

News in Brief – May 2021

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Professional
Teachers'
Association of the
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 the federation of state and territory joint councils representing hundreds of teacher associations, APTA represents a network of teachers from government and non-government schools, early childhood services and centres. There are a myriad of professional teacher associations across the country that APTA supports and advocates for. What all these associations have in common is that they are comprised of passionate teachers and other educators who share a specific educational interest and are keen to improve their practice to benefit student learning outcomes.

As we head into Term 2 of 2021, teacher associations across the country continue to provide leadership in their subject/specialty area of expertise. Teacher association leaders are engaged in a range of consultation processes regarding curriculum reviews, are busy delivering hundreds of online, face-to-face and hybrid professional learning opportunities to meet professional learning needs for classroom teachers, and are providing networking opportunities to foster innovative practice. Whilst COVID-19 has provided many challenges for teacher associations, one benefit has been the increased acceptance of virtual forums, enabling improved access for regional and remote members that facilitates greater teacher connection and, hence, teacher wellbeing.

Since the last *APTA News in Brief* in October 2020, APTA has been advocating for the unique role of teacher associations in engaging and strengthening the subject/specialty expertise of the teaching profession. APTA has been recommending that key government educational stakeholders recognise the existing networks of teacher associations and provide opportunities to develop these further.

APTA Board for 2021

The APTA Board for 2021 is as follows:

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

APTA’s Strategic Priorities

APTA’s three strategic pillars continue to guide the direction of the APTA Board:

1. **Collaboration:** Combining efforts and expertise across the states and territories to produce greater effectiveness of joint councils and member associations. One way that APTA has been doing this is through the provision of nation-wide webinars/forums on topics that provide general support to all teacher associations, such as curriculum review processes and governance.
2. **Advocacy:** Speaking out and acting to advance the role of professional teacher associations in educational decision making. One way that APTA has been doing this is through its submissions to federal government reviews, where it has pushed for greater recognition of evidence-based, classroom focused subject/specialty professional learning that is provided by professional teacher associations and that is of particular importance to those teaching out-of-field. APTA sees such ongoing professional learning as crucial for advancing the expertise of the teaching profession and for improving student learning outcomes.
3. **Leadership:** Visionary thinking to achieve positive change. One way that APTA has been acting in this area is through facilitating innovation between the stronger state/territory joint councils and the smaller state/territory joint councils that require more support.



Priorities of the new federal minister



Australia’s new federal Minister for Education and Youth, The Hon Alan Tudge MP, outlined his vision for schooling outcomes in Australia in his speech on 11 March 2021 that can be accessed [here](#). In this speech, the minister set the goal of being back among the top group of nations across the three major Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) domains of reading, mathematics and science by 2030. This is consistent with the **Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration** of Australia needing a ‘world class education system that encourages and supports every student to be the very best they can be, no matter where they live or what kind of learning challenges they may face’.

The *National Initiative to Support Teaching and School Leadership Narrative* was endorsed by Education Council on 11 December 2020 and sets out an approach for prioritising where national collaborative action on quality teaching and school leadership can make the biggest difference. It is intended to guide future decision making and commissioning of work to support quality teaching. APTA provided feedback on the draft document in October 2020 and argued for recognition of the need for subject/specialty professional learning that is customised to the professional learning needs of teachers, as determined by teachers and their associations. This was lacking in the draft but is reflected in the final document with the addition of the following phrases that reflect our submission: ‘Teachers should be supported to prioritise their own growth and development’, ‘Opportunities for teachers to develop their subject or specialty expertise should also be prioritised’ and ‘This should include enhancing opportunities for teachers to use their own professional judgement to identify their own professional learning needs and choose their professional learning focus’. The document can be accessed [here](#)

Major Reviews

APTA is, or recently has been, involved in a number of reviews of education initiatives at the federal level. It is helpful for teacher association leaders to be aware of these:

A. Review of the national architecture for schooling

The national architecture comprises the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Education Services Australia (ESA), and the new Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO). In its July 2020 submission in response to the **2019 Review of the National Architecture for Schooling in Australia**, APTA made a number of recommendations, including:

- that the national architecture be closely aligned with, and make reference to, the aspirational and inspirational terms of educational excellence and equity contained in the Alice Springs (Mparntewe) Education Declaration;
- that the bodies of the national architecture engage in an authentic manner with teacher associations to show respect for the professional and to empower the profession; and
- that teacher associations, through peak national professional bodies such as APTA, be built into the processes of the new national architecture to ensure that the Education Council obtains informed and realistic advice from the teachers in order to design a coordinated user experience.

APTA noted that professional teacher association leaders are respected, experienced, expert teachers across schooling sectors with proven pedagogy and a strong understanding of how to lead curriculum development, implementation, assessment and review.

In October 2020 after considering all submissions, Ministers identified a need to make a more explicit link between the national architecture and the Alice Springs (Mparntewe) Education Declaration and the National School Reform Agreement. Ministers:

- agreed that there is a need to better articulate the purpose of the national architecture;
- agreed that there is a need for better communication and engagements with stakeholders, especially early childhood, primary and secondary school teachers, educators and leaders, in relation to the national reform agenda;
- undertook to progress reforms through a staged approach, with an immediate focus on resolving process and governance issues to improve the effectiveness and efficiency of the national architecture; and
- recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges in undertaking more far-reaching reforms at the end of 2020, and decided not to make any structural changes at that time.

APTA will provide updates if there are further developments in this space.

B. Senior Secondary Pathways update

Significant work is being progressed across the education and skills sectors in response to the **Senior Secondary Pathways Review** recommendations, to which APTA provided input in 2020. Current work includes the Australian Curriculum Review (due to report in September 2021) and negotiations for a new National Skills Agreement (due to be finalised in late August 2021). Education Ministers are now focusing on areas that address potential gaps in current activity, including:

- literacy, numeracy and digital literacy;
- developing a sample learning profile;
- agreeing on a common language for skills and capabilities.

Other priorities, including improving career guidance and education and development of a national strategy on vocational education and training delivered to secondary students, are being progressed jointly with Skills Ministers.

C. Skills Reform

To support the future growth and prosperity of our nation, the Australian governments are committed to improving the vocational education and training (VET) system through Skills Reform. There are opportunities for teacher associations to provide input on immediate reforms through this [link](#).

APTA supports recommendations to implement greater alignment between teacher registration and VET qualifications for our vast number of teachers who hold or seek dual qualifications. APTA advocates greater diversity in the professional recognitions, industry and experiential opportunities and ongoing professional development recognition. The various versions and updates to the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment (TAE) do not keep pace with the requirements of teaching, training and assessment in secondary schools in Australia, the changing career pathways for teaching excellence, new skills, competencies and capabilities, reflect the nature of the workplace, or the new workforce planning needs.

D. Automatic Mutual Recognition (AMR) of Occupational Registrations

On 18 March the Australian Government introduced the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021 to the House of Representatives. This bill provides the legislative framework to enable a person who is licensed or registered in one occupation or state to be able to perform the same activities in another state or territory, without needing to apply and pay the fees for another licence. This includes the registration of teachers across the country. Progress on the bill can be tracked [here](#).

In its response to the Consultation Paper, APTA supported the proposed legislation as it will cut red tape for teachers, do away with additional fees and create a more mobile workforce. APTA acknowledged that a registered person in one state will be required to meet requirements such as working with children checks in another state. APTA strongly recommended that the state registration authorities prioritise the development of effective and efficient administrative processes in order to make available to each other relevant information about registered persons, especially when disciplinary action is taken against an individual in one jurisdiction as this should affect their entitlement to Automatically Deemed Registration (ADR) in other jurisdictions.

E. Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Review

While recognising the significant work over the past decade to strengthen ITE, the Minister has announced a review of ITE, to inform what more is needed to attract and inform high performers into the teaching profession and to ensure that we are preparing ITE students to be effective teachers.

APTA recommended that the review specifically consider the impact of out-of-field teaching. While pre-service teachers are trained to teach particular subjects or disciplines, they often find themselves teaching utterly unfamiliar subjects in their placements and in their first years as a graduate teacher. This increases their workload significantly, reduces their efficacy and budding sense of professional identity, and impacts their wellbeing. APTA believes that an appropriate valuing of post-graduation professional learning such as that provided by professional teacher associations, and support from schools for young teachers to participate in both in-school and external professional learning, allows new graduates to continue to access learning that accords with their needs.

More information about the review itself will be made available following the finalisation of the terms of reference.

F. Indigenous Cultural Competency

APTA responded to a **discussion paper** from AITSL on how teachers and leaders in schools across Australia can be supported to enhance their Indigenous and cultural competency. APTA strongly agreed with the discussion paper’s focus on exposure to culturally competent pedagogies and the need for experiential learning opportunities for teachers. APTA noted that professional teacher associations are a valuable means by which Indigenous Cultural Competence can be achieved. APTA can play a key role in facilitating communication between stakeholders and to support members to provide appropriate, research-based support to professional teacher associations across the country.

National architecture for schooling updates

A. Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO)

AERO was established at the end of 2020 after consultation with key stakeholders, including APTA. Its objectives are to generate high-quality evidence, make high-quality evidence accessible and enhance the use of evidence in Australian education. AERO’s website contains its first suite of products and resources to give educators greater access to high-quality education evidence. Please let the APTA Board know if you have any suggestions for how APTA and/or teacher associations can further engage with the work of AERO.

B. National Curriculum Review

ACARA has been consulting with teacher associations at a national level on the review of the national curriculum. APTA initiated and ran a virtual forum with Janet Davey, ACARA Director of Curriculum, on 29 March to update over eighty teacher association leaders from across the states and territories on the progress of the Curriculum Review prior to the opening up of the public consultation from 29 April until 8 July. I encourage all teacher associations to consult with their members on the proposed curriculum revisions that are relevant to their areas of interest and to provide feedback through the appropriate channels.

C. My Teaching Advice Platform

AITSL has set up the *My Teaching Advice* online platform to support early childhood teachers, casual/relief teachers, and teachers in regional/rural and remote locations to connect with expert colleagues. The expert teachers are able to provide advice to beginning teachers are those accredited at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages. The platform is being piloted with small cohorts of beginning teachers and AITSL intends to make it more widely available in 2022. Let APTA Board know if you have any comments in relation this platform.

D. Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) Summit

AITSL is hosting the **Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) Summit** on 25–26 June 2021 in Brisbane. As President of APTA, I have been invited to attend and engage with Emeritus Laureate Professor John Hattie and CEO Mark Grant regarding how we can collectively capitalise and grow the momentum around HALTs to meet our strategic objectives. I encourage all teacher association leaders to contact me if you are also attending this Summit.



E. Online Formative Assessment Initiative (OFAI)

The **Online Formative Assessment Initiative** aims to provide Australian teachers with innovative assessment solutions that integrate resources, data collection and analytical tools in a Teaching Tools Network that is easily accessible, interactive and scalable to meet future needs. It is a cross-agency project involving ACARA, AITSL and Education Services Australia (ESA). On 11 May, the APTA Board will be meeting with the OFAI Managing Director, Nick Weideman, who will provide a brief progress update on the current alpha phase and outline the work being proposed for future phases of this project. Let the APTA Board know if you have any comments on this project.



APTA webinars for teacher association leaders

APTA hosted a webinar on 16 March that was attended by over fifty teacher association leaders, titled *Getting Governance Right* and led by APTA Board member and VCTA President, Dr Deb Hull. Deb spoke about Association/Company governance structures, Board Responsibilities, the obligations of a company director, conflict of interest, financial responsibilities, interpreting financial statements, positive Board culture and getting the best from meetings. Several questions from attendees were discussed. Following the success of this webinar, APTA is planning further webinars that are of interest to teacher association leaders, particularly those who may be new to their role.



APTA WEBINAR
AUSTRALIAN PROFESSIONAL
TEACHERS ASSOCIATION

GROWING YOUR ASSOCIATION
Wednesday 12 May 2021
TIME: 7.30 – 8.30pm AEST via Zoom COST: \$30

While some teaching associations operate with a large membership, strong finances and paid staff, others work to support their members on the smell of an oily rag. This workshop will provide ideas and advice for smaller associations on cost-cutting, membership growth and service provision that won't overwhelm your volunteers. While there are no magical solutions, this workshop will provide an opportunity for smaller associations to ask questions and share ideas with their peers across Australia.

PRESENTER: Steve Hawkins, President of the Geography & History Teachers Association NT, President of the Professional Teachers Association NT and Treasurer of APTA.

FORMAT: A 40 minute presentation followed by a 20 minute Q&A session. Participants are able to send pre-made questions via the online form.

REGISTER HERE