

Final Submission to the Review of the National School Reform Agreement

Australian Institute for Teaching and
School Leadership (AITSL)

October 2022



AITSL acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land, sea country and waterways from across Australia.

We honour and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and future.

Contents

1. Introduction	4
2. Summary - Proposed National Policy Initiatives	5
3. Priorities for the Next National School Reform Agreement.....	8
Fit-for-purpose Teacher and Principal Standards	8
Initial Teacher Education.....	9
Teacher certification and career pathways	14
Teacher Labour Market Modelling.....	16
4. Finalising the Current National School Reform Agreement	17

Introduction

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is pleased to respond to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement: Interim report.

As a Commonwealth company responsible for developing national frameworks in a policy area where state and territory governments hold responsibility, AITSL is uniquely placed to comment on the *Review of the National School Reform Agreement* (the Agreement): *Interim Report* (Interim Report).

AITSL's work spans three main areas of focus:

- **Initial teacher education:** We provide support, resources and tools to help ensure that every pre-service teacher is classroom ready upon graduation.
- **Quality teaching:** We help teachers be the best they can be, and provide tools and resources to maximise their impact on student learning.
- **Leadership:** We help school leaders become highly effective by giving them the tools, resources, policies and practices needed to succeed in their important role.

Given the above focus areas, all of which impact raising the status of the profession and have work force implications, it is important reforms and decisions relevant to the above are well considered and integrated for maximum benefit.

AITSL's initial submission to this inquiry proposed a set of reforms for possible inclusion in the next Agreement. These reforms were selected to have the maximum impact on student outcomes by improving the quality of teaching and school leadership. A focus on the quality of teaching and school leadership in the next Agreement would reflect the clear evidence that these are the two largest in-school influences on student outcomes.

AITSL supports the direction outlined in the Productivity Commission's (Commission's) Interim Report. This submission focuses on filling in the detail of that direction to ensure that the Commission's advice to governments is likely to lead to reforms that are implementable and have real impact.

Summary - Proposed National Policy Initiatives

There is clear evidence that teaching and school leadership are the two major in-school factors affecting student learning. AITSL proposes that National Policy Initiatives in the next Agreement focus tightly on teaching and school leadership. In responding to the Interim Report, AITSL has focussed on providing further detail on the potential National Policy Initiatives proposed in its previous submission, informed by the discussion of these issues in the Interim Report.

A focus on teaching and school leadership would also be consistent with a commitment to improving equity in school education. As the Commission observes, certain equity groups are at higher risk of having poor outcomes from schooling, but many students in these groups succeed, and many students not in these groups fall behind. A focus on making a quality teacher available in every classroom is the key to ensuring that all students have the opportunity to live up to their potential.

AITSL proposes four National Policy Initiatives for the next Agreement. Limiting the number of Initiatives would provide a clear focus for reform and avoid dilution of effort.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Fit for Purpose Teacher and Principal Standards

AITSL recommends that developing a revised set of Teacher and Principal Standards be a National Policy Initiative in the next Agreement. This National Policy Initiative would include:

- All governments committing to a revision of the Teacher and Principal Standards, and to implementing the revised Standards once they are agreed by Ministers
- Jurisdictions committing to use the new Standards as the basis for increased efforts in principal preparation and induction, outlined in bilateral agreements.

Issues covered in the revision of the Standards would include, but not be limited to, those frequently raised by stakeholders, including applicability to early childhood teachers, reflecting the work of middle leaders, inclusive education, trauma-informed practice, and evidence-based teaching strategies.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Improving Teacher Preparation

AITSL recommends that a National Policy Initiative covering initial teacher education and beginning teacher induction be included in the next Agreement. Elements of this Initiative would include:

- Establishing a national quality assurance board to oversee key elements of initial teacher education quality assurance, including Teaching Performance Assessments.
- Conducting a national benchmarking exercise to ensure all Teaching Performance Assessments are assessing to a comparable standard.
- Jurisdictions working closely with initial teacher education providers to create tailored pathways into the teaching profession.
- Ministers agreeing to any amendments to the national *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* necessary to enable these reforms.
- Developing national mentoring standards and revised induction guidelines.
- Jurisdictions committing to enable effective induction processes, including mentoring of beginning and pre-service teachers by expert teachers.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Teacher Certification and Career Pathways

AITSL recommends that a National Policy Initiative focused on recognising and leveraging the expertise of Australia's best teachers be included in the next Agreement. Elements of this initiative would include:

- A commitment to streamline the national process for certifying highly accomplished and lead teachers.
- A commitment to develop national principles for recognising processes as equivalent to highly accomplished and lead certification.
- Establishing national and jurisdictional targets for numbers of certified teachers.
- Jurisdictions committing to create roles that leverage the expertise of certified teachers.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Teacher Labour Market Modelling

AITSL recommends that the development of a national teacher labour market model be included as a National Policy Initiative in the next Agreement. This would include a commitment by jurisdictions, systems and sectors to provide data to inform the model, including demand data, and ongoing funding for the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative.

AITSL welcomes the recent commitment by Education Ministers to develop a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. As the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan is due to be considered by Ministers in December 2022, it may be appropriate for some of the initiatives proposed in this submission to form part of the Action Plan, rather than waiting for the next National School Reform Agreement to come into effect in 2024. These will be decisions for Ministers, and this submission focuses on proposing national initiatives that will have a real impact, whatever their pathway to implementation.

In addition to these proposals for the next agreement, AITSL supports efforts to ensure the National Policy Initiatives in the current Agreement are completed, and makes one specific recommendation.

Recommendation

AITSL recommends that the Online Formative Assessment Initiative be continued in line with recommendations from the agencies following the beta phase. Whatever approach is taken, it should focus on:

- Creating a system that can take data from a range of assessments, including existing online tools, and report it in a consistent and comprehensible way to teachers.
- Assisting teachers to understand the growth of students and the trajectories taken by individual students (refer to: *Through Growth to Achievement: The Report of The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*)
- Providing timely and useful information to teachers so that they can reflect on and improve their teaching practice.
- Supporting teachers and school leader through professional learning that helps teachers to improve their formative assessment practices. Given the increasing mobility of Australia's teaching workforce, a nationally consistent understanding should be its focus.

Priorities for the Next National School Reform Agreement

AITSL's previous submission proposed prospective new initiatives for the next Agreement. AITSL continues to believe that these are the areas where national collaboration is most likely to be productive. Many of the initiatives proposed by AITSL are discussed in the Interim Report. This section responds to the Commission's comments, rather than reiterating details that are in AITSL's previous submission.

Fit-for-purpose Teacher and Principal Standards

AITSL's previous submission proposed that a review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards) and Australian Professional Standard for Principals (Principal Standard) would be an appropriate National Policy Initiative for inclusion in the next Agreement. The Interim Report makes important points that support this direction, particularly in relation to school leadership.

AITSL welcomes the Interim Report's inclusion of a chapter on school leadership, which can often be forgotten in a discussion focussed on quality teaching. AITSL would argue that there are a number of types of support for school leaders that could be included in the Agreement. A concerted effort to establish deliberate principal preparation and greater recognition of the critical role of middle leaders would address one of the major issues stakeholders raise with the current set of Standards, which is that middle leaders do not always see their work represented in the Standards framework.

Principal Preparation

Australia has nationally agreed guidelines on principal preparation¹. Future national action could involve developing and adopting middle leadership standards, to provide a clearer pathway to principalship as well as better support for those in middle leadership roles. In addition, jurisdictions could commit to implementing best practice principal preparation and induction programs, and sharing evidence on what is working in this area.

AITSL has heard from stakeholders that investment is required to ensure principals, aspiring principals and other school leaders are supported with access to high-quality, deliberate leadership development. While there are many leadership development providers and programs already on offer, the challenge for principals, aspiring principals and middle leaders is knowing what is right for their needs.

Middle Leadership

Since the Principal Standard was endorsed in 2014, there has been increasing commentary about the relationship between the Teacher and Principal Standards, and broad agreement that the practices of middle leaders (Head Teachers, Assistant Principals, Directors of Curriculum, etc) need to be better reflected in a School Leadership Standard.

AITSL's research on middle leadership, and an investigation of the alignment between the Standards, identified gaps between the Teacher and Principal Standards and highlighted implications for middle leaders and teachers seeking to use both sets of Standards for leadership development. The

¹ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/build-leadership-in-Australian-schools/leading-for-impact>

research found that the Lead career stage of the Teacher Standards does not (and is not designed to), cover all the requirements of middle leaders, particularly around multilevel and team leadership skills, change and innovation management, school vision and strategy, and understanding legal and policy frameworks.

Stakeholders acknowledge the need to preserve the purpose of the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher career stages of the Teacher Standards rather than attempt to incorporate the requirements of middle leaders within them. Further, stakeholders have shared that the current Principal Standard is more readily understood by expert principals with a deep knowledge of the role, and the inclusion of career stages for leaders would benefit the performance and development of new principals and middle leaders.

AITSL has established broad support from principal associations, members of the profession, and many representatives of systems and sectors to review the Principal Standard to encompass leadership across different levels and roles and encourage school leaders to prioritise high-impact school leadership practices.

The Teacher Standards

As outlined in AITSL's previous submission, the case for change **is not** limited to the principal standard. Issues regularly raised around the Teacher Standards include better applicability to early childhood teachers and their context, whether they are up-to-date in relation to issues such as inclusive education and trauma-informed practice, and whether they are specific enough about the elements of effective classroom teaching.

The Teacher Standards are the only lever available nationally to define teacher quality (as each teacher is registered against the Standards). Given teacher mobility, an up-to-date set of national Teacher Standards is the best way to signal what is valued and relevant in teaching.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Fit for Purpose Teacher and Principal Standards

AITSL recommends that developing a revised set of Teacher and Principal Standards be a National Policy Initiative in the next Agreement. This National Policy Initiative would include:

- All governments committing to a revision of the Teacher and Principal Standards, and to implementing the revised Standards once they are agreed by Ministers
- Jurisdictions committing to use the new Standards as the basis for increased efforts in principal preparation and induction, outlined in bilateral agreements.

Issues covered in the revision of the Standards would include, but not be limited to, those frequently raised by stakeholders, including applicability to early childhood teachers, reflecting the work of middle leaders, inclusive education, trauma-informed practice, and evidence-based teaching strategies.

Initial Teacher Education

AITSL's previous submission outlined two potential National Policy Initiatives relating to initial teacher education (ITE).

AITSL is pleased that the Commission's Interim Report has a strong focus on ITE. This is an area where national reform has been shown to be effective, and where there are clear next steps that build on past reforms. The rest of this section responds to the information requests made in the Interim Report, which are directly relevant to the reform areas previously identified by AITSL.

Teaching Performance Assessments

Strengthening the implementation of Teaching Performance Assessment (TPAs) is a major component of the current National Policy Initiative relating to ITE. Significant progress has occurred

on this National Policy Initiative, with all ITE programs implementing a TPA that has been endorsed by the TPA Expert Advisory Group (EAG).

With the final TPA endorsed in 2021, a new National Policy Initiative would focus on providing assurance that the standard of performance in a TPA is consistent across all institutions. There are currently 12 TPAs operating in Australia. This creates some challenges to ensuring that they are all assessing to a consistent standard and thereby providing confidence that all ITE graduates are classroom ready.

In response to the Commission's specific information request 5.1 *Teaching Performance Assessment*:

1. *Does the Teaching Performance Assessment (TPA) process ensure pre-service teachers are sufficiently classroom ready?*

The TPAs have been assessed by the EAG as having processes in place to ensure their validity and reliability. As a recent policy initiative, anecdotal evidence indicates positive feedback from schools about the readiness of graduates who have completed a TPA. To confirm that successful completion of a TPA produces classroom-ready teachers requires a detailed investigation of the relationship between completion of a TPA and workforce capability.

There is an appetite from TPA leads and other groups to lead or be involved in such a study. AITSL is aware that both the Australian Catholic University and the University of Sydney are exploring studies into the predictive validity of TPAs. This would be a welcome addition to the evidence base supporting TPAs.

It is also important to note that TPAs are not the only assurance of classroom readiness. ITE programs are accredited on the basis that each of the Graduate Teacher Standards are taught, practised and assessed. TPAs are a major innovation in ITE, but are only one component of ensuring graduates meet all components of the Graduate Teacher Standards.

2. *Should TPAs meet a national minimum standard? If so, how might this be achieved?*

The national quality assurance board proposed by AITSL would, in relation to TPAs:

- develop and implement a national standard-setting exercise to determine whether the standard of performance required to pass a TPA is consistent across all institutions
- implement an endorsement period for TPAs
- require evidence of the ongoing validity of the TPA through biennial reporting
- impose conditions and consequences for providers that do not demonstrate that their TPA is consistent with the national passing standard after the national standard setting exercise.

These activities will determine whether ITE providers are producing graduates who meet a common and consistent level of performance.

Further, it is recommended that the EAG, through the national board, has the authority to impose conditions and consequences on providers following national standard-setting activities and biennial reporting. Conditions and consequences could include recommending the provider join a TPA that does demonstrate that it is assessing to the nationally agreed standard.

3. Do TPAs ensure that pre-service teachers are well placed to respond to the needs of students from priority equity cohorts? If not, how might this be improved, and what trade-offs might this involve?

The content of the Graduate Teacher Standards enables ITE providers to prepare preservice teachers to meet the needs of all students including those from priority cohorts.

For example, Standard 1 of the Teacher Standards requires graduates to *Know their students and how they learn*. To meet this Standard, preservice teachers must demonstrate knowledge and understanding of teaching strategies to support a diverse range of students. These capabilities extend to, but are not limited to, students with:

- disabilities, and
- diverse linguistic, cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds.

There is a specific focus on understanding the impact of culture, cultural identity and linguistic background of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

The TPA requires that each pre-service teacher's (PST) performance is assessed against the Teacher Standards at the Graduate level, including Standard 1. However, as TPAs have been designed to assess the entirety of a PST's classroom readiness, the scope to prioritise specific standards or priority areas is limited. Additionally, expectations for graduates' performance must align to the Teacher Standards at the **Graduate** level.

There is scope to develop resources to address identified gaps in pre-service and graduate teachers' capacity to better support priority cohorts. For example, AITSL developed resources to support the consistent delivery of reading instruction in primary ITE programs. These resources comprised samples of ITE program outlines that exemplified the discipline knowledge content to be applied in the design of new programs or included in existing programs. The purpose of the resource was to assist ITE programs to incorporate up-to-date, evidence-based practice on reading instruction. Support of this nature could be developed to support PSTs and graduates in responding to the wellbeing and learning needs of all students and learners, including students from equity cohorts.

For in-service teachers, AITSL has worked with stakeholders to create an intercultural development toolkit. This toolkit is a suite of products that seek to build or enhance the cultural competency of the existing teaching workforce and increase cultural safety in schools. The specific resources are:

1. Intercultural development self-reflection tool: supporting teachers' self-awareness of their own worldviews, assumptions, attitudes and beliefs in relation to their learners and culture.
2. Intercultural development continuum: defining a language to describe levels of competency including identifying characteristics, knowledges, skills, practice, and moral imperatives of cultural responsiveness against which teachers can assess and progress the development of competencies.
3. Intercultural development capability framework: providing insight into the forms of support, experiences and reflection that are associated with different levels of cultural competency.

Extensive consultation for this project provided a wider view of issues relating to teachers' intercultural understanding. These are summarised in [*Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce*](#), the final report of this four-year project.

Recommendations from the Final Report provide further advice for the development and implementation of tools and resources to build or enhance the cultural competency of the existing teaching workforce and increase cultural safety in schools.

Although this particular project has focussed on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, similar projects would be valuable for other priority equity cohorts.

In response to the Commission's specific information request 5.6 *Streamlining pathways into teaching*

1. *How can pathways into teaching for mid-career entrants, especially those with skills in critical areas, be streamlined?*

There are several ways that pathways into teaching are being streamlined for mid-career changers. As the Commission has identified, graduate-level programs with employment-based pathways are one of the most promising developments in this area. However, it is important to emphasise that existing, new or redeveloped qualifications must comprehensively fulfill the breadth of teaching responsibilities. In addition, pathways must be scalable in order to address identified shortage areas successfully. If they are not scalable there are risks of continued shortfalls in the supply of teachers overall and in critical areas. Current programs are not high volume, and a commitment to significantly expand internship-type programs, which are useful for career changers, could be part of a new Agreement.

2. *What are the costs and benefits of re-introducing one year graduate diplomas?*

The first national *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (Standards and Procedures), endorsed by Ministers in 2011, included the requirement for newly accredited post-graduate ITE programs to be two years of full-time equivalent study. Implementation of these changes began in 2012 with the transition required to be completed by 2017.

Education Ministers made this decision in 2011 in response to the variable quality of the existing one-year graduate diplomas, and the need to develop more comprehensive programs to meet the breadth of expectations of 'classroom readiness' in the Teacher Standards at the Graduate level. However, it is important to note that two years of full-time equivalent study can still be completed in less than two calendar years, through 'fast-tracked' or similar programs that may be negotiated between ITE providers and employers (e.g., Departments or schools).

The opportunity costs of completing a two-year degree can be offset by internship models that provide pre-service teachers with an income, and make them useful in schools, while they are studying. This level of support is more likely to lead to a long-term teaching career than a one-year diploma, by providing greater depth of coverage of the Teacher Standards, and extended support as they transition into the classroom.

There would also be significant transition costs in making such a fundamental change as reintroducing one-year diplomas. These costs would largely be borne by ITE providers and teacher regulatory authorities who accredit these courses. Any change would take some years to fully implement across Australia.

3. What employment-based pathways could be explored?

AITSL's previous submission outlined a range of options for developing employment-based pathways. Programs can be fast-tracked by offering a 2-year full time degree over 18 months reducing the period of lost income for pre-service teachers. These programs allow the ITE student to condense their studies outside of the provider's traditional 'semester' structure. For mid-career changers this time commitment may reflect their current working conditions and offers a reasonable workload without lost time due to the extended breaks between semesters.

Many programs combine paid 'on-the-job training' / 'internships' / 'residencies' at a school with a study component running concurrently throughout their 18–24-month qualification. Access to these programs is often targeted at ITE students with skills in critical areas and these programs may require Limited Authority to Teach arrangements at a jurisdictional level. It is imperative that assurances are in put in place at the jurisdiction level, and by ITE providers and schools to make certain that the pre-service teachers entering the classroom through this type of program meet the Graduate Teacher Standards.

Employment-based programs can also provide employers with greater input into ITE programs. Attached to some programs is an offer of a permanent teaching position as an additional incentive. This model requires significant investment and support from the ITE provider, employers and participating schools, reducing the scalability of these programs.

Induction and mentoring

In Australia, induction is often the forgotten element of teacher preparation. Australia has nationally agreed induction guidelines². These could be refreshed, and more support materials provided. Further, improving mentoring is a particularly promising area for national collaboration and has been highlighted by stakeholders as sorely needed. Mentoring is a common strategy for improving teaching, but must be done well and focussed on the practice of teaching to have the desired effect.

AITSL commissioned an environmental scan of existing mentor/supervising teacher tools and resources within Australia and internationally to identify the key elements of effective mentoring/supervising programs.

The environmental scan examined six high performing systems to identify the common elements that underpin effective mentoring programs. The scan identified the key elements common to these programs including:

- Mentoring should focus on improving student learning
- Expertise is important
- Mentors need training
- Effective feedback to mentees with challenge can improve practice
- Positive professional relationships underpin mentoring
- Pre-service and early-career teachers require intensive professional development
- Mentoring should occur in teacher specialties.

² <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/tools-resources/resource/graduate-to-proficient-australian-guidelines-for-teacher-induction-into-the-profession>

A key recommendation from the environmental scan is the development of a national set of mentoring standards.

These standards would complement the Teacher Standards at the Proficient career stage, as the overwhelming majority of teachers are registered at the Proficient career stage. There is no description in this career stage of strategies to mentor preservice or early career stage teachers.

The purpose of the mentoring standards would be to build greater national coherence and consistency in the supervision of pre-service and early career teachers. Critically, the mentoring standards would provide a structure to guide nationally consistent understanding of the skills and knowledge required of supervising teachers to conduct structured high-quality placements for pre-service and early career teachers.

The Environmental Scan recommended that the mentoring standards:

- describe the knowledge, skills, actions and behaviours required of mentors and aspiring mentors to maximise their effectiveness.
- provide mentors, mentees, schools and ITE providers with a consistent understanding of the expectations of mentoring
- provide a structure for ITE providers, systems and sectors to devise effective mentoring programs
- provide more consistent outcomes for pre-service teachers, early-career teachers and any other teacher who has a mentor
- provide the basis for the development of resources such as mentor selection criteria, role descriptions and professional learning.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Improving Teacher Preparation

AITSL recommends that a National Policy Initiative covering initial teacher education and beginning teacher induction be included in the next Agreement. Elements of this Initiative would include:

- Establishing a national quality assurance board to oversee key elements of initial teacher education quality assurance, including Teaching Performance Assessments.
- Conducting a national benchmarking exercise to ensure all Teaching Performance Assessments are assessing to a comparable standard.
- Jurisdictions working closely with initial teacher education providers to create tailored pathways into the teaching profession.
- Ministers agreeing to any amendments to the national *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* necessary to enable these reforms.
- Developing national mentoring standards and revised induction guidelines
- Jurisdictions committing to enable effective induction processes, including mentoring of beginning and pre-service teachers by expert teachers.

Teacher certification and career pathways

AITSL's previous submission proposed that teacher certification and career pathways would be a productive area for future national collaboration. AITSL is pleased that the Commission is recommending this area for inclusion in the next Agreement. Below are some thoughts on how the specific points outlined in the Commission's recommendation could be implemented.

Training and deployment of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers (HALTs)

AITSL's engagement with HALTs themselves reveals that they are often frustrated that their roles do not expand after they achieve certification. A more systematic approach to deploying HALTs, and to their ongoing professional learning, would make the best use of their expertise, and most likely increase their retention in the profession.

It is encouraging that schools and systems across Australia are beginning to engage with these issues with examples including:

- the South Australian Department for Education's creation of identified roles only available to Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers. While schools can contextualise the roles, the Department offers advice on responsibilities to include, primarily focused on leading teaching within the school.
- the NSW Department of Education recently released *The Case for Change: A Briefing on Rewarding Excellence in Teaching*, outlining a range of approaches to leveraging highly effective teaching practice, including creating specific roles for HALTs, so they can share and model expertise to increase impact across the system.
- individual principals, who use HALTs in innovative and flexible ways with the creation of roles such as 'Impact Coach', driving evidence-informed quality teaching practice within the school.

In addition, establishing national targets for the number of teachers achieving certification would strengthen access to high quality teaching for all students, regardless of socioeconomic status, location and background.

Streamlining the Certification Process

At the August 2022 Education Ministers Meeting, AITSL was commissioned to undertake work and provide advice to ministers on streamlining the process outlined in the *Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in Australia* policy document (national certification policy). The key being to ensure the process is rigorous not onerous.

The purpose of this project is to propose changes to the national certification policy that will help to remove barriers and reduce the administrative burden on applicants, while maintaining the rigour of the process. These changes may include, for example, adjustments to:

- the certification process (including Pre-Assessment, Stage 1 and Stage 2)
- the level of prescription of the process in the national certification policy as compared with a focus on national quality assurance
- documentary evidence requirements for applicants
- site visit requirements
- the roles and responsibilities within the certification process.

AITSL will consult widely with key stakeholders throughout the project and commission advice from suitably qualified professionals with expertise in certification.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Teacher Certification and Career Pathways

AITSL recommends that a National Policy Initiative focused on recognising and leveraging the expertise of Australia's best teachers be included in the next Agreement. Elements of this initiative would include:

- A commitment to streamline the national process for certifying highly accomplished and lead teachers
- A commitment to develop national principles for recognising processes as equivalent to highly accomplished and lead certification
- Establishing national and jurisdictional targets for numbers of certified teachers
- Jurisdictions committing to create roles that leverage the expertise of certified teachers

Teacher Labour Market Modelling

AITSL's previous submission proposed a national teacher labour market model as a potential National Policy Initiative. AITSL is pleased that the Interim Report recommends this, following the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review making the same recommendation. Without reiterating the original proposal here, AITSL observes that the full implementation of this model would be a valuable support to many of the other initiatives proposed by the Commission, for example by helping to understand where programs to bring career changers into the profession should be targeted, or to understand whether strengthened induction programs are effective in reducing early-career teacher attrition.

The Interim Report also discusses the role of teaching assistants and other school staff. The availability of support staff, their impact on teacher workload and job satisfaction, and the evidence on how they can best contribute to improving student outcomes, are all critical issues with an impact on teacher supply and demand. A better evidence base and national guidelines on the role of teacher assistants would be valuable. Over time, other staff could be included in labour market modelling.

Proposed National Policy Initiative – Teacher Labour Market Modelling

AITSL recommends that the development of a national teacher labour market model be included as a National Policy Initiative in the next Agreement. This would include a commitment by jurisdictions, systems and sectors to provide data to inform the model, including demand data, and ongoing funding for the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative.

Finalising the Current National School Reform Agreement

The Interim Report comments on the National Policy Initiatives in the current National School Reform Agreement. AITSL agrees that there is quite some unfinished business from the current Agreement. In recognition of the funding already provided, efforts should be made to deliver the current National Policy Initiatives as agreed. Generally, these should be able to be delivered and moved into maintenance or business-as-usual phases during the term of the current agreement, and not need to be included in the next Agreement.

National strategy for the teacher workforce

In response to the National Policy Initiative to develop a National Teacher Workforce Strategy, AITSL developed the *Teaching Futures* background paper on strategic issues for teacher workforce planning³. The workforce issues identified in *Teaching Futures* have become increasingly pressing and significant since *Teaching Futures* was published in 2020. In this context AITSL welcomes the agreement by Education Ministers to develop a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, which would more fully meet the intent of the original National Policy Initiative.

An important decision taken by Ministers (2021) in the teacher workforce space has been to renew funding for the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative. Since June 2022 the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative has released the first of an ongoing series of continuously updated and critical data on teacher supply and the current teacher workforce accessible through state-of-the-art digital tools⁴, available to all jurisdictions and sectors for workforce planning. Continued funding for the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative is a welcome step toward realising the vision outlined in *Teaching Futures*.

Online Formative Assessment

Under the direction of an independent Project Management Board (PMB), the Discovery and Alpha phases of the Online Formative Assessment Initiative uncovered teacher needs and tested potential prototypes that will address these needs.

Work towards delivering this National Policy Initiative, for the first time, happened in a cross-agency manner. The project involved three national education agencies: the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), AITSL and Education Services Australia (ESA), who leveraged their unique expertise and relationships with the profession to deliver all facets of the project.

The project was driven by extensive stakeholder consultation and guided by the Teacher Practice Reference Group. The Teacher Practice Reference Group brought the voice of the profession to the

³ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/teachingfutures>

⁴ <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data/key-metrics-dashboard#tab-panel-2>

foreground in the review of prototypes and plans; and the three education agencies involved in the initiative engaged closely with their existing advisory groups and additional key stakeholders.

In June 2021, the three agencies completed all the deliverables of the alpha phase and delivered the beta phase proposal. The work conducted for the Online Formative Assessment Initiative clearly demonstrated that there is a need for more support for teachers in making formative assessment judgements and using them to improve teaching.

Recommendation

AITSL recommends that the Online Formative Assessment Initiative be continued in line with recommendations from the agencies following the beta phase. Whatever approach is taken, it should focus on:

- Creating a system that can take data from a range of assessments, including existing online tools, and report it in a consistent and comprehensible way to teachers.
- Assisting teachers to understand the growth of students and the trajectories taken by individual students (refer to: *Through Growth to Achievement: The Report of The Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools*)
- Providing timely and useful information to teachers so that they can reflect on and improve their teaching practice.
- Supporting teachers and school leader through professional learning that helps teachers to improve their formative assessment practices. Given the increasing mobility of Australia's teaching workforce, a nationally consistent understanding should be its focus.

Other National Policy Initiatives

The two existing National Policy Initiatives discussed above are those that are most relevant to AITSL and contain significant unfinished business. AITSL offers the following brief observations on other current National Policy Initiatives:

- In relation to ITE, the reforms agreed under the existing National Policy Initiative have been delivered. Further reforms to ITE, that would ensure the benefits of past efforts are realised, are discussed above.
- The Unique Student Identifier would deliver significant benefits and efforts should be made to break the deadlock surrounding its implementation.

Accountability for implementation

The Interim Report asks for views on accountability for implementing National Policy Initiatives. From AITSL's point of view, the implementation of the Australian Teacher Workforce Data initiative offers a model of success. This initiative has a governance board with a clear mandate and representation from the major stakeholders. The Board commissions AITSL to deliver the initiative, and is able to hold AITSL to account for delivery. Commissioning a national agency and then implementing appropriate project governance provides clear lines of accountability and increases stakeholder buy in.

