



Department of Education and
Early Childhood Development

Victorian Government Submission

Productivity Commission Draft Research Report
Schools Workforce

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1. Introduction

Victoria welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Productivity Commission draft research report on the schools workforce. A highly capable teaching workforce is essential to the improvement of the Victorian school system and the achievement of the Government's education objectives.

The Victorian Government is working to ensure that Victorian students have access to high quality teaching and learning. The government undertakes a number of important functions in relation to the schools workforce in Victoria, namely to:

- Regulate and develop policy for all schools in the education sector, including both government and non-government schools, and
- Fund and support the delivery of government school education and the employment conditions of government school teachers, within a system of devolved school management.

The Commonwealth undertakes a key role in the schools workforce through funding non-government schools, as well as providing supplementary assistance to government schools. It also plays a key role through its responsibilities in higher education which influences pre-service education.

Victorian government functions are primarily undertaken through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD). DEECD includes a central office and nine regional offices. There are also two DEECD statutory authorities:

- the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority (VRQA), responsible for the regulation of education and training providers and qualifications, and
- the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (VCAA), which provides curriculum and assessment programs.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT) is a statutory authority of the Victorian government, established in 2002 with responsibility for regulating the teaching profession.

Context of the report

The Commission's report comes at a time of both national and state reforms in education, much of which has relevance for the schools workforce. All states and territories have committed to the Council of Australian Government (COAG) reforms under the National Education Agreement (NEA), including the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership (TQNP) to lift the quality of teaching and strengthen leadership capacity in schools. National professional standards for teachers and principals, and the eventual introduction of the Australian Curriculum, will impact on the teaching and learning across Australia.

While national reforms are important, the vast majority of the policy levers on the schools workforce are state-based responsibilities. States and territories have responsibility for the key aspects of the schools workforce, including primary responsibility for teachers and employment conditions in government schools. Further, state-led reforms are important to enable workforce strategies to reflect local content, culture, history and levels of autonomy unique to each state and territory. It is important that there is the

right balance between national policies promoting consistency in education across Australia and the ability for jurisdictions to meet local needs. High performing jurisdictions, such as Victoria, must be given freedom to innovate and improve performance. Victoria considers that the Commission should examine state based policy levers on the schools workforce as a priority in its report.

Over a number of decades, Victoria has built a strong educational foundation based on key changes to education reform. The 1990s focused on devolving educational, financial and management responsibility to schools. The past decade has focused on building the capacity of schools, with a strong emphasis on the impact of strong, high calibre leaders and teachers to the system. The next wave of reform will be underpinned by professional trust and support by empowering school leaders and teachers, working with their communities, to be the drivers of change and to determine the local approaches that will achieve improvement in student outcomes.

Today, Victoria's 1,539 government schools operate in a devolved environment in which principals are primarily responsible for day-to-day operations, including teacher recruitment, management, development and working arrangements. Victoria's government school system is arguably the most independent and devolved in Australia. It is designed to afford school leaders sufficient resources and support to provide a unique and personalised education for every student.

Victoria is now moving into an era of increased responsibility of the profession to innovate and lead reforms. The role of the practitioner in reviewing and improving teaching programs and performance is paramount. Victoria will continue to build on innovative pilots and programs, including ways to reward and recognise outstanding teaching, and the use of a wider workforce in schools that includes teachers, paraprofessionals, teaching assistants and health staff to deliver personalised teaching and learning to students.

Victoria considers improvements in pre-service teacher education a key priority for the future. The Commonwealth plays an important role in pre-service teacher education, including facilitating national approaches to pre-service course accreditation and registration of teachers. As the employers of teaching graduates, this area is of significant importance to states and territories.

It is clear more needs to be done in addressing educational disadvantage and supporting all schools to develop a high quality workforce. The Victorian government will continue its efforts to facilitate balances in supply and demand in the schools workforce across Victoria. Ease of mobility of teachers across sectors – early childhood, vocational education and training (VET), and schools – is also important to addressing imbalances in supply and demand, as well as providing teachers with a diverse career pathway across sectors.

2. Key messages

The Victorian government highlights the following messages as high priority for consideration.

- State-led reforms are critical, given the schools workforce is a core area of state responsibility.
 - Victoria considers that jurisdictional flexibility must be maintained and expanded to enable states and territories to drive innovation and generate the benefits of competitive federalism.
- Teacher evaluation and feedback is a key reform area that could unlock significant improvements in the quality of teaching. Teacher evaluation also needs to be more closely linked to career progression so that outstanding teachers are recognised and rewarded.
 - Victoria has structured performance and development processes, a career and salary structure with progressive responsibilities and flexibility for accelerated promotion, as well as innovative trials to reward teaching excellence.
 - Early reports from teacher participants in the trials suggest that merit pay has limited direct effect on teaching effort, but that it ensures school leaders take a vigorous and careful approach to performance management and the development of a school-based performance culture.
- Using the wider schools workforce more effectively can help free up teacher time to focus on instruction and draw on specialist expertise to lift student outcomes.
 - Victoria has piloted programs utilising the wider workforce, and there is flexibility in current school arrangements for innovative work organisation and workforce configurations.
- Reforms are needed to lift the quality of pre-service teacher education, particularly in the development of stronger partnerships between schools and providers, attracting the best candidates, improved practicum course components in schools, as well as the need for multiple and alternative pathways into teaching. This is fundamental to preparing a modern workforce that values continual feedback for professional growth, in order to be responsive to the individual and changing needs of students.
 - Victoria supports non-traditional, diverse courses, as well as school-university partnerships to improve the integration of theory and practicum.
- To address recruitment difficulties in hard-to-staff areas and subjects, governments can influence workforce supply through incentives, although the type and size of incentives needs to be reviewed to ensure value for money and targeting longer-term social and demographic pressures.
 - Victoria currently offers a suite of incentives and scholarships to support schools in meeting recruitment difficulties.

Other key messages highlighted in the submission are outlined below.

- High-performing systems heavily invest in the professional development of their schools workforce, including opportunities for peer learning and the demonstration of practice in authentic settings.
 - Victoria has focussed on building workforce capabilities over a sustained period, with a suite of invitational quality-assured professional development modules and courses.
- Effective school leadership is key to leading school improvement. Leadership is no longer confined to principal class positions, but is now distributed more widely.
 - Victoria builds the skills of current and emerging leaders, and sets clear expectations with continuous learning linked to school-based plans and an emphasis on peer learning and collaborative networks.
- Multi-system analysis indicates that a number of benefits can result from a shift to greater autonomy for schools, once a high quality teaching workforce is in place.
 - Victorian government schools have high levels of autonomy, with decentralised hiring and school management of staff development and conditions.
- The research tells us that highly effective teachers are motivated to work in educationally disadvantaged schools not just by remuneration but also school leadership, and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation.
 - Victoria has a multi-faceted approach, not only offering targeted incentives but also fostering a culture of school improvement and strong leadership in low SES areas.
- The schools workforce must be equipped with competencies for quality teaching of Indigenous students, and Indigenous representation in the schools workforce is important.
 - Victoria supports professional development of staff for culturally inclusive schools, along with measures to increase the number of Indigenous people in the schools workforce.
- The schools workforce needs to be sufficiently trained to assist with students with specific needs, with a personalised approach to teaching and learning.
 - Victoria supports targeted capacity building of teachers to meet a diverse range of individual student needs.
- Evaluating which policies, programs, funding arrangements and regulations work best for the schools workforce is a key priority.
 - Victoria systematically collects workforce data to support strategic decision making, and is embarking on new longer-term partnerships to improve the evidence base.
- There are a number of barriers that impact on the mobility of teachers across early childhood, schools, and VET sectors that could be explored further.

3. The importance of the schools workforce

It is now widely accepted that teacher quality has the largest impact on student outcomes, outside of family background. Empirical evidence shows that 30 per cent of the variance in student learning can be attributed to the quality of teaching (Hattie, 2003; Hanushek, 2010).

Lifting teaching quality would have a large impact on economic growth. Jensen (2010b) estimates that an increase of 10 per cent in teaching effectiveness would improve PISA test scores by 19 points, and increase Australia's GDP growth rate in the long term by 0.2 per cent every year, adding \$90 billion to GDP by 2050.

High quality teaching requires the right people to be attracted, recruited and supported to do their jobs as effectively as possible. School and system arrangements that influence teaching quality include: the selection of entrants to the teaching profession; teacher training, induction and mentoring arrangements; school recruitment and selection processes; quality of school leadership; the nature of professional development; teacher evaluation and feedback; the school accountability system; and various aspects of pay and reward arrangements. Technology is also a powerful lever to enhance teaching effectiveness.

School leaders have a strong influence on school culture, working conditions and opportunities for staff, which are known to impact on attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers in the school. Principals have a direct influence on teachers and the effectiveness of the teaching and learning relationship. The schools workforce is also increasingly accountable for improved student outcomes.

Importantly, the Victorian Government agrees with the Commission's broad definition of the schools workforce which acknowledges the various workforce roles in school education, from paraprofessionals, experts in their fields, teacher assistants and education support staff. Volunteers, parents and the broader community play a vital role in Australian schools, and are also critical to fostering values of lifelong learning in young people.

Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment

In considering improvements to the schools workforce, it is important to conceptualise the three areas of most consequence in education. These can be described simply as:

- what is taught (the curriculum);
- how students learn and how teaching supports their learning (the pedagogy); and
- knowing what students have learned and need to learn (assessment).

The curriculum-pedagogy-assessment nexus is important to education outcomes. Teachers need the capability to use student assessment to identify areas for improvement in their own teaching practice. The motivation of teachers to expand their knowledge base and continuously improve pedagogy and technical competencies is critical. Policy drivers must complement and support the inherent and extrinsic motivations of teachers to continuously learn and improve, as well as promoting the cultural change within schools to foster improvement.

Victorian response to the Draft Research Report

4. Addressing imbalances in teacher supply and demand

To address recruitment difficulties in certain hard-to-staff areas and subjects, governments can actively shape workforce supply, although this approach needs to be reviewed given longer-term social and demographic pressures. Victoria engages in an active strategy to shape workforce supply through various incentives and scholarships, and is reviewing the effectiveness of this approach for the longer-term.

The Commission seeks input on addressing ongoing imbalances in the supply and demand of different groups of teachers. In Victoria, as reflected across Australia and internationally, there are recruitment difficulties in attracting teachers to rural areas and low SES communities, and to certain disciplines. Victoria is experiencing shortages of secondary teachers in some fields including maths, science, special education, physical education, technology and languages (DEECD, 2009).

There are many factors influencing these imbalances, as outlined by the Commission. There is a growing population in Victoria with more people moving to the urban fringe of Melbourne and some regional areas, resulting in an increasing demand for school services there. Schools in communities with large proportions of low-SES students often have challenging working environments that make it difficult to attract and retain staff. Wage relativities with other professions also impact on the ability to recruit individuals to teaching, particularly in maths, science and technology-related disciplines.

The ageing of the schools workforce is likely to exacerbate recruitment difficulties in areas that are already hard-to-staff. As highlighted in the Staff in Australia's Schools report (Owen, Kos & McKenzie, 2008), ageing of the workforce causes increasing concern for recruitment in particular subjects and specialisations, and in some rural and remote locations. In Victoria, the average age of staff in government schools was 44 years old, and 36 per cent of all teachers were over 50 years old in 2008 (DEECD, 2009). A similar proportion of the workforce will be eligible for retirement in the next five years. Many in senior leadership positions are also close to retirement.

To help alleviate recruitment difficulties, governments can influence schools' workforce supply. Targeted programs can provide additional incentives to encourage staff to work in high-need locations and subjects, including both financial and non-financial incentives such as scholarships, accelerated training, paid study leave, financial support when training, and other in-school support. In addition, research shows that high quality teachers are motivated to move and stay working in schools by factors such as strong leadership at the school and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. These factors are important in any efforts to create a sustainable workforce in hard-to-staff locations (discussed further in section 9).

In the longer term, the effectiveness of approaches to meeting future imbalances in supply and demand should be reviewed given the ageing of the schools workforce and increasing social demographic

pressures. The Victorian Auditor-General's Office is reviewing the effectiveness of Victoria's actions to address the ageing of the teacher workforce.

The Commission also seeks further input on the implementation issues that would arise in designing arrangements to increase the remuneration of teachers in hard-to-staff positions. In a highly devolved school environment, Victoria seeks to provide optimum flexibility to all schools to enable them to attract and retain quality teachers to deliver educational programs. This currently includes special payments for attraction and retention, appointments to promotion positions such as leading teacher and accelerated salary progression.

Victoria's approach

Victoria has a devolved system of recruitment, whereby schools advertise directly and select their own teaching staff- a key difference between that of the Victorian school system and other states. Decentralised hiring has allowed schools to appoint practitioners who can be of most benefit to their schools and to develop staff over the long term with skills appropriate for their school. Currently, all vacancies in Victorian government schools are advertised through the Department's Recruitment Online website. However schools are also encouraged to consider advertising some vacancies in the newspaper or on other job boards. When a school experiences recruitment difficulties, there are a number of supply initiatives on offer for schools to access. These initiatives include:

- *Teach For Australia* provides a new pathway into teaching, designed to prepare high calibre graduates from all degree disciplines for teaching in educationally disadvantaged schools. Teach For Australia Associates undertake a fully funded two-year postgraduate diploma in teaching while working in a government secondary school. It is a four-way partnership between the Victorian government, Commonwealth government, The University of Melbourne and Teach For Australia.
- The *Career Change Program* enables suitably qualified professionals and tradespeople with relevant experience to gain employment in priority Victorian government schools while studying towards a two year teaching qualification. It is used by schools that have experienced difficulty in attracting suitably qualified teachers.
- *Discipline-specific teaching scholarships* are available for university students studying languages, information technology, mathematics or science to undertake a graduate entry teaching course.
- The *Student Teacher Practicum Scheme* provides eligible student teachers with financial incentives to undertake practicum placements in Victorian government schools located in rural and outer metropolitan areas.
- *Hard-to-Staff Schools Teaching Scholarships* provide incentives to final-year student teachers and new teaching graduates to take up and maintain employment in hard-to-staff teaching vacancies.
- The *Graduate Retention Incentives Program (GRIP)*, which began in 2010, provides retention incentives to quality teacher graduates in priority rural schools over a four year period.

Victoria also supports schools to access other avenues to overcome recruitment difficulties, including:

- *International teachers* – overseas refresher courses help to transition them to Australian contexts.
- *Former teachers* - refresher courses help transition them back into a school.
- *Mature age professionals/qualified adults* – flexible delivery, accelerated courses and on the job training and salaries assist individuals changing careers.
- *Retraining of teachers in special needs areas* – special education scholarships are on offer to teachers to retrain in identified areas of need in schools.

In addition, technology offers the potential to assist schools with recruitment difficulties. Students in rural locations can access online ‘virtual classrooms’ that link up students in various locations to a classroom in another location. This can help students to access subjects which may not be offered at their school due to recruitment difficulties, and to link in to highly effective teaching elsewhere. In Victoria, the Ultranet allows online learning, and there are several virtual classrooms which include video conferencing in operation.

‘Virtual classrooms’ in Victoria

In the Wimmera, eleven government schools launched a new era of curriculum provision in 2009 via video conferencing infrastructure to overcome recruitment difficulties. This project has now expanded to include almost all secondary colleges in the Grampians Region and some from the Loddon Mallee and Barwon South Western Regions. It involves the teaching of physics, psychology, mathematical methods, chemistry, physical education and other subjects through innovative blended curriculum provision. This includes face-to-face teaching, digitised (recorded) audio and video instructional material, video conference lessons, special purpose podcasts, an online learning management system with 24/7 access, and personal conferencing technologies. In 2011 twenty-five classes were offered through the Grampians Virtual School.

5. Training and professional development

Reforms are needed to improve pre-service teacher education, particularly in the selection of candidates, the need for multiple and alternative pathways into teaching, integrating theory and practice, and improving course content. Victoria supports non-traditional, diverse courses, as well as school-university partnerships to improve the integration of theory and practice in schools.

High performing systems heavily invest in the professional development of their schools workforce, including opportunities for peer learning and the demonstration of practice in authentic settings. Victoria has focussed on building workforce capabilities over a sustained period, with a suite of invitational quality assured professional development modules and courses. Technology is central to workforce development strategies.

Pre-service teacher education

The Commission seeks input on the effectiveness of different kinds of pre-service teacher education pathways and training courses. The quality, and flexibility, of teacher preparation courses is a key influence on the effectiveness of the schools workforce. As the largest employer of Victorian graduates of pre-service teacher education, the Victorian Government has been working to influence the quality and provision of teacher education courses, and communicate our workforce needs to providers. Victoria would like to highlight a number of key issues concerning pre-service teacher education, many which have been raised in previous state and national inquiries.

Selection of candidates into pre-service teacher education courses

Victoria would like the Commission to investigate the current method of selecting candidates into teacher education courses and give consideration to the range of aptitudes needed to function effectively as a teacher. These aptitudes might include such qualities as interpersonal and team skills, organisational skills and communication skills. Current selection criteria and processes should be broadened to include written or online applications and interviews where appropriate. Psychometric testing, which is currently used in selecting first year medical students in some universities, could also be explored as a screening measure and/or supplementary tool.

Course flexibility and multiple pathways

A key priority for Victoria is the provision of multiple pathways into pre-service teacher education to cater to a range of applicants. Opening up routes into teaching can help attract a much larger potential pool of skilled and talented people, and raise the competitiveness of entering the teaching profession. Non-traditional employment based pathways into teaching can help alleviate some of the concerns for individuals associated with a return to study, including loss of income and employment outcomes on course completion. Non-traditional pathways that involve substantive on the job experience during training can also help to improve the integration of theory and practice.

Victoria supports non-traditional, diverse pathways into teaching, such as the Career Change program and Teach For Australia (outlined earlier in section 4). In addition the Victorian Government will continue to work with the Commonwealth to come to agreement regarding the implementation of the national Teach Next program, an employment based training pathway which aims to attract high performing professionals from other industries to teach in hard to staff schools and subject areas. Victoria believes that the program should provide sufficient flexibility for each jurisdiction to tailor the program to address local needs.

Integration of theory and practice in pre-service teacher education

Integrating theory with practice is an integral component of high quality teacher education. Pre-service teachers typically regard placement experiences as the most valuable component of their teacher education program (Townsend & Bates, 2007). Actual school experience has the potential to provide insight into the complex dynamics of schools and teaching, and opportunities to learn about effective strategies and their capacities to implement them. There is often a lack of coherence and alignment between theory and in-school experience (OECD, 2005).

Victoria supports The University of Melbourne's Master of Teaching (MTeach) program, a clinical model of teacher preparation for research-based teaching. This clinical model offers extensive practical experience in schools with support on practicum placement from two experts who help link university study with classroom experience. Recently, clinical preparation (or field experience) was identified as a key aspect of teacher preparation likely to have the most effect on student outcomes (National Research Council, 2010).

A report released by the Australian Learning and Teaching Council (Ure & Gough, 2009) made seven recommendations for program changes that are needed to address the professional learning needs of pre-service teachers in the practicum component of teacher education programs. This included the need for university providers to review the design of school placements and the professional learning needs of pre-service teachers.

Further, the provision of sufficient practicum places in Victorian schools continues to be a challenge. The Commonwealth is responsible for the funding of pre-service teacher education, including practicum placements. Victoria considers a higher rate of payment needs to be provided by the Commonwealth to take into account cost of living increases and the responsibilities associated with student supervision. Payments to schools for supervision have not changed since 1990, and range from \$12 to \$21 a day, which is an inadequate incentive for supervising teachers.

Victoria notes that the national award governing payments to supervisors of student teachers has recently lapsed, presenting an opportunity to review current arrangements. Victoria also notes the recommendation of the Higher Education Base Funding Review that all aspects of practicum be reviewed in early 2012 in consultation with employers and looks forward to participating. Victoria would like to see sufficient resources being made available to enable the implementation of more clinically-oriented teacher education and the proposed increase in minimum practicum days in courses under the national standards and procedures for accreditation of programs.

To help lift the quality of practicum components, Victoria has recently supported the establishment of seven School Centres for Teaching Excellence, in partnership with six of the nine universities in Victoria. Funded for two years through the TQNP, these centres are based on a school site or cluster of schools and enable pre-service teachers to have greater opportunities to integrate theory with practical experience as they engage with mentor teachers, research, and experienced academics to increase their effectiveness in the classroom.

Course content

There are perceived gaps in the quality of courses to prepare graduates in effective classroom teaching. The 2008 TALIS survey identified that 36 per cent of Australian teachers work in schools where their school principal believes a lack of pedagogical preparation by teachers hinders instruction in their schools (OECD, 2009). Education faculties should adopt a holistic approach to pre-service teacher education and include the development of key personal and interpersonal capabilities in teaching, such as resilience, communication skills, and conflict resolution skills. These teacher capabilities are critical given the increasing demands placed on teachers in their relationships with students, parents, staff and other members of the school community.

In addition, teacher preparation courses also need to better prepare teachers for 21st century teaching and learning (see section 7). This involves a more complex skill set such as using a mix of approaches and methods to meet individual student needs, utilising technology and flexible learning spaces, working in collaboration with teaching teams, and multi-disciplinary teams that draw on the wider workforce.

Innovation in pre-service teacher education provision

In 2010, Victoria provided seed funding to some Victorian universities to innovate and trial effective ideas for improved provision. The research partnership projects supported innovative solutions to complex problems, such as using technology for flexible provision, enhancing community-university-school partnerships, integrating theory and practice on site in schools, as well as strengthening incentives and support for rural practicum placements and students who need to work while studying. As a result of this research there is a greater appreciation of the mutual benefits available from school-university partnerships including the ability to place larger numbers of pre-service teachers at one school site and the flow-on professional development opportunities for school staff. There is also an appreciation of the value of practitioners researching their practice, and the need for mentors to work in a peer, co-teaching relationship.

Evaluating the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education courses

A key issue is the need to better evaluate the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education courses to develop graduates that are ready for beginning teaching. The feedback loop between government, schools and universities could be improved for this purpose. Victoria supports the Commission's draft recommendation for the development of a longitudinal dataset that tracks the experience of graduate teachers over time.

Victoria is engaging in a number of initiatives to explore the effectiveness of pre-service teacher education courses. Victoria is chairing the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) National Teacher Workforce Dataset Working Group, which is commencing a longitudinal study into the impacts of teacher education. Victoria is also a key partner in an Australian Research Council (ARC) linkage research project with Deakin University assessing the value add of teacher education in different contexts.

Professional development

International research emphasises that high performing systems prioritise the development of their teachers and leaders. A study by McKinsey & Company on the top performing countries in education found that these systems heavily invested in opportunities for continuous improvement and professional development, with opportunities to learn from each other and for coaching and mentoring (Barber & Mourshed, 2007). Teachers are known to learn best from the demonstration of practice in authentic settings, and highly value opportunities to undertake research (OECD, 2011; Barber & Mourshed, 2007). In Japan and Finland teachers work together, plan their lessons jointly, observe each other's lessons, and help each other to improve. There is a culture of collaborative planning, reflection on instruction, and peer coaching in these systems.

An important point from the research is that professional development programs must be clearly linked to teacher's individual development needs in order to be effective (OECD, 2009). Timperley (DEECD, 2011a) emphasises that teachers should identify their own professional development needs based on their students' needs. Teachers need to have strong formative assessment capabilities to be able to accurately identify their student's needs. The use of assessment is one of the most powerful and cost-effective interventions to improve teaching and learning.

Advancements in technology offer much potential to build teacher capacity. Technology enables teachers to better develop and customise their teaching approaches to meet individual student needs. It enables teachers' access to online learning communities for peer learning, as well as opportunities to link into professional learning sessions remotely. This can be particularly useful for teaching in rural and regional areas.

Victoria's approach

Professional development

Victoria has had a significant and sustained focus on building the professional capabilities of the schools workforce over time. Since 2008, the TQNP has funded many opportunities to build teaching capacity. Through this partnership, schools have the flexibility to voluntarily opt-in to a suite of invitational capacity building initiatives on offer across the state. Many professional learning programs aim to improve teacher practice and deepen content and pedagogical knowledge in specific disciplines, including literacy and numeracy proficiency. Others explore leadership, assessment and data management, workforce planning and community engagement. Victoria also supports teachers to take teacher professional leave to undertake focused inquiry of their practice. Further, a new program was piloted in 2010 to support teachers to be reflective practitioners and work collaboratively with mentors to explore their teaching practice.

Victoria has also focused on creating a leadership strategy with a suite of system-designed and quality assured professional learning modules. Many are programs run through the Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership (see section 8).

A key feature of the Victorian approach is to make clear the expectations of both school leaders and teachers for quality practice through a number of frameworks. The Principles of Teaching and Learning (POLT) were released in 2004, and more recently the e⁵ Instructional Model was released in 2009. The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders, released in 2007, describes the critical capabilities that leaders need (see section 8). The National Professional Standards for Teachers, released in February 2011 and National Professional Standards for Leaders, released in July 2011 by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), provide national consistency on elements of high quality practice.

In terms of professional support for beginning teachers, in Victoria, there is induction and mentoring support to ensure a smooth transition into the profession. Through an induction program, schools help to set expectations early for teachers about what quality classroom practice looks like and to assist new staff

in understanding their responsibilities and the level of support that will be provided to them to improve their practice. In addition, a two day Teacher Mentor Support program builds the capacity of mentors in government, Catholic and independent schools to support beginning teachers through ongoing professional learning.

6. Teacher performance

Feedback and evaluation of teaching performance is a key reform area, and needs to be more closely linked to targeted professional development and career pathways in schools. High quality teaching should be recognised and rewarded to attract, motivate and retain outstanding teachers. Victoria has in place performance and development processes; career and salary structures with progressively more responsibilities and the flexibility for accelerated promotion; and is trialling models to reward teaching excellence.

Victoria agrees with the Commission that evaluation and feedback is critical to teacher development, and can have a significant impact on student outcomes. Evaluation helps to identify teaching strengths and weaknesses, which can be improved through targeted training and development. It has been shown that schools which emphasise particular aspects of teaching in evaluations create improvements in the quality of teaching in those areas (OECD, 2005; Jensen, 2010a). Surveys of Australian teachers show that this is an area where substantial reform is needed to improve meaningful evaluation of teachers' work. Over 60 per cent of Australian teachers report that evaluation and feedback has little impact on the way teachers teach in the classroom (Jensen, 2010a).

Research shows that recognition and promotion are important in motivating and retaining effective teachers (OECD, 2005; OECD, 2011; Whelan, 2009). A study of Victorian teachers found that effective teachers – compared to less effective teachers – often sought recognition and promotion to positions of responsibility to implement change and improve student outcomes (Rice, 2008). While both financial and non-financial forms of reward are important, a lack of financial recognition of good teaching performance can affect teachers' decisions to join or leave the profession, especially those that are likely to have attractive employment prospects elsewhere (OECD, 2005; DEST, 2007; Goldhaber, 2009).

One of the challenges in improving evaluation is gaining consensus on how to measure teaching effectiveness, along with using reliable tools and an adequate collection of data. Jensen (2011) recommends using a balanced scorecard of effective teaching and learning that measures the different aspects of a teacher's role. He proposes schools choose a minimum of four of the following eight methods to assess teaching performance more effectively: student performance and assessments; peer observation and collaboration; direct observation of classroom teaching and learning; student surveys and feedback; 360-degree assessment and feedback; self-assessment; parent surveys and feedback; and external observation.

Victoria's approach

All Victorian government schools participated in the performance and development culture (P&D culture) accreditation scheme 2005-2009, resulting in 98 per cent of schools being accredited. Findings from an evaluation of the scheme indicated a belief that the P&D culture initiative had a significant impact on: establishing effective school policies, processes and structures; strengthened school culture related to continuous improvement; improved instructional practice; improved student learning; and also improved implementation of other government initiatives (Starr, 2009).

Victoria has in place structured performance and development processes that help to evaluate and provide feedback on teaching performance. In Victorian government schools, the teacher performance and development cycle is designed to recognise high performance, address low performance and includes targeted professional development that supports ongoing professional growth. As part of the Accountability and Improvement Framework, these annual performance and development plans form a written agreement between the schools workforce and principals outlining individual development needs, student learning and school priorities, and allow for local feedback on teaching performance.

The Accountability and Improvement Framework envisages that teachers will be promoted based on performance. However, the Department's most recent annual data (2011) shows that only 39 out of 22,891 eligible government school teachers did not progress to the next pay scale indicating that promotion is based on time served rather than performance. This outcome is consistent with the pattern in previous years, where some 99 per cent of eligible teachers on average progress. Despite the structured performance and development processes already in place, Victoria acknowledges that in the most devolved system in Australia the major determinant of teacher remuneration appears to have little connection to performance, impact, achievement or contribution notwithstanding the stated aims of the performance and development cycle.

The Commission seeks further evidence on whether current procedures for managing unsatisfactory teacher performance are effective. There are a very small number of involuntary redundancies in Victorian government schools. While there is a comprehensive process for identifying ineffective teachers, the exiting of teachers from the teaching profession through performance management mechanisms is infrequent. A report by The Allen Consulting Group (2007) found that this could be due to cumbersome processes in place (at that time) for exiting staff. Other factors could be cultural issues and/or a need for more support of principals throughout the process. In 2009, the Department offered a limited number of financial incentives to facilitate the exit from the profession of teachers lacking contemporary teaching skills.

The Commission also seeks further input on what issues are likely to arise in establishing a performance-based career structure for teachers. In Victoria, teaching performance is assessed against defined professional standards. Victoria has a progressive career and salary structure, with a special class of leading teacher at the top of the teacher career and salary scale. These positions provide recognition of the importance of leadership and management combined with exemplary teaching practice for improved student learning outcomes. High performing teachers can be accelerated through their respective salary

scales. In addition, schools have the flexibility to make special payments of up to \$7,000 to reward staff in special circumstances, although take-up has been limited to date.

While the principal has ultimate responsibility for the performance and development assessment for each employee at their school, he/she may assign the process to a nominee with the exception of the final assessment decision. Victoria's performance and development plans currently refer to DEECD's teacher classification level standards, and in the future may also link to the National Professional Standards developed by AITSL. VAGO (2010) reviewed Victoria's teacher performance evaluation processes and recommendations are currently being progressed.

In addition, Victoria is leading Australia in innovative trials to link pay more closely with performance. The Rewarding Teaching Excellence model trials are exploring rewards for both individual teachers and whole schools (see box below for more details). The design of the model trials places a greater focus on teacher evaluation as a means through which teaching quality can be improved. A strong performance and development culture in these schools provides the framework for successfully implementing the rewards models into existing processes. In implementing the trials support has been provided to school leaders to be able to differentiate teacher performance and to make informed judgments about what constitutes evidence in the different domains of professional practice. Training has been provided to develop confidence and expertise in giving feedback to teachers about their performance and areas for improvement. Importantly, the focus in the model trial schools' summative evaluation is moving from evidence of what teachers have done to what impact they have had on student learning. The results from these model trials will contribute to the evidence base and inform strategy and policy in respect to the alignment between performance management policy, professional standards and career structure.

Victorian Rewarding Teaching Excellence model trials

The Teacher Rewards model provides rewards for the top 30 per cent of teachers in a school. Rewards are based on their performance, as determined by a panel of school leaders. Importantly, a locally agreed 'balanced scorecard approach' is used to measure performance based on teaching excellence, teamwork and leadership, professional learning, and school and system contribution. Teachers present their nominated evidence to a panel to demonstrate the quality of their practice in relation to each of the four dimensions on the balanced scorecard. The findings from this measurement tool may have implications for future teacher performance evaluation across the system.

The School Rewards model provides rewards to the top 20 per cent of schools. This is based on their performance, relative to other schools, determined on the basis of improvement ('distance travelled') using a weighted index of school performance measures including student learning, student engagement and wellbeing, and student pathways and transitions.

The Victorian Rewarding Teaching Excellence model trials are currently underway, and based on early feedback from schools we understand that the trials have provided an opportunity for schools to further strengthen their performance and development culture. The balanced scorecard approach, at the core of the Teacher Rewards model, enables assessment across a range of areas, strengthening the focus on teacher appraisal and performance management in schools, opening up discussion and enabling greater

understanding of what constitutes effective teaching. Teachers are already familiar with the use of student data to inform their professional practice; here there is a clearer line of sight between intention, effort and impact as data is used to support their claims. Through the process of gathering and presenting evidence, and the giving and receiving of feedback, teachers and leaders develop a deeper knowledge of what constitutes effective evidence, gain confidence in how to differentiate performance and understand the actions that lead to improved student outcomes. With a greater emphasis on feedback, the developmental needs of individuals can be targeted and teachers can be better supported to achieve their professional goals.

In the School Rewards model schools are able to 'weight up' priority areas, and then work on strategies to achieve both these and other determined areas of improvement. Data is central to performance and development here as well, as schools seek ways to improve on a range of indicators. What is starting to emerge from some school feedback is the need for strong leadership, and a performance and development culture in schools to be present and further built upon as key elements of the Rewarding Teaching Excellence model trials, particularly the Teacher Rewards model.

Future reform efforts will focus on fostering teaching excellence and building a more robust performance assessment and management framework within schools. This will allow principals, parents and school communities to identify, encourage and reward high quality teaching.

Individual school innovation and remuneration approaches will have a clear role to play in achieving progress towards this goal. It is of vital importance that the performance culture is actively developed at the school level, and nurtured by school leaders.

7. Workforce composition and innovation

Using the wider schools workforce can help free up teachers' time to focus on instruction and draw on specialist expertise to lift student outcomes. Victoria has piloted programs utilising the wider workforce, and there is flexibility in current school arrangements for innovative workforce organisation.

The skill set required of teachers is changing, with important implications for job design and innovation in schools. Teachers now need to equip students for life in a knowledge-based 21st century society, where higher order thinking skills are increasingly integral in today's workplaces. Students, more than ever, need to learn to generate, process and sort complex information, think systematically and critically, ask meaningful questions, be creative, and be able to identify and solve real-world problems (Bransford, Brown, Cocking, Donovan & Pellegrino, 2000; Darling-Hammond, Barron, Pearson, Schoenfeld, Stage, Zimmerman, Cervetti & Tilson, 2008; Fullan, Hill & Crévola, 2006). With globalisation and international mobility, students need to develop strong intercultural skills, both for work and life at home and abroad.

In addition, there are new demands on school staff in pursuing personalised learning and teaching approaches and stronger and broader connections with the local community. Learning environments are expanding for students and flexible learning spaces are enabling greater teamwork among school staff and allowing larger numbers of adults and students to work together in new ways. Technology allows new

avenues for curriculum provision and online learning, and gives students anytime, anywhere access to learning materials and resources.

Some schools are using paraprofessionals to engage specialist skills in order to meet the individual needs of students and assist them to develop the skill sets required for today's global society. Some teachers are moving toward working in multi-disciplinary teams that comprise other teachers, education support staff, and paraprofessionals who contribute to improved student outcomes.

The use of paraprofessionals and support staff can also help to free up teachers' time for teaching and reduce their administrative burdens. The OECD's Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) in 2008 found that one quarter of Australian teachers are losing at least 30 per cent of their class time to factors other than effective teaching and learning, which includes undertaking administrative tasks and keeping order in the classroom (OECD, 2009).

Given the importance of effective teaching on student outcomes, qualified teachers need to be able to focus on their core competencies. In the UK in 2003 the government introduced school workforce reform measures to raise educational standards by freeing up teachers' time through the employment of a wider workforce. Schools used a creative mix of professionals and paraprofessionals that were able to manage school systems, support teaching and learning, and make a difference for students. The Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services and Skills (Ofsted) found that the schools with the most success in improving student outcomes were those that most closely aligned the wider workforce's roles and responsibilities to students' needs and school priority areas for improvement (Ofsted, 2008).

Victoria's approach

Victoria piloted a Wider Workforce Field Trial in 2009-2010 which investigated innovative and sustainable models of workforce organisation to increase a school's workforce capacity to improve student outcomes. This included models of employment for paraprofessionals, teacher assistants, and experts from local communities, business, universities and government agencies. Teachers led and organised these teams of adults to work together in order to meet the diverse needs of students. An evaluation of the program found that as a result, teachers were able to spend more of their time on higher order teaching activities and focused teaching time with individual students or small groups. Teachers were more effectively using their own and others' specialised skills. Other outcomes included students' increased attendance and retention, engagement in learning and connectedness to school (DEECD, 2011b)

The Victorian Secondary Teacher Assistants (STA) initiative supports secondary teachers in the classroom by providing funding to employ education support staff to undertake tasks that reduce the administrative component of teachers' workloads and enables them to focus on their core work of teaching and learning. The STAs carry out allocated activities and tasks determined by the principal and responsible teaching staff member to meet the specific needs and priorities of the school. An evaluation of the STA initiative found that as a result of the program, teachers have more time for teaching, less stress and improved job satisfaction. The STA initiative has allowed schools to consolidate, streamline and improve the efficiency of processes in the school (DEECD, 2011c).

Victorian Secondary Teacher Assistants Initiative

There is clear evidence that the STA initiative has been successful in getting teachers back to what they want to do, and what they do best – teach.

It is estimated that 87% of the work of STAs is activity that was previously undertaken by teachers or coordinators (and others), who now have more time to spend in planning, student engagement and supporting professional learning. (DEECD, 2011c)

In Victoria, principals have been encouraged to utilise existing flexibility to pay qualified education support staff at a level so they have duty of care for students' educational outcomes as well as their physical and emotional wellbeing. This also gives principals more flexibility in the organisation of their school workforce.

Schools are providing more professional development opportunities for education support staff to take on expanded roles in teaching. The Literacy Success program helps education support staff to increase their knowledge of how students learn to read and gives them a range of practical ideas to assist and support teachers in the classroom with reading instruction.

Victoria has also supported the capacity of schools to improve workforce planning and innovations in job design through the 2010 School Workforce Planning Tools project. The project provided funding to schools, groups of schools and networks to enhance strategic workforce planning practices through using and/or developing improved tools, processes and information to put into place strategies to attract, recruit, develop and retain the workforce needed in schools. Victoria is keen to utilise these tools and processes more broadly across schools. This work has sought to leverage currently available workforce data for localised workforce planning and could inform the work of the AEEYSOC National Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group particularly in relation to using data for workforce planning at central, regional and local levels.

8. Leadership and school autonomy

Effective school leadership is key to leading school improvement, and is no longer confined to principal class positions but distributed more widely in schools. Victoria builds the skills of current and emerging leaders and sets clear expectations with continuous learning linked to school-based plans and an emphasis on peer learning.

Multi-system analysis indicates that a number of benefits can result from a shift to greater autonomy for schools, once a high quality teaching workforce is in place. Victorian government schools have high levels of autonomy, with decentralised hiring and exiting processes, and school management of staff development and conditions.

Leadership

Leaders must be responsive to their school's needs in order to create effective learning environments. Leaders work together to set the strategic direction and expectations of their school based on data,

prioritise areas of foci, allocate resources and performance manage staff to achieve their outcomes. School leadership is no longer confined to those in principal class positions, but distributed and shared more widely in the school community in order to maximise staff expertise.

School autonomy

An analysis of twenty of the world's most improved systems (Mourshed, Chijioko & Barber, 2010) identified that once high quality teaching workforces are in place, increased autonomy at the school level can support the creativity and innovation of its educators and other stakeholder groups. Systems with high levels of professional regard for the workforce also come to rely on their schools and teachers to drive continuous improvement, and look to them to foster and share locally-driven innovation to facilitate improvement across the system (Mourshed, Chijioko & Barber, 2010; OECD, 2011; Fullan, 2011). At the overall system level, increased autonomy has been beneficial in a number of jurisdictions, such as the Netherlands, Hong Kong and Finland.

The World Bank (Barrera-Osorio, Fasih, Patrinos & Santibáñez, 2009) has concluded that the potential benefits of increased school autonomy include:

- improved student performance as a result of reduced repetition rates;
- reduced dropout rates, and better learning outcomes;
- more effective use of resources because those making the decisions for each school are intimately acquainted with its needs;
- increased participation of all local stakeholders in decision-making; and
- processes leading to more collegial relationships and increased satisfaction for the workforce.

Increased autonomy in schools requires appropriate accountability measures to be in place. Accountability involves holding all decision-makers to account for student outcomes and the effective allocation of resources. This is achieved through the collection and reporting of data relating to student outcomes, use of resources, and compliance with relevant legislation and regulations. However, accountability measures must be balanced by efforts to reduce unnecessary reporting and administration. As a result, the accountability of systems with high levels of decentralisation focus more on reporting on student outcomes (and the overall achievement of schools) and less on proving that particular processes are being followed.

Victoria's approach

Leadership

Victoria has heavily invested in a sustainable leadership strategy to help develop over time the capabilities required for effective leaders. This strategy is also focused to alleviate any issues with leadership succession in the future given there is a relatively shallow cohort of teachers in the 35-44 age brackets in Victoria.

In 2007, Victoria released The Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders, which is framed by Sergiovanni's (1984) model. The framework describes the critical capabilities that leaders can draw on within the five domains of effective leadership: technical, human, educational, symbolic and cultural. It also articulates the conditions under which high quality learning and teaching takes place. It distinguishes between levels of proficiency, and can be used to assist teachers and school leaders to participate in professional learning that is relevant to their developmental needs.

OECD case study: Preparing and developing leadership

Matthews, Moorman and Nusche (2007) identified the following strengths in Victoria's strategy for developing leadership:

- *a coherent reform process;*
- *intellectual engagement of the education workforce;*
- *clear expectations for school leadership;*
- *a focus on performance development;*
- *continuous learning linked to school-based plans and challenges; and*
- *an emphasis on peer learning (p. 29).*

The Bastow Institute of Educational Leadership continues to build on the leadership development work by providing quality assured modules and programs to build the knowledge and skills of emerging leaders, new and experienced principals, leadership teams, rural school leaders and early childhood professionals. Teachers can participate in leadership programs such as the Emerging Leaders program, as well as have mentoring roles to beginning teachers. The High Performing Principals Development program aims to develop high performing principals as system leaders who collaborate, share best practice across the system, and engage in and promote continuous learning. Principals undertake individual action research projects to address areas of need or interest, and contribute to system improvement. In addition to this, the Bastow Institute also builds the community leadership of school leaders, through the Leading Communities and Rural School and Community Leadership development modules.

School autonomy

Victorian government schools have high levels of autonomy, particularly in relation to workforce and funding. Substantial reforms to school autonomy were introduced in Victoria as part of the Schools of the Future program in 1994, with many elements being maintained through the 2000s. Victorian government schools also have extensive autonomy in relation to curriculum and assessment delivery (as long as it is consistent with state frameworks, the intergovernmental agreement on national frameworks and VCAA/VRQA statutory requirements) and the contracting and sourcing of goods and services. The Victorian Government is currently exploring options for further increases to autonomy, and is committed to establishing a default autonomy model for schools.

In Victoria, there is decentralised hiring, with hiring decisions being made at the school level. Principals manage a range of human resources responsibilities in respect to all school staff. This decentralised hiring approach has allowed schools to appoint practitioners who can be the most benefit to their schools and to develop staff over the long term with skills appropriate for their school.

The Victorian Government considers increasing the regard for the professionalism of the workforce, and enabling teachers increased freedoms to drive improvements in pedagogy and teaching instruction as key priorities for the future. In 2010 the Schools Workforce Planning tools project supported the capacity of schools to improve workforce planning and innovations in job design. Evidence from Victoria and other jurisdictions indicates that reforms to school autonomy need to be considered both in terms of structural and cultural changes. Structural change includes legislation, regulations, reporting requirements, and Ministerial Orders. Cultural changes focus on the relationship between the bureaucracy and schools and the extent to which schools are actively supported and encouraged to undertake local decision-making.

Cultural changes also include enhancing professional accountability between teachers and school leaders and between schools and their local communities (lateral accountability), whilst ensuring appropriate accountability to, and support from, the centre for the monitoring and delivery of core outcomes (vertical accountability).

9. Reducing educational disadvantage

Highly effective teachers are motivated to work in educationally disadvantaged schools not just by pay but also school leadership, and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. Victoria has a multi-faceted approach, offering targeted incentives as well as fostering a culture of school improvement and strong leadership in low socio-economic communities.

The schools workforce must be equipped with competencies to provide quality teaching and learning for Indigenous students. Victoria supports the professional development of staff for culturally inclusive schools, along with measures to increase the number of Indigenous people in the schools workforce.

The schools workforce also needs to be sufficiently trained to assist students with specific needs, in order to provide a personalised approach to teaching and learning. Victoria has targeted capacity building on meeting students' individual needs.

Victoria would like to draw the Commission's attention to the factors motivating highly effective teachers to work in areas of educational disadvantage, as high quality teaching is required to give these students the best chances of success. A Victorian study undertaken by Rice (2008) highlights the range of factors that motivate the most effective teachers to work in high need schools. Financial incentives are not enough in isolation, and it is important that a school has a culture of continuous school improvement, strong school leadership, as well as opportunities for promotion and increased responsibility. Flexibility to engage with new ideas and innovative approaches to education, and opportunities for professional learning and post-graduate studies, are also key factors (Rice, 2008).

In rural areas, there is some evidence that individuals of a rural background tend to stay longer in teaching in those school locations (Boylan & McSwan, 1998). Both financial and other non-financial benefits can be effective in supporting rural placements, especially if they target issues to do with isolation, and are used in conjunction with other policies for school improvement (Boylan & McSwan,

1998; Rice, 2008). Rural areas may seek to attract locals to regional university sites with a view to retaining them in rural locations.

Victoria considers that it is professional competencies and qualities that are critical in teaching Indigenous students. The schools workforce should have compassion, have a values and belief system that respects and celebrates Indigenous culture, hold high aspirations for Indigenous students, have a commitment to developing meaningful relationships with Indigenous communities, and have a commitment to developing their own cultural awareness.

It is important that teachers have the capacity to tailor education to the individual child, and respond to any specific educational needs that may exist (Council for Australian Federation, 2007; OECD, 2006). Personalised learning aims to raise outcomes by focusing teaching and learning on the aptitudes and interests of students, to ensure that every pupil achieves the highest standard possible (OECD, 2006). The schools workforce needs to be sufficiently trained with particular specialisations to assist students with specific needs, including students from cultural and languages backgrounds other than English, and those with other specific educational requirements.

Victoria's approach

Educational disadvantage

In line with the research, Victoria takes a multi-faceted approach to supporting the development of a high quality workforce in high need areas. Victoria supports not only targeted initiatives and incentives to attract and retain teachers to these settings, but also more broadly supports school leadership, school improvement and supportive working conditions to help develop and retain staff over time.

The Commonwealth's National Partnerships have focused on low-SES communities as a priority, and there are a range of initiatives to support students who are at risk of disengagement from school or from educationally disadvantaged communities. Schools have flexibility to determine which approaches are most appropriate for their school community and culture.

Victoria provides targeted programs and incentives to attract and retain high quality teachers in high need areas, such as Teach For Australia, where top graduates from various disciplines undertake teacher training whilst being employed in educationally disadvantaged schools. High-need schools have the flexibility to make special payments of up to \$7,000 to attract and retain high quality teachers, although this has had limited take-up to date. Further, a new Executive Class of principals was also introduced in 2008, which enables high-need schools to attract talented and high-performing principals and other leaders, and utilise their leadership skills and experience to lift school performance.

More broadly, Victoria supports schools to provide training for teachers in specific areas of disadvantage. Victorian government schools also have access to a range of different staff to support teachers and students when addressing disadvantage. These include, but are not limited to, Koorie engagement support officers, primary and secondary school nurses, student support services officers, primary welfare officers, student welfare coordinators, and school-appointed wellbeing and engagement staff.

In Victoria, the Student Family Occupation (SFO) density is used to identify those schools whose students' readiness to learn is affected by a range of circumstances, including prior educational experiences and family or other personal circumstances. SFO is Victoria's preferred measure as it is a direct enrolment measure of the students' socioeconomic status. SFO density impacts on the amount of funding provided to schools to support programs that focus on students at risk of not achieving success at school, with a particular emphasis on students with literacy problems. SFO density is calculated by aggregating each student's weighted parental occupational category to form a school level index. To be eligible for SFO funding a school's SFO density must be greater than the state wide median SFO density.

Schools also have access to a range of support programs and initiatives to improve outcomes for young people and address disadvantage. This includes a student mapping tool to identify students at risk, funded under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions. There are also Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), workplace learning coordinators, regional career development officers and Koorie transition officers that work with schools to support and assist them to address critical issues. The Victorian government is working to create a shared understanding of how health and wellbeing services can work in a coordinated way to promote, identify and address the health and wellbeing needs of children and young people.

Indigenous students

Victoria is committed to providing professional development opportunities for principals, teachers and school staff to help develop culturally inclusive schools that not only accept but highlight the centrality of Indigenous culture and history. The government is also working to increase the number of Indigenous people entering the schools workforce by:

- offering Koorie teaching scholarships to support Indigenous university students studying to become teachers;
- offering a career structure to Indigenous employees above entry level positions in order to increase their skills and professional status over time. This has already occurred with Victoria's regional Koorie education workforce, where the number of roles were increased and redesigned to improve job security and raise classification and salary levels; and
- working to increase the retention of Indigenous students in the school setting. This includes: utilising individual education plans (IEPs) for each student that cover key transition points in schooling; providing Wannik tutorial assistance programs for students performing below the expected standard in literacy and numeracy; assisting those at risk of disengaging from school to develop education and pathway plans to achieve their future goals; and supporting high-achieving students in Years 11 and 12 through the Wannik education scholarship program.

Specific educational needs

Victoria is committed to ensuring that teachers respond to the particular educational needs of all students. Specialist preparation for different cohorts of students with specific needs is provided in Victorian pre-service teacher education programs, as well as in-service capacity building initiatives across

schools. In addition, Victoria supports educators to upgrade and refresh their qualifications through the provision of initiatives, such as special education teaching scholarships for teachers.

Supporting students with autism spectrum disorder

Victoria is also committed to providing a range of ways to support children with autism, including specialist autistic schools, special schools, and supporting integration into mainstream schools through the use of cluster arrangements and resourcing in innovative and flexible ways. A number of programs have been run to up-skill wider workforce members to better support students with autism, including the Window into Autism program for integration aides and 'What Makes an Autism-Friendly School?' for psychologists, speech pathologists, social workers and visiting teachers.

Catering for gifted and talented students

Victoria currently coordinates a limited range of opportunities specifically targeted at gifted and talented students. As part of this, the government provides information for teachers on its website and also provides regular professional learning and networking opportunities for coordinators in the 36 Victorian government schools that offer the Select Entry Accelerated Learning (SEAL) program. The Victorian Government is also committed to select entry and specialisation schools in the government sector. In addition, the Victorian Government's Education and Training Committee is currently leading a parliamentary inquiry into gifted and talented education. As part of their terms of reference, the Committee is considering ways of enhancing support for teaching staff and school leaders so they can better cater for the needs of gifted and talented students. The Committee's recommendations are expected in June 2012.

Students with a disability

The program for students with disabilities provides additional support within the Student Resource Package for eligible students with disabilities in mainstream and specialist schools. The Government is currently exploring the development of additional, more holistic, approaches to the diverse and changing needs of children and young people with a disability or developmental delay and to meet the needs of their families.

Supporting refugee children and students studying English as an additional language

A range of professional learning opportunities and resources are offered at the regional and system level for school staff to increase their knowledge, skills and qualifications in meeting the learning needs of refugees and students studying English as an additional language. This includes access to multicultural education aides, outreach services coordinators, primary welfare officers and secondary student welfare coordinators. English as a second language (ESL) regional program officers work with schools to provide whole school approaches to meeting the needs of students studying English as an additional language and conduct professional learning for teachers. The Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre (LMERC) provides a range of resources for teachers, and there are subsidies to support teachers to undertake post graduate studies in Teaching English as a Second Language (TESOL).

A priority of the Government is to make all mainstream teachers and principals aware of the particular needs of students studying English as an additional language. It is important that all school staff involved in teaching and counselling refugees and other students have specialist training. There is scope to better incorporate specialist training into pre-service teacher education programs, and to raise awareness across the system of the specialised support required to support these students.

10. Policy evaluation and research

Victoria systematically collects and shares information on workforce data to support strategic decision making at a school and system level, and is embarking on new longer-term partnerships to improve the evidence base. Evaluating what policies, programs, funding arrangements and regulations work best for the schools workforce is a key priority.

Victoria's approach

Collection and sharing of data and information

The Victorian government has an oversight and monitoring role in supporting schools and education institutions with information on the schools workforce. It develops an annual teacher supply and demand report which outlines information on the composition of the teaching service in the government, Catholic and independent sectors, the outlook for the teaching service over the next four years and the historic trends in pre-service teacher education. The report is provided to the Teacher Supply and Demand Reference Group, which makes links with universities to balance supply and demand.

Victoria also uses the information collected to inform the directions of major initiatives to assist principals to recruit in hard to staff areas, and develop systemic priorities. More recently, a workforce metrics framework has been developed to provide a single source of workforce data points to support strategic planning and decision-making throughout the organisation. The framework is designed to measure the success of the workforce in delivering the Government's strategic and operational objectives. This project aligns with the work being undertaken nationally by MCEECDYA's National Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group, and is in the implementation stage.

Victoria recognises the continuing role of the Working Group and its potential to play a stronger role in the development of a more comprehensive national data and research repository to inform workforce policy. It is important that this work focuses on the evidence needs of jurisdictions and other stakeholders as well as providing national data. The role of the Working Group could be strengthened to enable it to undertake the next phase of work.

Evaluation

Evaluating what policies, programs, funding arrangements and regulations work best for the schools workforce is a key priority at both the school and system level. It is important to gain a better understanding of what programs and interventions have worked, and why.

Victoria regularly evaluates schools workforce programs and initiatives within its departmental processes and cycles. Schools workforce issues are considered within the context of the broader DEECD Outcomes Framework, which is a department wide planning, management and evaluation framework used to assess progress toward expected outcomes. Since late 2010, the government has undertaken a more rigorous approach to evaluation by beginning a shift toward large scale partnerships with institutions to assess the effectiveness of major initiatives over time. Assessment of the effectiveness of schools workforce approaches is a key priority.

In addition, there is a nation-wide evaluation of the National Partnership agreements underway, including a review of the TQNP initiatives. Victoria also plans to undertake its own impact evaluations on specific teaching initiatives, such as the Rewarding Teaching Excellence model trials. Through the National Partnership initiatives, there are many cases of Victorian government schools showing significant improvements, and further analysis in these areas is a key priority.

11. Some broader framework issues

There are a number of barriers that impact on the mobility of teachers across early childhood, schools and vocational education and training sectors that could be explored further.

Workforce mobility is important to address supply and demand imbalances as they arise, as well as to encourage diverse career pathways and opportunities. In Victoria, there are barriers to teachers transitioning between the upper secondary school and VET sector workforces due to each sector's different industrial agreements and accreditation requirements. If teaching VET in a school setting, teachers must comply with the different requirements of VIT and the Australian Quality Training Framework. If teaching VET in a TAFE, then fully qualified secondary teachers need to obtain a Certificate IV. While a similar set of skills is required to teach these comparable programs to the same broad cohort of students, the regulatory requirements for teachers of applied programs is different.

There are also barriers in the transition between the early childhood and early primary school workforces. Many early childhood teachers are not eligible to be registered by VIT to work in a school. Registration requires teachers to have completed four years of tertiary study, and approximately 60 per cent of early childhood teachers only hold a three year qualification. Similarly, there are inhibitors to workers transitioning from primary schools to early childhood settings. The Children's Services Regulations require that anyone employed as a teaching staff member in a licensed children's service must hold an approved early childhood teaching qualification.

12. Conclusion

Victoria's submission raises and addresses a number of key matters that require both state and federally led responses. Victoria has progressed many of the issues raised with a multi-faceted approach, and both acknowledges and welcomes further consideration of these issues to improve the quality and impact of the schools workforce.

State-led reforms are critical, given the schools workforce is a core area of state responsibility. Victoria considers that jurisdictional flexibility must be maintained and expanded to enable states and territories to drive innovation and generate the benefits of competitive federalism.

Teacher evaluation and feedback is a key reform area that could unlock significant improvements in teaching effectiveness. Teacher evaluation also needs to be more closely linked to career progression and remuneration so that outstanding teachers are recognised and rewarded. Using the wider schools workforce can help free up teacher time to focus on instruction and draw on specialist expertise to lift student outcomes.

Reforms are needed to lift the quality of pre-service teacher education, a key area of Commonwealth responsibility, particularly in attracting the best candidates, improved practicum course components in schools, as well as the need for multiple and alternative pathways into teaching. This is fundamental to preparing a modern workforce that values continual feedback for professional growth, in order to be responsive to the individual and changing needs of students.

To address recruitment difficulties in hard-to-staff areas and subjects, governments can influence workforce supply, although this approach needs to be reviewed regarding the type or size of incentives and how they are meeting longer-term social and demographic pressures. In addition, Victoria recognises that high performing systems heavily invest in the professional development of their schools workforce, including opportunities for peer learning and the demonstration of practice in authentic settings. Effective school leadership is key to leading school improvement, and is no longer confined to principal class positions but distributed more widely in schools.

Multi-system analysis indicates that a number of benefits can result from a shift to greater autonomy for schools, once a high quality teaching workforce is in place. The research tells us that highly effective teachers are motivated to work in educationally disadvantaged schools not just by pay but also by factors such as school leadership, and a culture of continuous improvement and innovation. The schools workforce must be equipped with competencies for quality teaching of Indigenous students and needs to be sufficiently trained to assist with students with specific needs, with a personalised approach to teaching and learning.

There are a number of barriers that impact on the mobility of teachers across early childhood, schools and vocational education and training sectors that could be explored further. Evaluating what policies, programs, funding arrangements and regulations work best for the schools workforce is a key priority.

A capable workforce is pivotal to the continued success of the Victorian school system and the achievement of the Government's educational objectives. The Victorian Government is working to ensure that all Victorian students have access to high quality teaching and learning, but there is more to be done.

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