



"APTA is a federation of state and territory joint councils of professional teacher associations. Its vision is to provide national leadership that supports and advances the teaching profession".

News in Brief – May 2020

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Northern Territory
Teachers leading teachers

CPTAV

CEASA
educators

PROFESSIONAL
TEACHERS'
COUNCIL NSW
Building capacity to support teacher quality

President's Report



APTA President, Cheryl Brennan

As we watch the daily news we are observing a changing landscape and attempts to help us all understand and cope with an ever-evolving reality, both in Australia and globally.

As part of the unprecedented events facing society, teachers have had to adapt to remote learning and many other changes in their daily work. For a workforce to turn around and adapt to change and develop online learning capacities within only a few days is astounding!

For professional teacher associations this is obviously a very challenging time; but it is also a time of possibilities. Professional teacher associations, more than ever, are the 'go to' for quality, trusted support. Your members do need you and to hear from you as encouragers, mentors, supporters and as a useful, credible resource.

Federal Department of Education, Skills and Employment priorities in light of COVID-19

APTA has been engaging with the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment on priority initiatives and how APTA and the Department can work together to achieve the common aim of advancing the teaching profession and educational outcomes. At our May meeting, the Department is interested to hear APTA's views on the major challenges facing teachers during COVID-19 and what areas we think the Australian Government could best support teachers. Please feel free to speak with your APTA representative about the experience of teacher associations and teacher association members in the current environment.

Other key topics of interest to the Department include the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training, Learning Progressions and Online Formative assessment, the National Evidence Institute, the Grattan Institute's *Great Teachers* report, PISA results and the Review of the Melbourne Declaration. Please speak to your state or territory joint council APTA representative if you would like more information on any of these.



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Zoom as a solution for teacher associations during COVID-19

Current restrictions on gatherings of people due to COVID-19 present many challenges, but they also open up new opportunities as well.

Many teacher associations have traditionally relied on face-to-face professional development courses as their primary means of supporting their members and for revenue raising. Restrictions on gatherings have meant that many teacher associations have had to postpone or cancel face-to-face events. This is having a significant financial impact, particularly on smaller teacher associations with limited means.

On a positive note, many teachers have become familiar with video conferencing and webinar technology such as Zoom, and there is an increasing acceptance of the value of this mode of delivery. An advantage of this sort of technology to provide professional learning is that it is more accessible to regional and remote teachers, it easily allows for recording and viewing at a later time, and a national audience is more readily reached without the cost and hassle of travel for conference delegates.

Part-time APTA Executive Officer David Browne has been overseeing the use of Zoom for numerous professional learning activities by several teacher associations in NSW in recent years. Joint councils of other states and territories are welcome to contact David Browne at the PTC NSW office to discuss options for their organisation and members to move ahead with Zoom in 2020.

APTA has formally approached Zoom to provide support for joint councils in this difficult time. APTA requested two licenses per joint council and webinar support for the next 6 months. Our request was based on the need for all joint councils to support their struggling membership due to lack of financial streams from professional learning events. Once APTA receives a formal response from Zoom we will provide an update to Joint Councils.

Constitutional Reform

APTA members unanimously voted for the adoption of a new Constitution to enable it to be more flexible and effective. This process took into account the Australian Institute for Company Directors Not-for-Profit Governance Principles. The new Board is smaller and comprises one representative from each state or territory joint council, instead of two. Other changes to the Constitution include a simplification of wording and greater clarity in areas such as the definition of a member, quorum, powers of the board and processes for dealing with resolutions. The changes comply with the *Corporations Act 2001 (Cth)*. Special thanks must go to now-retired Board Member Sue Gazis, who led the Constitutional reform.

The 2020 APTA Board is as follows:

- President: Cheryl Brennan
- Vice President: Malcolm McInerney (Educators South Australia)
- Treasurer: Danielle Gordon (JCQTA)
- Secretary: Steve Hawkins (PTANT)
- Karen Yager (PTCNSW)
- Deb Hull (CPTAV)
- Jill Abell (NEAT)
- Carolyn Broadbent (COACTEA)

Collaborative professionalism and teacher agency

Teacher Associations play a significant role in the lives of teachers, providing leadership, advocacy, networking and professional learning on specific subjects or fields of interest. There is the potential for professional teacher associations to facilitate greater collaborative professionalism across subjects, states and sectors. There is also the potential for policy makers to accord greater weight to the teacher voice in educational decision making at the state and national levels. Collaborative professionalism and teacher voice are two strategies that can lead to improvements in student learning outcomes across the nation. To support and foster such thinking about the role of professional teachers associations I wrote an article for Volume 22 of the Professional Educator Magazine themed “Teaching: A Noble Profession”. Click [here](#) to read the article published by the Australian College of Educators. Please take advantage of opportunities to draw the attention of your member associations to this article as it raises the profile of teaching associations and APTA.

Teacher associations as a valuable source of curriculum knowledge

ACARA CEO David de Carvalho gave a brief presentation and engaged in discussion with the APTA Board on issues such as the OECD Education 2030 Project, state-based curriculum reviews, calls for greater curriculum flexibility and autonomy, whether general capabilities should be taught separately or embedded with content, and whether civics and citizenship should be considered a cross-curriculum priority rather than a separate subject, especially considering that some states have not adopted it as part of their curriculum.

The APTA Board emphasised that professional teacher associations are a valuable source of curriculum knowledge and skills from a classroom perspective. Currently ACARA receives regular input from principal and parent associations, but not from teacher associations. There is clearly a role for APTA in this space.

The APTA Board also noted that there are different interpretations of the “overcrowded curriculum” concept, with classroom teachers generally calling for a reduction in the prescribed content to allow for greater depth of learning, and principals tending to call for a focus on the basics of literacy and numeracy with a reduction in the number of subjects required to be taught. If you have further insights on this, please feel free to raise them with your state or territory joint council representative on the APTA Board.

The Federal Minister Dan Tehan has endorsed a review of the Australian Curriculum, beginning with mathematics and science in 2020. A key focus seems to be to “declutter the curriculum”. APTA will provide updates as the year progresses.

National Architecture Review

The Education Council has released an independent review of Australia’s national architecture for schooling to identify options for, and make recommendations on, the most effective and efficient institutional and governance arrangements for the national architecture.

The key recommendation of this review was a new corporate statutory authority, the Australian Curriculum and Teaching Services (ACTS), that would replace ACARA and AITSL and, for the first time in Australia, provide a single integrated focus in national support to curriculum, assessment and teaching.

APTA is considering the detailed recommendations of the review and updates will be provided as the year progresses.

Projects with AITSL

APTA has been invited to work with AITSL on two projects: A review of “red tape” faced by teachers, and an investigation of abuse of teachers and school leaders. Both of these projects were election commitments and were initiated by the federal Education Minister Dan Tehan. APTA will provide more information on the progress of these projects later in the year.

Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into work, further education and training

The APTA submission highlighted the key skills, knowledge, and capabilities that students need to succeed in their post-school lives. This involved considering questions such as:

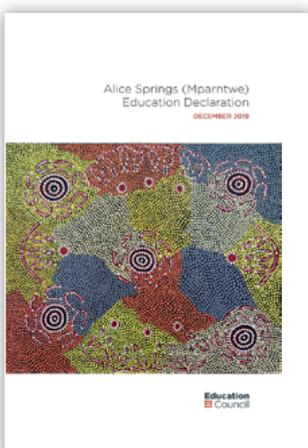
- How we can help students make better decisions about learning pathways within school? How to change negative perceptions of certain pathways? How we can support young people to make better decisions about their post-school pathways? How we can make sure opportunities are available and support is tailored to the needs of all young people?

APTA’s submission to the Review can be accessed [HERE](#). The submission emphasises that professional teacher associations actively work with the tertiary sector, industry and community groups. The submission also made the point that within teacher associations there are many members who work outside of schools in these sectors, thus strengthening the opportunities for collaboration and communication between schools and post-school institutions. It is crucial that key government educational stakeholders recognise the existing networks embodied by teacher associations and provide opportunities to develop these further.

Inquiry into the education of students in remote and complex environments

In December 2019, The House Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training launched an Inquiry into the education of students in remote and complex environments. The Inquiry will examine the performance of the Australian education system in remote and regional areas, its territories and in complex circumstances like drought and post-natural disaster. APTA’s submission to this Inquiry can be found [HERE](#).

Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration on Education Goals



In December 2019 the Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Declaration on Education Goals was announced, providing an update to the Melbourne Declaration that had set the principles over the last decade. It can be found online at [THIS LINK](#).

APTA had previously made a submission to the Review and attended consultation events around the country. The APTA Board is interested in hearing the views of professional teacher associations from across the states and territories on the new Declaration. Feel free to pass your comments and reflections on to your state or territory joint council representative on the APTA Board.

APTA website

The APTA website has been updated to provide clearer communication to internal and external stakeholders. If you have feedback on the website, please pass this on to your state or territory joint council representative.

I look forward to working with all joint councils in the remainder of the year. The APTA Board can be emailed at the following address: contactus@apta.edu.au