

News in Brief – October 2021

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COUNCIL NSW
Building capacity to support teacher quality

President's Report



APTA President, Cheryl Brennan

APTA has been working diligently throughout 2021 to support teacher associations across the country. Since the last *News in Brief* in May 2021, COVID-19 outbreaks across the nation have caused ongoing disruption to activities of teacher associations in many states and territories. Many teacher associations have been able to capitalise on new opportunities, with increased uptake of webinars which have enabled increased participation by regional and remote teachers. There is the scope for teacher associations to provide collaborative professional learning opportunities to reflect on subject-specific pedagogies that have been successful during periods of remote learning and to consider whether any elements could be maintained when face-to-face learning resumes.

APTA's Strategic Priorities



APTA's three strategic pillars – collaboration, advocacy and leadership – continue to guide the direction of the APTA Board. In particular, APTA is focusing on bringing greater attention to the role that teacher associations play in promoting specialist expertise in the teaching profession. Specialist expertise – usually linked to particular subject areas – is the content and pedagogical knowledge that professional teacher associations possess, develop and share with members through professional networking opportunities, networking and the collaborative creation of subject-specific teaching resources. APTA believes that improving the specialist expertise of the teaching profession

must be accorded greater attention in government education policy at the federal level in order to improve student learning outcomes across the country, and that greater support of professional teacher associations is a crucial element of improving student learning outcomes.

Back to the future: the fall and rise of subject teaching in Australia

On Wednesday 8 September, APTA hosted a webinar with Dr Ben Jensen, CEO of Learning First, on the topic “Back to the future: the fall and rise of subject teaching in Australia”. Ben has served on the Australian Government Ministerial Advisory Group, on OECD expert groups for their Program of International Assessment (PISA) and the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), and he has a wealth of experience from his previous work with the Grattan Institute.

The webinar drew attention to the increase in expenditure on education and the constant focus on reforms that have not resulted in significant increases in student learning, nor improvements in equity. Ben noted that in the past there had been a traditional focus on specialist subject teachers and their content and pedagogical knowledge; however, in the last two decades, there has been a shift away from this focus towards general pedagogy and school improvement dislocated from curriculum. Policy development is currently based on general pedagogical approaches rather than examining what is happening in schools in particular subject areas. Curriculum debate is very poor and disconnected from classrooms; policy has shifted well in front of research; and we see the continued rise of general over specific policy.

Webinar attendees generally agreed that policy debate is not anchored in what is actually happening in classrooms and how to better support teachers in particular subject areas. Instead policy debate is dominated by the opinion of experts without any comprehensive analysis of what is happening in classrooms and how we can make classroom practice better in particular disciplines. It was generally agreed that a better approach is for government policy to focus on improving subject-specific knowledge and practice – the space of professional teacher associations through their professional learning, networking opportunities and collaborative development of teaching resources. This can be achieved through greater engagement with APTA.

Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)

Upcoming meeting with the DESE:

The Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and Workforce team, led by David Graham, has taken over management of the engagement with principal and teacher associations. David will be supported by Graeme Grant and Lu Han who will be APTA’s main points of contact. APTA has a meeting scheduled with the DESE on Tuesday 26 October, where key policy directions and developments will be discussed.

Schools Stakeholder Forum:

I attended the Schools Stakeholder Forum on 10 June 2021. This was hosted by Ms Alex Gordon, Deputy Secretary, DESE. Alex provided the first presentation with an update on recent schooling sector developments, including school budget measures, such as \$5.8 million to the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection, \$1.0 million to strengthen civics and citizenship education and \$3 million to support disadvantaged youth participation in the Duke of Edinburgh’s Award. Alex noted that “Education Ministers Meeting” (EMM) has replaced “Education Council”, with continuing oversight of the National Schools Reform Agreement including Online Formative Assessment, Review of Senior Secondary Pathways, Initial Teacher Education, Unique Student Identifier, Australian Education Research Organisation (AERO) and Improving national data quality.

The second presentation was from Ms Dannie Edmonds on the 2020 Review of Disability Standards for Education. The Report made 13 recommendations across four main reform directions: mostly about awareness and understanding of the Standards and two proposed changes to the Standards. The next step is related to implementation, with consultation with educators a priority. To read the report in full click [HERE](#).

The third presentation was from Mr Nick Weideman, Deputy CEO Education Services Australia, on the Learning Progressions and Online Formative Assessment Initiative. Nick’s presentation supported his previous explanations to the APTA Board on 11 May and mentioned in the last *APTA News in Brief*. This cross-agency project involves ACARA, AITSL and Education Services Australia (ESA) and aims to provide Australian teachers with an opt-in group of interconnected and aligned information technology systems to assist teachers to monitor individual student progress and identify student learning needs. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

The fourth presentation was from Mr Daniel Pinchas, General Manager, Teaching and School Leadership, AITSL and Ms Carly Jia, Senior Advisor, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education, AITSL, on Indigenous cultural competency in the Australian teaching workforce. Working with the profession, AITSL aims to build a suite of professional learning resources to build or enhance the cultural competency of the existing teaching workforce and increase cultural safety in schools. AITSL has indicated that it is partnering with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education experts to deliver this work. APTA’s submission to AITSL noted that the ability of professional teacher associations to supplement professional learning provided by jurisdictions should be given careful consideration in future strategies to increase teacher cultural competence.

Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA)

The Review of the Australian Curriculum has been a key priority for teacher associations throughout 2021. The stated aim of the Review is to refine, realign and declutter the content of the existing curriculum within its existing structure. The review has been undertaken concurrently in all eight learning areas from F to 12. Core concepts have been added to prioritise the big ideas, understanding, skills or processes that are central to a learning area to give clarity and direction about what matters. General capabilities and Cross Curriculum Priorities (CCPs) have been embedded into the learning area content where they fit best. The Australian Curriculum website has been updated with new functionality for users. The Consultation period for the Consultation Curriculum was from 29 April to 7 July, with many teacher associations from the states and territories providing submissions to ACARA in their relevant subject areas. APTA made a submission to ACARA, emphasising the value of teaching associations representing the views of practising teachers with specialist expertise. APTA recommended ACARA carefully consider the feedback provided by teacher associations across Australia and provide weight to the views therein.

Final revisions to the Australian Curriculum will be provided to education ministers for their consideration and endorsement and once approved, the next version of the Australian Curriculum will be published on a new website in 2022. State and territories implement the Australian Curriculum according to their own timeline. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

If your teacher association has an opinion on the progress of the Australian Curriculum, please be in touch with your state or territory APTA Board member. The APTA Board is concerned that education strategy and policy development has become increasingly dislocated from the teaching of particular subject areas that happens in schools and classrooms, and that policy makers are skipping an understanding of current practice and are instead basing strategies on generalised approaches. These issues were discussed by attendees of the recent APTA webinar with Ben Jensen and will be considered further by the APTA Board in the remainder of 2021.



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Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Consultation and Submission

The Quality Initial Teacher Education (ITE) Review was launched on 15 April with an expert panel led by Ms Lisa Paul AO PSM. The Review is seeking to build on reforms to date, including the Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education, the introduction of non-academic selection criteria for applicants and the establishment of the Australian Teacher Workforce Data collection survey. Two key questions formed the scope for the Review: How to best attract and select high-quality candidates into ITE and how best to prepare them to become effective teachers. I attended an ITE Consultation session on 13 July. Various questions were posed, with the most relevant ones to professional teacher associations being:

- What do you think could be done to match the supply of teachers with demand in specific subject areas, or geographic areas?
- How well do you think the current initial teacher education system and courses prepare ITE students for the classroom and school environment?”
- What do you think could be done to improve how graduate teachers are supported and prepared for the classroom?

Submissions to the ITE Review closed on 18 July. APTA made recommendations that the Review consider the impact of out-of-field teaching and appropriately value post-graduation professional learning such as that provided by professional teacher associations to promote specialist expertise. APTA will be updated on the progress of the ITE Review in its meeting with the DESE on 26 October. Click [HERE](#) for more information about the ITE Review. Please be in touch with the APTA Board if your association has any comments regarding ITE.

Automatic Mutual Recognition Scheme (AMR)

The Commonwealth Government passed the Mutual Recognition Amendment Bill 2021 and the AMR Scheme was implemented in NSW, Victoria, ACT and NT on 1 July 2021. Other jurisdictions are expected to progressively enter the scheme, pending the passage of various legislation in each state. As noted in the previous News in Brief, APTA supported this legislation as it cuts red tape for teachers, removes additional fees and creates a more mobile workforce. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

Highly Accomplished Leader Teacher (HALT) Summit



I attended the HALT Summit in Brisbane on 25–26 June. There were two keynote presentations: Wellbeing: Shifting our Focus from the Individual to the Context (Dr Helen Street) and The Learning Trajectory: From Surface to Deep to Transfer (Dr Jared Cooney Horvath).

I attended the AITSL stakeholder vision session at the Summit. The most relevant question raised was “What are the key ‘spaces’ that AITSL should be focusing on? Which ‘emergent modes’ should AITSL focus on in the coming decade (advocacy, convening, research synthesis, resources/tools for professional learning, system advisory, cross-system policy learning)?”

Please contact the APTA Board if your association has any views on ways that APTA should engage further with AITSL in regards to HALTs or promoting the specialist expertise of the profession.



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Australian Teacher Workforce Data Survey (ATWD)



Australian Teacher Workforce Data

I attended a briefing from Zhi Soon, General Manager Evidence and Impact, AITSL, on the Australian Teacher Workforce Data Survey, on 1 July 2021. Established in 2017, the ATWD is delivering a comprehensive picture of the national teaching workforce, across systems and sectors, from initial teacher education (ITE) through to end of teaching career.

The ATWD is a longitudinal data linkage project that connects ITE data collected by the Commonwealth to workforce data collected by teacher regulatory authorities, and data provided by teachers through an annual ATWD Teacher Survey. AITSL is delivering this project on behalf of the Commonwealth, state and territory governments.

The ATWD provides insights on topics such as working hours, the prevalence of out-of-field teaching, and access to professional learning.

The ATWD is voluntary, and no individual teacher or school can be identified in reporting on this data. The Teacher Survey is a critical part of the ATWD, and is the largest representative survey of the teaching profession in Australia.

Zhi Soon requests that APTA support/promote the survey amongst its teacher association membership. Please contact APTA if you would like more information that you can add to your state/territory communications with your members.

My Teaching Advice Platform

In January 2021, AITSL completed the build of *My Teaching Advice*, an online application to support beginning teachers throughout their induction. The application was released to a small group of advice givers (Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers) and seekers (beginning teachers) in February 2021. When the application is available more widely in 2022, beginning teachers across Australia, especially those with challenges accessing professional learning (teachers from rural, regional and remote areas, casual relief teachers, and early childhood teachers), will be able to use the application to seek advice from experienced teachers across Australia.

AITSL has sought APTA's involvement in this process, including APTA's assistance to source teachers to be trained as advice-givers. APTA's general advice to AITSL was:

- While *My Teaching Advice* would be useful for generic teaching strategies, classroom management, dealing with parents, general support and encouragement etc., it will not be possible for AITSL to train its advisers in the intricacies of every subject at every year level. For that reason, the professional learning and resources provided to advisers should include links to the websites of teacher association peak bodies in each state and territory, so that advisers can quickly access the web addresses of all teachers' associations. Teachers contacting *My Teaching Advice* should be directed to the relevant subject association for accurate and up-to-date advice, assistance with developing materials, connection to teacher networks etc.
- AITSL staff who are supporting the advisers could canvass teachers' associations around Australia to understand what mentoring and professional learning is available in different subject areas, so that this information can be drawn on by advisers during an interaction. It should be made clear to people seeking assistance that the advice line is not the only source of support available to them.
- The Australian Curriculum is not taught "as is" in every state and territory. State-based differences will matter, especially if a young teacher has been given a senior class, which happens often in rural and remote areas. When a teacher seeks help with their specific subject(s), it will be discouraging if they are offered only general help.

AITSL VET in Schools

In its November 2020 submission in response to the AITSL Consultation Paper *Building a high quality, sustainable ‘VET in Schools’ workforce*, APTA commended the proposal for greater alignment between teacher registration and VET qualifications for teachers who seek dual qualifications, and recommended that jurisdictions increase their active engagement with the formal teacher networks in the professional teaching associations to implement long-term and strategic VET teaching and pedagogical approaches.

In May 2021 AITSL published the *Building a high quality and sustainable dual qualified VET workforce* report to Australian Education Senior Officials Committee (AESOC), available [HERE](#). The major finding of the report was that a combination of factors have made dual qualified VET teachers an “endangered species” in some jurisdictions. There is little incentive for schools, systems or individuals to pursue dual qualifications when much VET is delivered by people who are not fully registered teachers. The recommendations aim to create pathways into ITE to build the dual qualified VET teacher workforce, support current VET teachers to maintain their dual qualified status and ensure the quality and sustainability of VET delivered in schools. As recognised in Peter Shergold’s *Senior Secondary Pathways Review* (2020), the benefits of high-quality VET delivery in schools cannot be overstated and require true collaboration between the education and skills sectors.

Associations Forum

I attended an Associations Forum Special Interest Group on membership on 4 August. It was interesting to hear how other (non-teaching) associations have been providing value to their membership, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some teacher associations may also benefit from membership of Associations Forum. Click [HERE](#) for more information.

APTA webinars

APTA has successfully run three webinars so far during 2021 to support the leaders of teacher associations across the country. These have been *Getting Governance Right*, *Growing your Association* and *Back to the future: the fall and rise of subject teaching in Australia*. Please let the APTA Board know if you have suggestions for future webinar topics.