are able to meet requirements for maintaining registration, just like any other teacher. As mentioned above, the Framework is writing in such a way that it can be easily transported and adapted across all education sectors and teachers. I continue on with the point that ECTs are still teachers because like their teaching colleagues, they have had to undertake a four-year degree to become qualified, some even doing extra studies to become qualified, so they should be held to the same standard against the Framework as other teachers.

How does teacher registration support entry into the teaching profession?

As mentioned above, registering as a teacher can be a difficult process, depending on what state or territory you are trying to register in. For a new graduate, the process of finishing university and starting to teach for the first time can be daunting enough, without adding the confusing process of getting registration, and the different levels of registration, and what you need to do to move up a level.

Some graduates are lucky that they land a job immediately after finishing their degree, while others have to work casually or on temporary contracts, or worse not get work at all. I believe to ease the graduates into the profession and the whole registration process, they need to be given more time to complete their registration. I know that in the ACT new educators are given extra release time to develop their professional development and start putting together their portfolio together to demonstrate they have met the requirements to move up to proficient level.

Moving between states, I have noticed there are also discrepancies with how many days you need to teach for before you can apply for proficient accreditation. In NSW it's 160 and in the ACT it's 180. Now for a graduate who may only be working casually, or not at all, this can be quite daunting when they think how will they be able to meet the requirements of registration if they are not working consistently?

With a pre-registration of initial teacher education students, it would make it easier for them to transition from provisional to proficient. My suggestion is that while they are studying at university or the TAFE that they are all conditionally registered, then they instantly become provisionally registered once they graduate. Then once they have been in the profession for 2 years, then they can start working towards proficient, rather than trying to get it all done in their first year.

How can we ensure that registered teachers satisfy the fit and proper person requirement?

While there are different processes regarding registration in each state, I believe the processes that are in place currently are doing a great job of ensuring that all teachers are the best fit. The double requirement of having police checks and working with vulnerable children/people checks before a teacher can be registered is an additional piece of mind for schools knowing that they are getting someone who is not only qualified but trustworthy.

If there is a national teacher registration system in place, having nationally recognised police checks and working with vulnerable children checks will ease the burden on teachers who need to move interstate, and they only need to pay the fees once a year, rather than every time they move. The national police check and working with vulnerable people checks should be valid for 1 year and should be included in the registration fees that teachers need to pay, rather than separate transactions. Having an expiry date on the registration and security checks can ensure that the teacher is still performing their duties according to the Standards and Framework.

Conclusion and suggestions for improvement for a national registration process

In this paper, I have discussed how I feel the Framework and Standards have been implemented across the country, and the strengths of these. I have also discussed my situation in having to move states every two years, and the different processes I have had to undertake in order to be registered as a teacher in different jurisdictions.

Based on my experiences, I would like to suggest the following to improve teacher registration and to move it closer to becoming national process:

- National teacher registration that is valid for 2-3 years, rather than just 1
- Police checks and working with vulnerable people checks to be included in national registration
- Mutual recognition across all states to make it easier for teachers to transition between states
- All graduates being conditionally registered while they are on their last year of their degree, then move to being provisionally registered when they graduate. Graduates then have a little longer to obtain proficient status due to the nature of graduates not always securing a full -time position when they finish.

With a national curriculum in place, it is time that we move towards a national registration for teachers, to ensure we have the best people we possibly can in the profession.

I look forward to the findings of this review.

Thank you for giving teachers more of a voice when it comes to a such an important issue such as national registration.

Kind regards,

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