

# NSW GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT

## SCHOOLS WORKFORCE

### Introduction

New South Wales welcomes the opportunity to respond to the key findings, recommendations and information requests of the Productivity Commission Draft Research Report (the Report) into the schools workforce.

The State's key concerns in relation to the Report relate to the duration of graduate teacher education programs, teacher quality, supply and remuneration.

### Summary of NSW Response

#### *Duration of graduate-entry training courses*

The Commission's recommendation that two-year graduate entry teacher training courses should be optional is not supported by New South Wales. This would go against strong evidence, both internationally and within Australia, that links the longer duration of teacher education programs with raising the quality of graduate teachers. It would also go against national decisions to extend the length of these programs, and to allow a range of national accreditation and professional standards to be met.

#### *Teacher remuneration*

New South Wales considers that the Commonwealth's 'Rewards for Great Teachers' scheme should be used as an incentive for continuous improvement and better educational outcomes for all students rather than providing a 'bonus' payment on the basis of isolated student tests, as was originally planned. It is essential that any reward system takes into account current best practice in performance management and recognition processes, and includes the development of career structures as a way to recognise quality teaching.

#### *Practicum and induction*

New South Wales supports the Commission's proposal for the trialling and evaluation of practicum and induction, with a particular focus on the sustainability and quality of practicum arrangements. It is critical that the total number and distribution of practicum places across schools is adequately resourced and better targeted to workforce need, particularly given the uncapping of university places from 2012. It is also important, given the increased focus on national teaching standards, that there are stronger links between the core curriculum and the practicum experience.

#### *Longitudinal data study*

New South Wales supports the Commission's recommendation for a longitudinal data study to be established that would profile graduate teachers including their entry scores, university and employment destinations. This response contains some suggestions for the scope of such a study, and provides an endorsement contingent on resourcing issues being resolved.

#### *Imbalances in teacher supply and demand*

New South Wales notes that the draft recommendations, findings and information requests do not include discussion of the imbalance between teachers in the early childhood education and care sector and in the primary school workforce.

The new regulatory regime for early childhood education and care services will require more university qualified staff, resulting in a potential undersupply of teachers in the sector.

Removing the barriers to movement for teachers between the early childhood and schools sectors would benefit both sectors, addressing the oversupply of primary teachers while boosting the number of qualified teachers in the early childhood sector.

Note that the issues and key points made in the original NSW submission still stand.

## **Response to key findings, recommendations and information requests**

### *Differential levels of remuneration*

#### **Information request 4.1**

The Commission seeks further input on the implementation issues that would arise in designing arrangements to increase the remuneration of teachers in hard-to-staff positions, and what measures should be used to address these issues.

There are many complexities associated with differential levels of teacher remuneration, including whether to use one-off or ongoing payments, and whether measures of performance should be taken into consideration. These complexities would be exacerbated by providing bonus payments based on isolated student test results. New South Wales supports linking the 'Rewards for Great Teachers' scheme to the National Professional Standards for Teachers. This would create the opportunity for a more effective, performance-based career structure.

### *Longitudinal data collection*

#### **Draft recommendation 5.1**

The Australian Government should commission a longitudinal data collection that:

- follows a sample of recently appointed teachers for at least five years
- encompasses an assessment of the pre-service training, induction and professional development that each teacher receives
- includes measures of teacher effectiveness, including an indicator of student outcomes.

The study should follow more than one cohort of graduate teachers to analyse any future experimentation in pre-service training, induction and professional development.

This study could be implemented either by expanding the scope and duration of the Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study that is forming part of the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality, or by commissioning a separate study focusing on the specific matters identified above.

New South Wales supports this recommendation and suggests that the scope of the proposed longitudinal data collection be expanded, contingent on availability of resources, to include the following:

- characteristics of entrants into pre-service teacher training (including school education and ATAR scores);
- data from the implementation of the initial teacher education programs' accreditation process; and
- data from the certification processes for Graduate and Proficient teachers.

As the National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality will conclude in 2013, New South Wales proposes that the longitudinal data collection outlined above be established separately to the National Partnership process. As the proposed scope of the study focuses specifically on initial teacher preparation and early career teachers, New South Wales proposes that it should instead be aligned to the implementation of both the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, and the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

The longitudinal data collection should also coordinate with the work to be done by the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). Under the national system for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs, the ACDE has agreed to participate with the AITSL in quality assessment projects in a range of areas, including entry requirements for teacher education courses and assessment of pre-service teachers' achievement of graduate outcomes.

### *The practicum*

#### **Draft finding 5.1**

The provision of high-quality practicum and induction experiences for pre-service and graduate teachers plays a key role in developing an effective teaching workforce. While there are a number of promising avenues for improvement, including university–school partnerships, trialling and evaluation is needed. This should focus on better understanding what forms and combinations of practicum and induction, and what types of university–school relationships, are most cost-effective in improving the quality of beginning teachers.

New South Wales firmly believes that the practicum is at the heart of the teacher education process. However, delivering a quality practicum to all teacher education students has become increasingly difficult for both the NSW Department of Education and Communities and for universities.

Current practicum arrangements are unsustainable, in terms of both student numbers and spread across schools.

A single school may have several time-consuming relationships with higher education providers for which they provide practicum placements. On average, one in four teachers in NSW government schools will supervise a practicum in any year. In reality, the burden is unevenly distributed and is much higher in many schools.

The capacity of the government school system, in particular, to continue to deliver quality practicum placements is already stretched by the considerable oversupply of teacher graduates.<sup>1</sup> Approximately 18,000 practicum placements are sought annually in New South Wales schools, of which government schools host around 16,500. Many schools are currently providing practicum support for teacher trainees who will never enter the teaching workforce. This situation is likely to be exacerbated by the uncapping of university undergraduate places, and universities' needs to meet low socio-economic status enrolment benchmarks.

It is essential that the proposed trialling and evaluation of practicum and induction attend to the need for sustainable practicum arrangements, in terms of total numbers and spread across schools. This should involve more explicit links between the core curriculum and the practicum experience. The outcome should be teacher graduates who have:

- completed a practicum experience supervised by a qualified supervising teacher;
- English language skills adequate to the teaching profession;
- skills in teaching literacy and numeracy across subject areas;
- skills in classroom management, teaching diverse student cohorts, and the effective use of student assessment data;
- expertise in high-demand content areas (for example, Mathematics); and

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<sup>1</sup> The government school systems employs between 1,800 and 2,000 new teachers each year, against around 5,500 teacher education completions.

- ongoing professional support from their university upon employment.

New South Wales also supports a greater focus on developing practicum placement programs (aligned with curriculum content) that address workforce need. This includes prioritising practicum placements targeting low socio-economic status and non-metropolitan schools, schools with significant Aboriginal cohorts, and particular subject areas and specialisations. It is important that graduate teachers are fully prepared to 'hit the ground running', as 20% of placements in 'challenging' schools in New South Wales are currently first-year teachers.

Additional resources are required to manage school-university partnerships and practicum placements, including extra support for schools hosting practicum placements. It is also essential that universities implement consistent processes and administration of the practicum component of teacher training, provide adequate support to students undertaking practicum placements, and continue to provide professional support to graduates upon employment.

AITSL has developed national program accreditation standards relating to school partnerships, endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs. The AITSL publication *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* includes program accreditation standards (Program Standards).

Program Standard 5 sets out requirements relating to professional experience placements and school partnerships, including the requirement that graduate entry programs include a minimum of 60 days in-school professional experience. New South Wales suggests that this Standard could be developed further, providing more detail about the content of that experience.

#### *Length of graduate-entry teaching courses*

##### **Draft recommendation 5.2**

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs should direct the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership to modify Program Standard 1.3 of the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, governing the length of graduate entry teacher training courses. The revised standard should indicate that two-year courses remain an option rather than a mandatory requirement.

New South Wales strongly supports maintaining two year graduate teacher education training courses. New South Wales does not support any modification of AITSL's standards for graduate teaching programs to reduce the duration to less than the two years.

Ministers agreed in April 2011 that, in order to provide sufficient opportunity for candidates to acquire the professional knowledge and skills required by the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*, the professional studies components of all initial teacher programs should be the equivalent of at least two years of full time study.

The two-year duration is necessary to allow time for adequate discipline-specific curriculum and pedagogical studies, general education studies, and professional experience in order to produce a quality graduate teacher. This also allows time to build strong connections between core curriculum and practicum experience, and to enable more effective, structured professional experience placements. It is supported by the ACDE.

The Productivity Commission argument relies on the divided conclusions of largely American research. Given that America is not one of the top band of performers in international educational testing, it is more appropriate to look at the components of pre-service teacher education in other, high-performing countries. There is strong international evidence of the effectiveness of two-year graduate entry teacher training courses.

A recent article<sup>2</sup> provides some useful insights and contrasts. Marc Tucker outlines how Finland and Singapore are moving teacher education from relatively low status post-secondary institutions to research universities. The purpose of this is to make teacher education more attractive to students, attract outstanding scholars to the field of education, and infuse the training of teachers with cutting edge research.

In Finland, teachers in training must earn a Masters degree including at least one year of intensive instruction in pedagogy. In Shanghai, most of a teacher's formal preparation is devoted to mastering the subjects he/she will teach, and the first year of teaching is devoted to apprenticeship under a master teacher who is released from regular teaching duties for this purpose. New teachers are not expected to carry a full load during their apprenticeship. The common thread is that the top performing countries believe that teaching is a complex craft, which takes time and first class instruction to master.

In the USA, research by Levine<sup>3</sup> and Scannell<sup>4</sup> has found that longer, university-based programs produce teachers who have a stronger commitment to the profession and have a higher impact on student learning. Recent Australian research<sup>5</sup> has found that longer programs are also associated with lower rates of attrition during teachers' early careers.

The Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) reports that the international trend has been for the length of initial teacher education to increase.<sup>6</sup>

New South Wales notes that two-year graduate teacher education training courses align with the attributes of effective pre-service training highlighted in the Report (p.69) and address the pre-service training issues identified in *Staff in Australia's Schools (SiAS) 2010*.

The Report refers to the "commonly used one-year graduate diploma of education as a pathway into teaching" (p. 82). This overstates the frequency of the one year diploma in New South Wales, which is not currently a common pathway into teaching in the State. In New South Wales, the extended length would not be a significant change as most programs are already two years in duration.

Alternative models of intensive teacher preparation, such as Teach for America, referred to by the Commission, are associated with higher levels of attrition from the teaching workforce and may not be cost-effective. This is coupled with a developing consensus that two-semester programs provide insufficient opportunity for candidates to undertake a thorough preparation comprising the full range of professional studies across the subjects a teacher needs to be prepared to teach.

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<sup>2</sup> Tucker, Marc "Teacher Quality: What's wrong with US strategy?" in *Educational Leadership*, Dec 2011/Jan2012, Vol 69, No 4.

<sup>3</sup> Levine, A. (2006) *Educating School Teachers*. Washington DC: The Education Schools Project

<sup>4</sup> Scannell, D.P. (2007) *Models of Teacher Education*. Report to the American Council on Education Presidents' Task Force on Teacher Education

<sup>5</sup> Ure, C., Gough, A., & Newton, R. (2009) *Practicum Partnerships: Exploring Models of Practicum Organisation in Teacher Education for a Standards- Based Profession - Final Report*. Australian Learning and Teaching Council: Strawberry Hills NSW

<sup>6</sup> OECD (2005) *Teachers Matter: attracting, developing and retaining effective teachers*.

Two-year graduate entry programs are not simply extended one-year programs. They provide opportunities for prospective teachers to undertake in-depth professional studies and undertake learning in areas not always able to be covered in just over a semester of coursework, such as working with parents, families and communities; using data from assessment to improve teaching; addressing learning difficulties in individual children; and supporting disengaged students.

Longer duration programs provide opportunities to develop flexible approaches to teacher education, which in turn makes it possible to attract high achieving graduates and career-changers to teaching; provide a more seamless transition to fully autonomous practice; and make strong links between rigorous academic content and supported professional practice.

### *Providing feedback and support to teachers*

#### **Draft finding 6.1**

Many teachers are not being provided with the feedback and support they need to become better teachers. Efforts to address this deficiency are more likely to be effective if:

- principals and teachers have a major role in determining how their school undertakes performance appraisals and associated support
- appraisals are based on school-level indicators and criteria
- more than one method is used to gather evidence on performance — including an indicator of student outcomes — so that the various dimensions of teacher performance are adequately captured.

Central agencies can help to improve performance management arrangements by:

- providing schools with broad guidelines and templates, sufficient resources to maintain an effective appraisal system, performance management training, and guidance on performance measures and data management
- undertaking system-wide monitoring that focuses on effectiveness rather than just on compliance with processes.

Research indicates that principals are able to distinguish between good and poor performance, but not as effectively for gradations at either end of the spectrum.

New South Wales strongly supports the concept of appropriate frameworks, including templates and guidelines, resources, performance management training (including giving and receiving feedback and managing difficult conversations), and guidance on performance measures and data management to support school level decision making and implementation of appraisals.

In 2010, MCEECDYA proposed the use of the National Professional Standards for Teachers to underpin the renewal of registration every 5 years, and the certification of teachers at the higher levels of registration.

When implemented, this will introduce a national scheme for the renewal of a license to teach, based on assessment against standards and professional learning. This will be one of the tools used to manage teacher performance.

### *Managing teacher performance*

**Information Request 6.1**

The Commission seeks further evidence on whether current procedures for managing unsatisfactory teacher performance are effective and, if not, how they should be improved

The NSW Department of Education and Communities has revised its current annual assessment and review processes to ensure alignment to teaching standards at the teacher and executive level, as well as in the management of teachers experiencing difficulty with their performance. These will need further refinement with the introduction of the national teaching standards. This is expected to be in 2013 for New South Wales, subject to quality resources and support materials being available. Appropriate professional development and support for principals and supervisors will be part of the implementation process.

*Performance-based career structure***Information request 6.2**

The Commission seeks further input on what issues are likely to arise in establishing a performance-based career structure for teachers, and how those issues should be handled. This could include how to:

- align career structures with the national teaching standards
- design selection processes for promoting teachers to defined positions so that there is not an automatic progression based on accreditation or qualifications
- ensure that the career structure is cost effective
- phase in the career structure.

There is a clear logic in designing career structures for teachers based on teaching standards, even though that is not the explicit intention of the standards framework. The standards provide clarity of language and expectations at specified levels of performance.

Standards offer a widely accepted mechanism on which to build a differential career structure, and could form the basis for an alternative to the commonly used incremental progression process, which rewards time in service.

Achieving and maintaining accreditation at the higher (non-mandatory) levels of standards could be linked to corresponding increases in salary.

Alternatively, achieving and maintaining higher levels of accreditation could become a prerequisite for applying for promotional positions.

Underlying both of these views is the issue of retaining quality teachers in the classroom rather than 'forcing' them to move out of the classroom into more administrative roles to increase their remuneration.

*Rewards for Great Teachers scheme***Draft recommendation 6.1**

The Australian Government should defer the full-scale introduction of its proposed national bonus scheme for teachers (Rewards for Great Teachers), given current uncertainty about how to design an effective bonus system. In the interim, the Government should finance smaller-scale experiments with teacher performance pay, building on recent trials in Victoria and involving control groups of schools and teachers to enable robust ex post evaluation. The Government could also provide further assistance to schools to address current deficiencies in teacher appraisal and feedback.

New South Wales agrees that the Rewards for Great Teachers scheme should not be implemented as originally proposed.

New South Wales welcomes the recent announcement by the Minister for School Education, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, that the best teachers in Australia will be recognised through a staged implementation of the Rewards for Great Teachers scheme linked to the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

The Rewards for Great Teachers scheme should act as an incentive for continuous improvement and better educational outcomes for all students, rather than providing a 'bonus' payment based on isolated student test results. The allocation of reward payments to staff accredited as 'Highly Accomplished' or 'Lead' teachers supports the improvement of teaching quality through alignment with the intent of the National Professional Standards for Teachers to create the opportunity for enhanced career and salary structures.

It is essential that any reward system takes into account current best practice in performance management and recognition processes, and includes the development of career structures as a way to recognise quality teaching. The Highly Accomplished Teacher Positions established in New South Wales represent one of the essential building blocks of a more effective, performance-based career structure.

New South Wales is, however, disappointed by the significant (\$200 million) cuts to the funding for reward payments as recently announced. Increasing the funding to this type of reward process would increase the incentive to teachers to apply for higher levels of accreditation. New South Wales strongly believes that the Australian Government should re-invest the funding amount originally announced (\$425 million) to support the Rewards for Great Teachers scheme, rather than the scaled back amount that has recently been confirmed.

#### *School Leadership Development Strategies Clearinghouse*

##### **Draft recommendation 7.1**

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) should expand its online School Leadership Development Strategies Clearinghouse to promote the dissemination of research — including the outcomes of pilot studies and school-level trials — relating to schools workforce composition and job design. Such a resource should draw together experiences across all school sectors and jurisdictions, including from overseas.

In addition, AITSL should establish a mechanism for evaluating such research to assist schools and education policymakers in identifying the most promising avenues for workforce innovations.

New South Wales supports the expansion of AITSL's online School Leadership Development Strategies Clearinghouse to promote the dissemination of research regarding schools workforce innovation.

Whilst States and Territories have appropriate evaluations in place, there is a role for AITSL in the dissemination of findings. The proposed role sits well with AITSL's responsibility under the variation to the Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership for the coordination of principal professional development activities, which includes the sharing of best practice programs nationally.

This would provide a valuable resource to policy-makers through assisting navigation of the large volume of studies in educational research. In evaluating findings, AITSL could establish a 'hierarchy of findings' (based on, for example, research methodology and size/scope of individual studies). Similar services have worked well in other areas of educational research and other countries (e.g. Australia's 'Closing the Gap Clearinghouse');

the US department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences 'What Works Clearinghouse').

*State and Territory measures to complement increased school autonomy*

**Draft recommendation 8.1**

State and territory governments should complement initiatives to provide greater autonomy to individual schools with measures that give schools the necessary leadership skills, resources and school-level governance arrangements. There should also be support from central agencies on matters such as training, teacher standards and curriculum.

The NSW Government is committed to improving teaching and learning through strengthening school leadership and management, and increasing schools' capacities for local, school-based decision making.

This commitment is demonstrated through the *Local Schools, Local Decisions* initiative, which will involve major reform over several years. These reforms will focus on strengthening school-based decision making in relation to managing resources, staffing, working locally and reducing red tape. This initiative recognises the diversity of school contexts in New South Wales, and acknowledges that communities can provide additional resources and expertise to support schools, including advice on the school's strategic direction and local priorities.

In 2011, NSW conducted a formal consultation process on *Local Schools, Local Decisions*. Feedback from this consultation will inform the directions to be undertaken in the key reform areas, including in relation to teacher support and professional development, school-level governance that includes stronger participation from the local community, and schools meeting their local needs by working together and combining resources.

The NSW Government's commitment to providing greater decision-making capabilities to schools is also demonstrated in the two year pilot of school-based management in 47 NSW schools, in which pilot schools have increased flexibility and authority for making local decisions. Evaluation outcomes from the pilot indicate that greater authority and flexibility are valued and utilised, benefitting schools and students and leading to improved teaching and learning.

*Evaluation of current and proposed initiatives to address educational disadvantage*

**Draft finding 9.1**

Reducing the adverse effects of individual, economic and social factors on student outcomes must be a high priority for schools workforce policy — especially for students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, students living in rural or remote areas, Indigenous students, and/or students with disabilities or other special needs. Despite a long history of policy attempts to address educational disadvantage, outcomes for disadvantaged groups — particularly Indigenous students — still fall well below the rest of the student population. While the current reform agenda has added impetus for action, and a number of initiatives look promising, a comprehensive evaluation of current and proposed initiatives is urgently required to determine the most effective combinations for future action (see draft recommendation 10.1).

New South Wales supports this recommendation as a component of the wider policy evaluation proposed by the Productivity Commission in draft recommendation 10.1.

Initiatives to reduce the adverse effects of individual, economic and social factors (including students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students living in rural or remote areas, Indigenous students, and/or students with disabilities or other special needs) are central to the NSW Department of Education and Communities' Strategic Plan. New South Wales

agrees that despite a long history of policy attempts to address educational disadvantage, outcomes for disadvantaged groups — particularly Indigenous students — still fall well below the rest of the student population. New South Wales strongly supports the intent of this recommendation, to develop a comprehensive evaluation of initiatives in each of these areas in order to inform evidence-based policy at the national level.

Within the area of workforce development, New South Wales is particularly interested in a comprehensive evaluation of initiatives supporting preparation for teaching low socio-economic status and Aboriginal students. Currently in New South Wales, a very high proportion of early career teachers are appointed to ‘challenging’ (low socio-economic status) schools.

**Draft recommendation 10.1**

The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs should initiate and oversee:

- a program-based evaluation of the effectiveness of remuneration-based incentives as a means of addressing shortages of school workers
- a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and policies to help ameliorate educational disadvantage
- an independent performance review, to commence in five years’ time, of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority and the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership. Among other things, this review should include consideration of the effectiveness of these institutions in improving access to and evaluation of: data on student outcomes and the schools workforce, and research and information relevant to workforce policy settings and to the performance of the workforce itself.

These evaluations and assessments should complement the proposed evaluation initiatives relating to performance bonuses (see draft recommendation 6.1), pre-service training, induction and professional development (see draft recommendation 5.1) and workforce composition and job design (see draft recommendation 7.1).

New South Wales has consistently engaged in evidence-based, continuous improvement of its schooling system and strongly supports the intent of this recommendation to develop a comprehensive evaluation of initiatives in each of the above areas in order to inform evidence-based policy.

As part of the Smarter Schools National Partnerships, New South Wales has commissioned five state-wide strategic evaluations. The projects seek to evaluate the Smarter Schools National Partnership policy in terms of its overall effectiveness and its impact in important areas of strategic policy at the state level. The results will guide the development of future education policy through a better understanding of:

- which reforms have been effective;
- whether they have targeted the right pressure points in the education system;
- how cost-effective our efforts have been;
- whether they are transferable and sustainable; and
- to what extent there has been real collaboration at the level of decision-making between the school sectors, at regional or diocesan level, and at the local level within school communities.

A key component of all state-level strategic evaluations is an evaluation of the sustainability of initiatives. These evaluation projects will help identify the most effective strategies for long-term impact and will ultimately guide future policy and resource allocation to reform education in New South Wales.

New South Wales’ five strategic evaluations are as follows:

- Evaluation of the take-up and sustainability of new literacy and numeracy practices (Literacy and Numeracy National Partnership). Evaluation commenced during quarter 1, 2011 and concludes in December 2013.
- Evaluation of school external partnerships (Low SES National Partnership). Evaluation commenced during quarter 3, 2011 and concludes in December 2017.
- Evaluation of school staffing, management and accountability initiatives (Low SES National Partnership). Evaluation commenced during quarter 3, 2011 and concludes in November 2014.
- Evaluation of the impact of the professional experience reform measures (Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership). Evaluation commenced during quarter 3, 2011 and concludes in June 2014.
- Evaluation of the impact of the quality teacher, paraprofessional and centre for excellence initiatives (Improving Teacher Quality National Partnership). Evaluation commenced during quarter 1, 2011 and concludes in August 2016.