

Building a skilled and adaptable workforce (interim report)

September 2025

Introduction

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the Productivity Commission's interim report on *Building a Skilled and Adaptable Workforce*.

QCEC is the peak strategic body with state-wide responsibilities for Catholic schooling in Queensland. This submission is provided on behalf of the five Diocesan Catholic school authorities and 17 Religious Institutes and other incorporated bodies which, between them, operate a total of 313 Catholic schools that educate more than 160,000 students in Queensland.

QCEC commends the Productivity Commission's focus on foundational education, tertiary pathways, and occupational entry reform and expresses the Queensland Catholic sector's support for the proposed draft recommendations.

In preparing this submission, QCEC engaged with Queensland Catholic School Authorities, whose feedback has shaped the sector's response. QCEC's submission mainly addresses draft recommendations 1.1 and 1.2 and only brief responses are offered on the other draft recommendations.

Draft recommendation 1.1 – Invest in a single national platform for all teachers to access lesson planning materials

QCEC supports the proposed development of a national platform for hosting a comprehensive bank of sequenced lesson-planning materials. A centralised repository of ready-to-use, high-quality, curriculum-aligned teaching resources would provide a strong foundation for lesson planning. Provided the resource is freely available to teachers across all school sectors and jurisdictions, it would help reduce teacher workload, promote consistency and support professional learning. To maximise its effectiveness, the resource should support evidence-based and differentiated teaching, promote equity, and provide enhanced assistance for both out-of-field and early career teachers.

Many Catholic schools in Queensland are located in regional and remote areas, where access to specialist teachers and resources is limited. The platform would help bridge this gap.

A national platform would also support system-level planning by reducing duplication and allowing system leaders to focus on localised support and innovation.

Teaching materials should be tailored to diverse learning needs, including students with disabilities and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and allow for adaptation by educators, enabling them to align content with specific contextual factors (school and class size, multi-age classrooms, geographic location, level of access to digital resources). QCEC also advocates for the ability to integrate a Catholic perspective where appropriate, to support faith-based education. Additionally, it is advisable to plan for the potential realignment of teaching materials should the Australian Curriculum undergo further revisions or restructuring beyond Version 9.0.

Queensland Catholic school authorities have indicated that the lesson planning materials should support a range of pedagogical approaches. A model such as the one used to develop *Primary Connections* (science) and *ReSolve* (maths) would be preferred over generic teaching materials. For example, in *Primary Connections* a clear pedagogical approach is articulated and supported by teacher-friendly materials that can be adapted and adjusted for a particular context.

Further, Catholic school authorities have noted that it would be helpful if assessment examples, annotated with student samples, were included. This would ensure that assessments align with lesson plans. For summative assessment tasks, alignment to the relevant Australian Curriculum year level achievement standards (as opposed to content descriptions) would be necessary to align with educational program requirements within the Queensland context.

Quality assurance is critically important to ensure the resources are curriculum-aligned, evidence-based, include scaffolding for diverse learners, and offer flexibility for teachers to adopt to their classroom environment. QCEC recommends that the resources are developed by individuals who possess discipline-specific knowledge and recognized expertise.

QCEC supports the development and implementation of a national framework for evaluating the quality of lesson planning materials and extends an offer to contribute to this process. Co-design with non-government sectors would help ensure relevance and uptake across sectors. Some school authorities have expressed a strong desire to contribute to these materials, particularly where jurisdictionally specific resources are required. QCEC also recommends that advice from subject matter experts is sought to assess alignment with the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and their implementation.

Additionally, QCEC recommends that teachers are offered professional development opportunities to enhance their confidence and effectiveness in utilising the lesson planning materials.

Draft recommendation 1.2 – Lead national efforts to ensure equitable access to educational technology (edtech) and artificial intelligence (AI)

QCEC supports the recommendation for the Australian Government to provide a national approach to edtech and agrees that this would enable the lessons learned by early adopting jurisdictions to be incorporated into future investments, spreading the benefits of advanced edtech to students in all states and territories and school sectors.

Catholic schools are increasingly adopting edtech and AI tools for personalised learning planning and delivery and to support administrative efficiency. For example, Brisbane Catholic Education has demonstrated that AI can be introduced responsibly and at scale, through implementation of M365

Copilot, exploration of hybrid learning models and testing of new approaches to resource design and adoption supported by professional learning.

While many schools already productively use edtech and AI tools, the challenge remains for all how best to assess the quality, suitability and value for money of the vast array of tools available to educators, schools and systems. A national framework for assessing edtech tools with regard to their quality and alignment with evidence-based practices would establish clear expectations, structures and guidelines for schools and edtech providers, making adoption easier.

Catholic school authorities have indicated that an assessment of edtech and AI tools and the production of a curated list of vetted and recommended products would be a valuable resource provided it is made available to all school sectors and jurisdictions.

QCEC notes that the *Safer Technologies 4 Schools (ST4S)* initiative, an Australian and New Zealand service that assesses the privacy and security of digital products used in schools, provides a standardised approach to evaluating digital products. QCEC sees critical value in the adoption of a similar approach for edtech and AI products. In fact, QCEC believes that the ST4S platform could be enhanced to include both technical assessment of products and their educational value.

Queensland Catholic school authorities also indicated that national advice on age-appropriate use of technologies would be valuable. Whilst the revised education guidelines published by the Non-State Schools Accreditation Board (May 2025) now lists the learning area of Technologies as optional in Prep, students across the primary years must learn to skilfully engage with edtech in age-appropriate ways, as described in the Digital Literacy general capability of the Australian Curriculum.

QCEC recommends that the process of developing and refining guidelines for the adoption and use of edtech tools should draw on schools and systems already utilising the technologies and create common templates on how to share best practice and evidence of outcomes. QCEC is open to collaborating with the government on additional research initiatives and the implementation of established methods for AI adoption.

Similar to draft recommendation 1.1, QCEC advises that resources should be accompanied by professional development accessible to all sectors. This would support teachers in building their confidence, skills, and willingness to implement new approaches.

Draft recommendation 2.1 – Move toward a national system of credit transfer and recognition of prior learning (RPL)

The Queensland Catholic education sector views VET as a vital component of a holistic education system that prepares students for diverse post-school pathways. Catholic secondary schools have a strong tradition of delivering VET in Schools (VETiS) programs, often in partnership with local employers, TAFE, and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs).

QCEC supports proposals to improve transitions between VET and higher education, including through the recognition of prior learning and credit transfer arrangements. We also support the proposal to expand access to micro-credentials and skill sets, which are increasingly relevant in a dynamic labour market. Further, QCEC welcomes the proposal to enhance the quality and transparency of VET offerings, including better information on course costs, outcomes and provider performance.

QCEC requests that the proposed phased implementation is accompanied by robust consultation with stakeholders across all sectors, in particular, secondary school VET coordinators to ensure that informal learning (e.g. service learning) is recognised where appropriate.

Draft recommendation 2.2 – Better target incentives to lift work-related training rates in small and medium enterprises (SMEs)

QCEC supports this recommendation and suggests extending similar incentives to not-for-profit education providers. This could strengthen school-based traineeships and VETiS programs, particularly in partnerships with SMEs.

Draft Recommendations 3.1 – Remove excessive occupational entry regulations that offer limited benefits

QCEC supports this draft recommendation and notes that reforms must maintain high standards in professions critical to child safety and wellbeing, including teaching.

However, a review of unnecessary barriers to employment is welcome. For example, the requirement for a Master of Education Leadership for principalships may be a barrier for otherwise capable leaders and could form part of this review.

Draft recommendation 3.2 – Expand entry pathways and streamline qualification requirements for occupations

QCEC supports this draft recommendation and notes that the implementation of micro-credentials and bridging programs may support skilled tradespeople and professionals in their transition into teaching and training roles.

Draft recommendation 3.3 – Improve the regular reviews of occupational entry regulations

QCEC supports this draft recommendation and refers to the example provided under 3.1.

Draft recommendation 3.4 – Incentivise occupational entry regulation reform through National Competition Policy (NCP)

QCEC expresses its support for this draft recommendation and advocates for the inclusion of education workforce reforms within NCP reviews, ensuring these efforts are aligned with national productivity objectives and facilitate access to reform incentives.

Conclusion

QCEC appreciates the opportunity to contribute to this important inquiry. We support the Commission's vision for a skilled and adaptable workforce and look forward to further collaboration to ensure that Catholic schools in Queensland are empowered to deliver high-quality, future-focused education.

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