

## Introduction

The Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania is an independent statutory authority whose primary function is to register persons employed as teachers in Tasmanian schools.

When undertaking its functions the Board is to consider the welfare and best interest of students to be of paramount importance.

The Board's functions also include:

- To promote the teaching profession
- To approve teacher education courses
- To develop and improve teaching standards
- To maintain a code of professional ethics for the teaching profession

The Board is established under the provisions of the *Teachers Registration Act 2000*.

## Teacher Registration

The purpose of teacher registration is to ensure that all students are taught by people who are appropriately qualified, competent, of good character and fit to teach. Registration criteria describe the minimum/base line requirements for the teaching profession – qualification and teaching competence requirements, character and suitability requirements. Registration processes set the entry levels for the profession for new graduates and establish the performance levels expected of an experienced and competent or proficient teacher.

The quality of teachers and teaching is actively supported by the registration process in the following ways:

- Pre-service teacher education courses must be approved or accredited as courses that adequately prepare graduates to undertake the role of a teacher.
- Graduates are granted provisional registration and are then required to demonstrate teaching competence against agreed performance standards in order to be granted full registration.
- Teachers must renew their full registration on a regular basis – to do so requires the demonstration of teaching competence against agreed performance standards.

Regulatory bodies such as the Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania actively support teacher quality by working with the profession and key education stakeholders to develop agreed performance standards, articulate professional benchmarks and ensure that the processes that are used to demonstrate teaching competence model and reflect what we know and understand quality teaching to be.

In Tasmania these processes are implemented in partnership with the teaching profession and all education stakeholders.

Over the last decade or so, most Australian States and Territories have established teacher regulatory systems that undertake this set of tasks, functions and processes in a fundamentally consistent manner. While differences do exist between the various legislative and policy frameworks, these are usually the result of jurisdictional priorities rather than differences in intent or purpose.



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Again, over the last decade or so the teacher regulatory bodies have worked together to enhance shared understanding and consistency in policy and practice. This has created strong relationships between the various bodies and encouraged a sharing of expertise at governance, senior executive and officer level.

In the last 12 - 18 months attention has been focussed on the development of a national framework for the teacher regulatory process. This has seen the development of the National Professional Standards for teachers and the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education in Australia: Standards and Procedures, under the leadership of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, (AITSL).

The Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania believes that the teacher registration process does add value to teacher quality. The establishment of minimum benchmarks or standards for the teaching profession, and the articulation of these at the training, graduate or entry level and proficient stages, clearly impacts on the understandings, the actions and the expectations of teachers, teacher employers, teacher educators and the parent and wider community. Clearly articulated professional standards and benchmarks establish the framework within which teacher quality can be actively improved.

It is the Board's view that schools or employers are not in a position to manage the teacher regulatory process – it does require an independent body or structure that is focussed on articulating and maintaining the agreed professional standards irrespective of specific employment circumstances.

The diversity of schools, systems and jurisdictional needs across Australia requires regulatory frameworks and processes to be enabling and supportive of this diversity. By its very nature regulation established at a national level can lead to an increase on compliance and a decrease in flexibility but this can be managed if parties agree that it is important to do so.

Limited regulation or indeed the absence of regulation may result in the perception that there is greater flexibility for schools and employers, but this does not guarantee greater quality or enhanced outcomes. Regulation does not impede the capacity of schools or employers to access qualified, competent and suitable teachers; it does however impede the capacity of schools to employ non-qualified and potentially unsuitable people as teachers.

### **Tasmanian Statistics = TRB perspective**

The Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania currently has over 10,800 teachers on the active register. Of these some 10,300 are registered to teach in schools (Kindergarten – Year 12). The remaining teachers are registered to deliver vocational education and training only.

Since the start of 2011, 127 teachers have registered with the TRB under Mutual Recognition arrangements with other Australian and New Zealand regulatory authorities.

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Approximately 139 registrations were processed under mutual recognition provisions for during 2010. The number of registrations processed under Mutual Recognition arrangements has not substantially changed over the last few years and usually represents around 1.2% - 1.4% of the total number of registrants.

Tasmanian schools can employ a person with no teaching qualifications to teach if there is no suitable registered teacher available. In this situation the person is granted a limited authority to teach (LAT).

The number of LATs approved in 2008 was 418, in 2009 was 441 and in 2010 was 478. The 478 LATs approved in 2010 were held by a total of 358 individual teachers. 206 of the LATs were for fixed term teaching appointments – the remainder were for relief teaching only.

Traditionally, the greatest number of approved LATs are for music specialists – music teachers for primary schools and instrumental musicians for primary, secondary and senior secondary schools.

In 2008, 34 LATs were approved for people to teach in the maths/science area. In 2009 only 14 LATs were approved for this purpose and in 2010 the number of maths/science LATs was 9.

In 2008, 36 LATs were approved for people to teach in the health and physical education area. In 2009 only 15 LATs were approved for this purpose and in 2010 the number of H. PE. LATs was 10.

Specialist music, maths/science, health and physical education, technology, languages, and vocational education and training are the main specialist skill areas for which schools consistently request LATs.

The actual number of LATs in each area changes each year reflecting changes in need, effectiveness of recruitment strategies, teacher retirement levels, and the number and availability of graduates seeking employment etc.

Anecdotally Tasmanian principals are currently reporting increased difficulty in recruiting suitably qualified teachers. TRB statistics do not show this trend at this time.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the role and purpose of teacher registration in relation to the school workforce.

Kerrie Moss  
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Teachers Registration Board of Tasmania