

# **Productivity Commission Education and Training Workforce Study**

Schools Workforce: Draft Research Report November 2011

Submission from the **Department of Education,  
Employment and Workplace Relations**

March 2012

## Preliminary Comments

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) welcomes the Productivity Commission's review of Australia's schools workforce and this opportunity to comment on its *Schools Workforce: Draft Research Report*.

DEEWR made an initial submission to the study in September 2011. Since then, a number of initiatives have progressed, which will assist the Productivity Commission's final report. In addition, the Australian Council of Educational Research has released the 2010 *Staff in Australia's Schools Report*<sup>1</sup> which provides important data to help inform the workforce study. The purpose of this submission is to provide updated information and respond to the recommendations and findings released by the Productivity Commission in November 2011. This submission should be read in conjunction with our initial submission.

In our comment on the draft report, the Australian Government will provide update and comment on:

- Attracting quality teachers to hard-to-staff schools (*Draft Finding 4.1*)
- High quality practicum and induction (*Draft Finding 5.1*)
- Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study (*Draft Recommendation 5.1*)
- Graduate entry teacher education programs (*Draft Recommendation 5.2*)
- Establishing a performance based career structure for teachers (*Draft Finding 6.1*)
- Implementation of Rewards for Great Teachers (*Draft Recommendation 6.1*)
- Skills to support increasing school autonomy (*Draft Recommendation 8.1*)
- Evaluation of initiatives to address educational disadvantage (*Draft Finding 9.1*)
- Performance review of ACARA and AITSL (*Draft Recommendation 10.1*)
- Ensuring the representation of non-government schools, non-teaching workforce and parents in high-level policy making (*Draft Recommendation 11.1*)

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<sup>1</sup>McKenzie, P., *Staff in Australia's Schools 2010*, Australian Council for Educational Research, November 2011.

## Attracting quality teachers to hard-to-staff schools

### Draft Finding 4.1

*In addition to the explicit and widely used location allowances for teachers in rural and remote areas, some school operators are increasingly using — often unpublicised — variations in pay to address teacher shortages in other hard-to-staff positions, including in particular subjects and some low socioeconomic status schools. The Commission considers that there would be benefit in exploring options for embedding such variation more explicitly into the remuneration framework.*

The draft report made recommendations around exploring options for providing incentives to attract teachers to work in hard-to-staff schools and positions.

The Staff in Australia's Schools Survey (SiAS) 2010 supports the Commission's conclusion that there is a need to address this issue. The Survey report found that six per cent of primary principals and nine per cent of secondary principals reported major difficulty in suitably filling staff vacancies during the past 12 months. These proportions are much higher in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Education Action Plan focus schools<sup>2</sup> – 29.5 per cent for primary and 37.5 per cent for secondary principals.<sup>3</sup> SiAS also found that 42 per cent of secondary principals ask teachers to teach outside their field of expertise in response to teacher shortages.<sup>4</sup>

As outlined in our original submission, the Australian Government through DEEWR has implemented several initiatives to address teacher shortages in hard-to-staff schools including *Teach for Australia* and *Teach Next*. *Teach for Australia* aims to raise the profile of the teaching profession and address educational disadvantage by recruiting high-calibre, non-teaching graduates and placing them in schools where they can make the most difference.

*Teach for Australia* provides participants with an 'employment-based' pathway into teaching that combines the teaching of theory with practice. Participants have a reduced teaching load and receive a high level of ongoing support and training throughout their two-year placement. On completion, participants are awarded with a Postgraduate Diploma of Teaching.

To date, there have been 128 graduates recruited to the *Teach for Australia* program through three cohorts. The first cohort completed the program in 2011. Initially 45 Associates were recruited and placed in 13 Victorian Government schools. Forty-two of these graduated with a Post Graduate Diploma in Teaching. Since completing the program, 27 associates have continued to teach in Australian schools in 2012.

In Cohort 2, 42 Associates were recruited, all of whom are currently in the second year of the program and teaching in Victorian and ACT Government schools and a Victorian Catholic school. Cohort 3 has seen a further 40 Associates placed in schools this year. The program has expanded to include placements in two remote schools in the Northern Territory.

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<sup>2</sup> McKenzie, P., *Staff in Australia's Schools 2010*, Australian Council for Educational Research, November 2011, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p. 194.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, p. 114.

*Teach Next* recognises that career-change teachers are also a valuable source of new entrants to teaching, both in terms of addressing shortages and reinvigorating the teaching practice of subjects, by combining theory with real world application and experience. The program aims to address ongoing teacher shortages in specialised subject areas, such as mathematics and science, by attracting highly skilled and experienced professionals and placing them in hard-to-staff schools, particularly in regional areas. The initiative also builds on the work that DEEWR is already doing through the Teacher Quality National Partnership to provide more flexible pathways into teaching.

DEEWR is working towards a first intake to begin their initial intensive course in June 2012 and be placed in schools in Term 3. Education authorities have been formally invited to participate and identify vacancies for this intake and the application process will open for potential participants to apply in mid-March 2012.

Through the *Teach Remote* initiative, the Government is working specifically to develop the teacher workforce in remote and very remote schools. *Teach Remote* is a collaborative initiative between the Australian Government and the National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools (NARIS), which is a partnership between the Northern Territory, Western Australia, Queensland, South Australia and New South Wales governments, working with over 170 remote and very remote Indigenous schools.

The initiative is targeting recruitment, training, and support for teachers working in remote communities, with 14 key strategies being implemented. Some examples of these strategies include the development of a common induction program, a virtual teachers network, an online course in teaching English as a second language, and scholarships for high performing teachers to undertake further study. By improving the attraction and retention of a quality teaching workforce, *Teach Remote* is helping to create a more stable teaching and learning environment for students living in remote locations in Australia.

### **High quality practicum and induction**

#### **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.*

The Australian Government agrees that high-quality practicum and induction experiences for pre-service and graduate teachers play a key role in developing an effective teaching workforce but considers that it is at the teacher employer level that trialling and evaluation of university-school partnerships and practicum and induction experiences should be conducted.

SiAS 2010 reports that half or more of both primary and secondary early career teachers indicated they receive the following forms of assistance when they entered teaching:

- designated mentor;
- an orientation program designed for new teachers;
- observation of experienced teachers teaching their classes;
- structured opportunities to discuss experiences with other new teachers; and
- a reduced face-to-face teaching workload.<sup>5</sup>

More than half of those surveyed found that these forms of assistance were helpful or very helpful. However, only a third reported follow up from their teacher education institution as a form of assistance, and of these same respondents, only a third considered this as helpful or very helpful.<sup>6</sup> As such, the data suggests that although the provision of induction and practicum are considered satisfactory for primary and secondary early career teachers, there is scope for further support and improvement.<sup>7</sup>

One of the ways that the practicum and induction experiences of teachers are being improved is through the work that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is leading on the nationally consistent accreditation of initial teacher education programs. From January 2013, all initial teacher education programs across Australia will be assessed against the National Standards and Procedures which were endorsed by MCEECDYA in April 2011.<sup>8</sup> The Standards and Procedures reflect high expectations of initial teacher education that include high-quality practicum and induction experiences for pre-service and graduate teachers.

As part of this work, AITSL is continuing to work with the Australian Council of Deans of Education to strengthen pre-service teacher practicum experiences. AITSL is also working with the NSW Institute of Teachers to develop an on-line module to support teachers mentoring and supervising the practicum of pre-service teachers.

The School Centres for Teacher Education Excellence reform, under the Teacher Quality National Partnership, is also providing support schools to provide specialist professional experience for pre-service teachers. The Centres of Excellence aim to:

- strengthen actual and virtual professional experience placement programs for teacher education students with university partners;
- provide mentoring, support and supervision of early career teachers to refine their skills, knowledge and experiences;
- build leadership capacity through shared practice and targeted professional learning; and
- provide mentoring training for supervising teachers.

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<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p. 77.

<sup>7</sup> McKenzie, P., *Staff in Australia's Schools 2010*, Australian Council for Educational Research, November 2011, p. 79.

<sup>8</sup> Communiqué of the 11<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs, 15 April 2011, Melbourne.

## Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study

### 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.*

The Australian Government agrees with the value the Productivity Commission Schools Workforce draft report places on improving the data available on the teacher workforce. In our original submission we provided an overview of the Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study which is being commissioned by the Government to provide vital information about the impact of teacher education on the quality, supply and distribution of teachers. It was also noted that the study would consist of two phases designed to track individuals through and out of the teaching workforce (phase 1) and to increase understanding of the impact of pre-service education on supply and demand (phase 2).

Since the Productivity Commission's draft report was released, the Australian Government has allowed for flexibility in the current Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Main Study Funding Agreement to accommodate the Commission's recommendation to follow a sample of teachers for at least five years.

## Graduate Entry Teacher Education Programs

### 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.*

The Australian Government does not agree to the proposal of the draft report to modify Program Standard 1.3 of the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia; Standards and Procedures, to indicate the two year courses should remain an option rather than a mandatory requirement.

Education Ministers endorsed the *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia - Standards and Procedures* (Standards and Procedures) in April 2011, following extensive consultation with key stakeholders, including school

systems, the teacher education sector, education researchers, professional associations and unions.

Their decision to endorse the Standards, including those relating to the duration of initial teacher education courses, is supported by feedback from teacher and principal surveys. As noted in the draft report this feedback has consistently indicated that current teacher preparation is inadequate in various areas including weak links between theory and practice, and inadequate focus on classroom management. The Grattan Institute, in *CatchUp: Learning from the Best School Systems in East Asia* cites quality initial teacher education as one of six policy areas integral to the success of the four nations of their study.<sup>9</sup> Recent research and consultation undertaken by the AITSL shows that a one-year program provides insufficient opportunity for participants to gain thorough and quality preparation across the full range of professional studies required in a graduate entry program.<sup>10</sup>

The requirement in Program Standard 1.3 for graduate entry professional qualifications to be of two years duration or equivalent reflects the depth of knowledge and skill required by a quality teacher. Two years also allows sufficient time for the development of a rigorous program of pre-service teacher education that includes strong partnerships with schools and allows for the inclusion of a high quality practicum.

### **Establishing a performance based career structure for 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.*

The Australian Government agrees that teachers should be provided with appropriate feedback and support throughout their career, and that this should be based on the National Professional Standards for Teachers.

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<sup>9</sup> Jensen, B., *Catching up: Learning from the best school systems in East Asia*, Grattan Institute, February 2012, p. 21.

<sup>10</sup> Caldwell, B., *Graduate Entry Teacher Education: A Case for Two Year Programs*, 31 January 2012.

The Australian Government is implementing the *Rewards for Great Teachers* initiative in order to improve the quality and effectiveness of all Australian teachers by ensuring that they are supported throughout their career through the implementation of quality performance and development processes at the school level.

On 25 November 2011, the Australian Government announced that the *Rewards for Great Teachers* initiative will provide \$1.1 billion over eight years (2011-12 to 2018-19) to recognise and reward the best teachers in Australia through a reward payment scheme linked to the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Over the next four years, the Government will provide \$225 million to introduce an Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and recognise our best teachers with a reward payment. It is proposed that under the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework all teachers will participate in an annual appraisal process where they will receive regular and constructive feedback on their progress and performance. Opportunities for further professional development will also be identified through this process. The design and implementation of the new Framework will help to drive quality and national consistency in the provision of appropriate and constructive feedback for all teachers on their performance and further development.

The linking of this Framework to the *National Professional Standards for Teachers* also aims to ensure that feedback conversations are built around the agreed standards that set out what teachers should be able to know and do at each stage of their career.

Data from SiAS 2010 indicates that teacher appraisal is widespread and regular, and involves school executive staff. The survey indicates almost all teachers are appraised at least once per year. Around 95 per cent of primary and secondary teachers were appraised annually or more frequently by at least their Principal, Deputy Principal or a Head of Department or equivalent.<sup>11</sup> However, while a wide range of areas were appraised and a number of methods were used, these were not universal across schools nor consistently given high importance.

SiAS 2010 indicates a lack of consistency of measures used to assess teacher performance. Between half and two thirds of principals reported use of formal interviews with teachers and an individual plan setting out goals and development strategies as methods for appraising teachers. Less than half of principals reported use of assessment of evidence of teaching practice; assessment of teaching performance against professional standards; classroom observation; provision of formal written feedback; or peer assessment.

Although teachers were appraised against up to 16 criteria, the SiAS 2010 data indicated that only five of these criteria were identified as areas of high importance by more than half of primary principals and only three by more than half of secondary principals. Around 43 per cent of primary and 36 per cent of secondary principals indicated high importance was given to student learning outcomes other than test scores with approximately 12 per cent indicating high importance was placed on the use of student test scores.

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<sup>11</sup> McKenzie, P., *Staff in Australia's Schools 2010*, Australian Council for Educational Research, November 2011, pp. 120-121.

## Implementation of Rewards for Great Teachers

### 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.*

Since the Productivity Commission's draft report was released, the Hon. Peter Garrett, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth in November 2011, announced that *Rewards for Great Teachers* will be implemented through a staged approach in conjunction with the rollout of the National Professional Standards for Teachers and linked to the new national certification process. The National Professional Standards for Teachers provide a nationally consistent and valid basis for recognising quality teaching, with those teachers achieving Highly Accomplished and Lead levels to be rewarded with a one-off bonus payment.

The Minister's announcement has taken into account international evidence from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) which demonstrates that effective teacher appraisal and development should occur within a framework of agreed standards of professional practice.<sup>12</sup>

The work of AITSL in developing the Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework and a nationally consistent certification process for the Highly Accomplished and Lead levels of the Standards will be completed in 2012 for introduction of both from 2013. The first teachers to be eligible for reward payments will commence their assessment process for certification in 2013 to allow the first reward payments to be made in 2014.

Under the Rewards for Great Teachers initiative teachers who achieve certification at the highest levels of the standards will be rewarded with a one-off reward payment of \$7500 for Highly Accomplished teachers and \$10,000 for teachers who achieve the Lead teacher level.

Over the life of the initiative over \$1 billion has been allocated for reward funding. The Government expects that take-up of certification at the higher levels will be gradual and will increase across the life of the program. As more teachers are assessed at the Highly Accomplished or Lead levels, and familiarity with the process increases, we expect the numbers of reward payments to increase each year.

The Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework, referred to earlier, will become the tool by which teachers will be able to assess their

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<sup>12</sup> Santiago, P. et al, OECD Reviews of Evaluation and Assessment in Education: Australia, OECD, August 2011.

performance and make judgements about whether to put themselves forward for certification at the Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher levels.

In contrast to the national reforms being progressed under the Rewards for Great Teachers initiative, the trials occurring in Victoria referred to in the recommendation are on a much smaller scale and involve the payment of bonuses to teachers based on school-based assessments.

The Victorian Government is in the second year of the trial to evaluate the impact of two reward payment models on improving the performance of teachers and improving outcomes for students. This trial, the Rewarding Teaching Excellence program, is funded under the TQNP. The first model is a Teacher Rewards Model which involves the payment of an annual bonus to top performing teachers as assessed by their schools on the basis of a balanced scorecard approach. A total of 11 schools are participating in this model. The second model is a School Rewards Model through which bonus payments are made to the top 20 percent of Victorian Government schools that demonstrate the greatest improvement. A total of 37 schools are participating in the School Rewards Model. Across both reward models 48 schools are participating.

### **Skills to support increasing 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 Australian Government supports greater autonomy for individual schools, allowing principals, teachers and school communities to make decisions in a timely and more locally effective way to enhance the education prospects of their students. As reflected in the Productivity Commission's draft report released in November 2011, the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative is intended to provide additional impetus to existing initiatives to support increased local school decision-making in government and non-government schools across the country. Under this initiative, DEEWR is providing considerable flexibility to education authorities to tailor implementation to suit their own unique circumstances. Education authorities will be responsible, for example, for undertaking the school selection process (within nationally agreed guidelines and criteria) and determining the nature and scope of actions to be undertaken by schools.

It is anticipated that the National Partnership Agreement on *Empowering Local Schools* will be signed and in place by early 2012, and that Funding Agreements with non-government school education authorities will be in place by the end of March 2012.

Under the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative AITSL will receive \$1.25 million in Commonwealth funding to support high quality professional development for principals aligned with the National Professional Standard for Principals.

In addition, the Australian Government will provide \$38 million from the Teacher Quality National Partnership for professional development for current and emerging school principals. These funds will be distributed to states and territories to complement and build on current initiatives to strengthen capacity in the principal workforce, in recognition of the key role principals play in a rapidly changing education landscape.

### **Evaluation of 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).*

A number of evaluations are currently underway for Australian Government programs which aim to assist in improving the educational disadvantage in Australia. These include the Smarter Schools National Partnership (SSNP) National Evaluation Strategy, the evaluation of the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative and the evaluation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan.

The SSNP National Evaluation Strategy, as agreed by MCEECDYA, will assess the outcomes and impact of the SSNPs and alert governments and systems to indirect consequences of the reforms, both positive and negative.

An evaluation is also an important component of the More Support for Students with Disabilities initiative. Through the evaluation process, DEEWR will make available to the public information on the impact and effectiveness of this initiative as well as examples of good practice. DEEWR is currently in the process of identifying an independent consultant to undertake the evaluation.

The Evaluation for the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (2010-2014) (the Action Plan) has been developed by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Working Group of the Australian Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC).

## Performance review of ACARA and AITSL

### Draft Recommendation 10.1

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

- *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.*

### ACARA

The Australian Government agrees with the general premise that it is important to conduct a review of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)* and indeed, this is already an inclusion of the *Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority Act 2008*. Section 44(1) of the *ACARA Act 2008 Act* states that the Minister must cause a review of the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority's ongoing role and functions to be conducted and that the review must commence within 6 years of the commencement of s44(1) (8 December 2014) and must be completed within 6 months.

The role of ACARA as outlined in *ACARA Act* is to:

- a) develop and administer a national school curriculum, including content of the curriculum and achievement standards, for school subjects specified in the Charter;
- b) develop and administer national assessments;
- c) collect, manage and analyse student assessment data and other data relating to schools and comparative school performance;
- d) facilitate information sharing arrangements between Australian government bodies in relation to the collection, management and analysis of school data;
- e) publish information relating to school education, including information relating to comparative school performance;
- f) provide school curriculum resource services, educational research services and other related services; and
- g) provide information, resources, support and guidance to the teaching profession.

While ACARA has a strong remit for aspects of student data the only link to workforce data lies in Ministerial agreement that the proportion of teachers at each level of expertise linked to the national teaching standards be published on the My School website at some time in the future.

### AITSL

The Australian Government agrees that a review of the performance of AITSL has merit. AITSL currently reports regularly on progress against its work program to Ministers through the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood (and its precursor MCEECDYA). A formal review of AITSL's performance against its

objectives, and of the organisation's effectiveness in the context of the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) reform agenda, would provide Ministers with important additional information to ensure the organisation is relevant in the future.

Under its current work program AITSL is already progressing initiatives to improve access to and evaluation of schools workforce research. For example, AITSL manages a clearinghouse of research on School Leadership Development Strategies, as well as having a broader role in sharing research on what works in Australian school. While AITSL currently does not have the mandate to collect, or provide access to, data on the schools workforce, this could be considered in the future. Any decision to include this role as part of AITSL's remit will require agreement by the Standing Council.

### **Ensuring representation of non-government schools, non-teaching workforce and parents in high-level policy making**

#### Draft Recommendation 11.1

*The Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs should ensure that non-government schools, the non-teaching workforce and parents are appropriately represented in high level policy-making processes in the schools area. To this end, the Council should establish a working group to consult with the relevant stakeholders and advise on specific options for improving their representation on high level policy forums.*

DEEWR has long standing and existing mechanisms in place to consult widely with a range of stakeholders, including non-government schools, the non-teaching workforce, principals and parents.

DEEWR has a long association with the peak principal bodies through the National Principal Association Seminars which have been convened by the Australian Government since 1997. Since 2010, the Commonwealth Minister for School Education has also hosted a National Conversation with Principals. This gives up to 150 practising principals the opportunity to engage with the Australian Government Education Minister provide feedback on the impact of current and future government policies and reforms for school education.

The Strategic Policy Working Group (SPWG) has been established as a specific sub group of the Standing Council of Ministers and seniors officials AEEYSOC to allow senior officials from both the government and non-government sectors to discuss matters of strategic importance to schooling. The SPWG provides advice to ministers on the Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood (and its precursor MCEECDYA) on strategic education policy issues arising out of the National Education Agreement (NEA). Membership of the SPWG includes:

- CEOs from all Australian Education Departments
- Representative from the National Catholic Education Commission
- Representative from the Independent Schools Council of Australia
- Representative from Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (CEO or Chair)

- Representative from Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (CEO or Chair)
- Representative from Education Services Australia (CEO or Chair)
- Secretary, Standing Council for School Education and Early Childhood

AITSL is charged by ministers under its Letter of Expectation to consult extensively with stakeholders during the development, testing, implementation and evaluation phases of its work. AITSL must ensure stakeholder engagement is appropriate, regular and can be obtained through a variety of modes.