

## NEWS IN BRIEF – May 2022



### President's Report



APTA President, Cheryl Brennan

The Australian Professional Teachers Association (APTA) is a federation of state and territory joint councils of professional teacher associations. Since the last *News in Brief*, APTA has continued to provide national leadership through the challenges of COVID lockdowns and high absences in the new "COVID-normal". Professional teacher associations have been a source of connection and support to many teachers, providing a source of community and the opportunity to reflect on subject-specific pedagogies that have been successful through these challenging times. Many professional teacher associations have reported an increase in engagement from rural and remote members who are able to more fully participate in association professional learning activities and networking opportunities. With the return to face-to-face events, joint councils and teacher associations are encouraged to continue to take advantage of opportunities to support members in new and innovative ways.

### APTA Board for 2022

The APTA Board for 2022 is as follows:

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

*Please reach out to your state or territory representative with any suggestions or comments about how APTA can support your joint council, or how your joint council can provide support to APTA.*

## APTA’s Strategic Plan 2022–2024

The APTA Board has endorsed its strategic plan for 2022–2024. Its three strategic pillars that will guide the direction of the APTA Board over the next three years are:

1. **Synergy:** Combining efforts and expertise to produce greater effectiveness of joint councils and their teacher association members;
2. **Advocacy:** Speaking out and acting to ensure that the interests of joint councils and their teacher association members are taken into account; and
3. **Support:** Providing support to our joint council members, teacher associations across the country and the teaching profession.



## Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE)

APTA met with staff from the Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) on Tuesday 26 October 2021 and Monday 28 March 2022 to discuss policy directions and developments.

### Tuesday 26 October 2021

In the 26 October 2021 meeting, APTA was able to report on COVID experiences and learnings for teacher associations. APTA reported that there were widespread cancellations of face-to-face professional learning and networking events, which caused financial hardship for many associations. At the same time, many associations were able to pivot and provide an increased offering of online events, which enabled a greater level of participation from rural and remote members. APTA noted that professional teacher associations

were a great source of support for teachers during COVID-19 lockdowns, and associations were a focus of discussion over subject-specific pedagogies that worked well during online learning. APTA noted that it is not a “one-size-fits all” model – different pedagogies are required for different subject areas. Professional teacher associations are the ideal place for these conversations to be further explored.

The other major issue discussed in the 26 October meeting was the emerging teacher workforce shortage – a particular issue for regional/remote schools and for some subject areas. High workloads of teachers was noted, especially during lockdown periods, and an improvement in respect for teaching profession since COVID-19 was observed. It was surmised that this was linked to the capacity of the profession to adapt and cater for students in their care.

### Monday 28 March 2022

The main topic of this meeting was **Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review** (note that the “Report on a Page” link provides a quick summary). The DESE outlined the background of the report and its seventeen recommendations, with key proposals centred around attraction and selection, ITE program quality, and early years of teaching. APTA’s response focused on how it can support teacher associations to be a part of the solution, with the main ways being by:

- providing mentoring programs for new staff – for example, pairing up an experienced teacher association member with a new teacher member of the association – this is already provided through some teacher associations but could be expanded. APTA noted that teacher associations are a better solution in this space than AITSL’s *My Teacher Advice Platform* and that teacher associations provide support in addition to that provided within the school setting; and
- providing professional learning courses for out-of-field teachers – although APTA noted that release time by schools and funding for teachers to attend is crucial – often schools have a focus on whole-school, generic professional learning at the expense of individual teacher needs.

APTA raised the acting Education Minister’s comments in the article **Stuart Robert says ‘dud teachers’ not an issue in Australia’s independent schools**. APTA put to the Department, on behalf of all our joint councils and member associations, how damaging comments like this made by the federal minister are to all teachers. The DESE acknowledged the comment and agreed to feed this back to the minister.

APTA noted that the national architecture for schooling was reviewed in 2020 and APTA’s submission in response to the consultation paper supported a shift to a streamlined model (Australian Curriculum and Teaching Services – ACTS) with expert advisory committees. APTA recommended that teacher association voice (e.g. through APTA) be a part of these advisory committees because without the representation of teachers, the advisory bodies will lack credibility and the same issues encountered by the current national architecture will continue to proliferate. In October 2020 after considering all submissions, education ministers recognised that the COVID-19 pandemic posed challenges in undertaking more far-reaching reforms at that time. APTA asked if there are any plans for further developments in this space. The DESE response was that there are no reform plans as yet and the current focus is to improve communication flows between the five arms of the national architecture (AITSL, ACARA, AERO, ACEQA and ESA) so that they are on the same page. The DESE agreed to feed the APTA position back to the education ministers.



The DESE wanted to hear from each jurisdiction on teacher workforce supply issues in each jurisdiction. APTA made a number of comments, including that often out-of-field teachers are also novices to the profession, exacerbating early career exit issues.

The DESE is keen to hear from APTA on the Future Leaders Program (FLP) that is currently running in WA, NT, NSW and Queensland. If you have comments on this program, please speak with your state/territory joint council representative.

## Indigenous School Teacher Workforce

The Department of Education, Skills and Employment (DESE) is currently seeking views on the teacher and school leader workforce, with a particular focus on Indigenous teachers and leaders. The main policy issues are about having appropriate numbers of Indigenous teachers and leaders to reflect the broader Indigenous population, and how Indigenous teachers and leaders impact on student engagement and learning outcomes. Please be in touch with your state or territory APTA representative if you would like to make a referral to sources of information or if you have comments from your own experiences.

## Australian Curriculum

The Australian Curriculum Version 9.0 has been endorsed by education ministers, and according to ACARA’s media release on 1 April it is a “decluttered” curriculum that “sets high expectations and standards for what all students should know and be able to do, and that supports deeper conceptual understanding and improvement in educational performance”. ACARA CEO David de Carvalho, says “there is a stronger focus on phonics in English and on mastering essential mathematical facts, concepts, skills and processes. History has been decluttered, allowing more time for in-depth teaching. There is also a strengthening of explicit teaching of consent and respectful relationships from F-10 in age-appropriate ways”.

The updated curriculum, Version 9.0, will be available on a new website in Term 2, 2022 and will be implemented by schools according to the timelines set by education authorities in states and territories.

## Associations Forum National Conference

I attended the Associations Forum National Conference in Melbourne on 11–12 April. This was the first face-to-face conference that many attendees had participated in for a long time, and an excellent opportunity to network with association leaders in professions other than education and to learn from their experiences. I attended sessions on Education Revolution Utilising Technology, Considerations for Good Governance, Major Association Transformation, Association Commercialisation, Lessons from reinvention following COVID-19 and Developing Position Statements and Policy. Associations Forum offers a variety of useful services to associations and several joint councils and teacher associations are already members.

## Highly Accomplished Lead Teacher (HALT) Summit



Steve Hawkins, APTA Secretary, will attend the AITSL Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher Summit in Adelaide on 13–14 May to represent APTA and participate in the AITSL stakeholder vision session. Steve will be more than happy to speak to teacher association leaders who are also attending the Summit in order to consider ways that HALTs can further support teacher associations and promote the specialist expertise of the teaching profession.

## Copyright Reform

On 25 February, APTA made a submission in response to the **Exposure Draft Copyright Amendment (Access Reform) Bill 2021** – Schedule 4: Update and restore education exemptions. APTA is supportive of the proposed changes which seek to update the copyright laws to suit the digital age and existing laws around the educational or non-commercial use of copyright material. APTA’s submission can be found **HERE**.



## APTA webinars

APTA is planning to host webinars throughout 2022 to support the leaders of teacher associations across the country. Please let your state or territory joint council representative know if there is a topic that would be of interest to you. Alternatively, you can reach APTA directly at **contactus@apta.edu.au**