



Monday, 30 April 2018

RE: [National Review of Teacher Registration](#)

National Review of Teacher Registration

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Dear Chris Wardlaw (PSM), Chair of the Expert Panel,

After careful reading of the consultation paper and terms of reference for this Review, Flinders University's Early Childhood Team and I write to provide a considered response to the key areas for discussion in this review. We have framed our response around the South Australian context and have sought to identify improvements and implications that are of national significance for the Expert Panel's consideration below.

### **1. How is the national teacher registration framework working across Australia?**

The National Teacher Registration Framework does not currently recognise teaching qualifications and/or experience with adult learners in higher educational contexts. Teacher educators in university contexts, for example, are expected to provide educational leadership for the sector with regards to evidenced-informed best practice in teaching and learning locally and internationally.

Such recognition, regulated against a specified number of professional learning hours during the teacher registration period (e.g. 60 days) and number of days of teaching with learners (e.g. 200 days equivalent) would strengthen teacher registration implementation to be inclusive of all learners' age-spans and all educational contexts. It would also lay important foundations for strengthening teacher quality, beginning with a sense of equality in the university-sector partnerships that are so integral to recent requirements for professional experience placements and will be for the successful implementation of initiatives like Teaching Performance Assessments of pre-service teachers seeking to achieve graduate teacher registration status. Quality teaching and learning is built on trusting, respectful relationships, and the registration of teachers working in higher education contexts would only add value to the Framework's current teacher quality imperatives.

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## 2. Should early childhood teacher be part of a national approach to teacher registration?

Yes. If the sector is to be acknowledged for the incredibly valuable work it undertakes, then early childhood teachers must also be part of a national approach to teacher registration.

Not to include the sector diminishes the importance of early childhood professionally and in the eyes of the general public. It also significantly undermines the national requirement for two early childhood teachers in all children's services with 60 or more places by 2020; the final part of the *National Quality Framework's* implementation. Why have early childhood teacher requirements in the children's services sector if they are not to be counted as 'real, registered teachers'?

- *How could a nationally consistent approach to teacher registration support and improve the quality of early childhood teaching in school and non-school settings?*

Early childhood education is internationally defined by the [United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization \(UNESCO\)](#) as the early education and care of young children aged from birth-to-eight years that is 'more than preparation for primary school'. Teacher education providers offering a birth-to-eight qualification need to meet two sets of professional requirements (those from ACECQA and AITSL), which has seen birth-to-five years early childhood teaching qualifications proliferate in the sector.

We recommend that **all** four-year accredited early childhood teaching qualifications be accepted as suitable qualifications for teacher registration purposes. This inclusion will contribute to the quality of early childhood teaching across children's services and school settings in two key ways:

- i. By enabling those with a passion to teach children under 5 years (including infants and toddlers) the opportunity and capacity to specialise their teaching qualifications and expertise without loss of teacher registration standing in the community.
  - ii. By having early childhood teachers qualified to teach with children aged birth-to-eight or birth-to-twelve years to facilitate and sustain educational quality and leadership in children's services settings, and early childhood pedagogy and expertise into the schooling system to repair the fractured delivery of early childhood education nationally.
- *How could the Teacher Standards be applied for early childhood teacher registration?*

South Australia has successfully required the registration of early childhood teachers since the 1970s, counting teaching qualifications and experience across age-groups and educational contexts with parity. There is no delineation of teacher registration 'type' beyond provisional and full-registration. Since the implementation of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers* and the *National Teacher Registration Framework*, early childhood teachers in this state have successfully met graduate,

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provisional and full-registration requirements within children's services and school contexts, including 80 days of professional experience prior to registration, or 60 hours of professional learning and 200 days of teaching with children across the birth-to-eight years age-span to renew registration. At Flinders University, our Early Childhood Teacher Education courses have also successfully used the Standards as assessment criteria for professional experiences placements with our pre-service teachers across all year levels.

**3. What role does teacher registration play for VET teachers in school settings?**

N/A

**4. How does teacher registration support entry into the teaching profession?**

- *How do current teacher registration processes support graduates: a) seeking provisional registration b) employed in different circumstances (e.g. casual, full-time or permanent)?*

There needs to be provision for teachers who are employed in other capacities to meet the teaching requirements for registration. Registered teachers working in university contexts are one such example, as are teachers who are currently on parental leave. If professional learning can be proven, teachers who are on full registration should not lose this status when there are extenuating circumstances (i.e. approved leave or employment in another sector, e.g. tertiary). Similarly, this would then apply for provisional registration.

- *How could the pre-registration of initial teacher education students support entry to the profession?*

Pre-registration could involve the establishment of a formal mentorship programme where pre-service/new graduate teachers enter into a professional relationship with an experienced educator, regardless of whether they are employed on a casual, full time or permanent basis. The mentor would provide support and input and assist the graduate to move towards full registration, which is particularly difficult for some of our ECTs in long-day care contexts, for example, where they are likely to be the only person employed with such a qualification. The mentor could be financially compensated, and all mentors would undergo induction into the role and receive acknowledgement as an educational professional. This may also assist the mentor to move towards Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher status themselves. The relationships that new graduates form with other educators have a significant impact on their developing confidence, skills and competence as early career teachers. Formalising this process would enable all graduates to enter into a positive, professional relationship with significant benefits as they enter the profession, regardless of their employment status and conditions.

- *What would be the benefits and implications of such an approach?*  
Ongoing support and mentoring for early career teachers from experienced teachers still employed within the profession.

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Improvement of support for ECTs working in isolation at their site, as is the case in many long-day childcare centres and early learning environments, as well as those working or located in rural and remote locations.

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

A formal mentor here could help to assist the early career teacher to 'step up' to what is required of a demanding but rewarding role as a teacher in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The mentor could be part of the process as the early career teacher moves to full registration as a referee/assessor of the suitability of the early career teacher. The mentor could also report any concerns as needed to the national teacher registration body. Regular reports could also be made 6 monthly or yearly by the mentor or even by a registered teacher/site director/school leader at the site where the early career teacher is employed whilst they are provisionally registered as a check and balance.

#### **5. How can we ensure that registered teachers satisfy the fit and proper person requirement?**

In South Australia, under the Teachers Registration and Standards Act 2004 (the Act):

- i. Newly registering teachers are required to supply proof of identity, a copy of their full-day Responding to Abuse and Neglect (RAN) training certificate and consent to a National Criminal History Record Check undertaken by the Teacher Registration Board of South Australia (the Board) to obtain their 'Certificate of Teacher Registration'.
- ii. Teachers renewing their registration typically undergo online refresher training of their RAN certification, supported by the Department of Education, as well as repeating their consent to a police check, on a three-yearly basis.
- iii. New applicants, renewing teachers, and those applying for a special authority to teach must consent to Overseas Criminal History Record Checks if they have lived in any country other than Australia for more than 12 continuous months.
- iv. Teachers granted registration, under the Act, are required to notify the Board of criminal charge/s, unprofessional conduct, and/or improper conduct related to a child within 14 days of such an incident. Failure to do so can result in dismissal of registration and prosecution.

We advocate for a similar, nationally consistent approach in light of recent recommendations from the [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse](#). We would also recommend:

- Development of a reporting mechanism for colleagues, employers and community members to also report any breaches that call into question a teacher's 'fit and proper person' status; and,
- All pre-service, in-service and non-practising teachers "are equipped with knowledge, skills and awareness to keep children safe through continual education and training" as per Recommendation 6.6 (Standard 7). *NB: Such training and its curricula needs to be a government-initiative rather than leaving this to private enterprise or registered training organisations.*

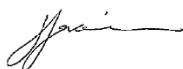
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*Children and young people's health, safety and wellbeing cannot be left to chance or profiteering.*

- All practicing teachers document their use of a child protection curriculum in their work with learners as a part of registration requirements. South Australia's [Keeping Safe](#), for example, guides planning for teaching and learning pertaining to child protection, as well as increasing children and young people's own developmentally-appropriate understandings and knowledge in this area.

Recognising the national significance of this Review of Teacher Registration, we hope our response can go some way towards shaping the recognition and standing of the teaching sector and work towards further improving teaching quality in Australia. We look forward to seeing the Expert Panel's recommendations in due course.

Regards,



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**Written on behalf of the Early Childhood Education Team at Flinders University, including:**

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