



A SUBMISSION TO THE STUDY BY THE PRODUCTIVITY  
COMMISSION INTO THE SCHOOLS WORKFORCE

FROM

THE VICTORIAN INSTITUTE OF TEACHING

August 2011

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The Victorian Institute of Teaching (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission to the Productivity Commission's study of the workforce of Australian schools.

The Institute is the independent statutory authority for the regulation of the teaching profession in Victoria. It is the single registration authority for all teachers in Victorian schools. Established in December 2001, the Institute operates under and administers Part 2.6 of the *Education Training and Reform Act 2006* and reports to the Victorian Parliament through the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession.

Statutory registration boards play an important role in protecting the public and affording Victorians the confidence that registered professionals are subject to uniform regulation regardless of where they are employed. It is a model that is cornerstone to many professions within Australia including the health professions. Registration boards have responsibility for determining the entry standards into the profession, ensuring that registered professionals continue to maintain their competency, and if required can withdraw the right to practise if an individual breaches the standards expected of the profession. The aim of establishing the Institute was to strengthen parent and community confidence in a regulatory system that would ensure only appropriately qualified and suitable professionals are teaching Victoria's children.

The Institute regulates teachers through the assessment of professional qualifications, conduct and standards of practice. This serves to assure the public of the suitability and competency of teachers practising in Victorian workplaces. The registration requirements for teachers to meet and maintain professional standards determine they continue professional learning throughout their teaching career, thus raising their professional profile. This recognition will be widened through the impending introduction of national standards of teacher practice, including at higher levels.

The Institute's main function is to regulate the teaching profession in Victoria and to recognise and promote the regulatory role and activities of the Institute. Other functions of the Institute include:

- reviewing and approving teacher education programs;
- recommending the qualifications, criteria and standards for registration and renewal of registration and for the recognition of higher levels of professional practice of teachers in Victorian schools;
- granting registration or permission to teach in Victorian schools;
- maintaining a register of teachers; developing and maintaining standards of professional practice;
- developing, maintaining and promoting a code of conduct for the teaching profession;
- investigating the conduct, competence and fitness to teach of registered teachers and imposing sanctions where appropriate;
- developing a Professional Learning Framework to support teachers' continuing education;
- undertaking professional development programs and activities for teachers related to the Institute's functions;
- undertaking and promoting research related to the Institute's functions; and
- providing advice to the Minister about the professional development needs of teachers.

The Institute aims to work in the public interest to build a profession that aspires to the highest standards of teaching practice and conduct. The focus for this submission will be the role the Institute takes as a teacher regulator to support and develop proficiency of practice in registered teachers who are members of the schools workforce.

The Victorian Institute of Teaching is a member of the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA), the peak body for teacher regulators in Australia and New Zealand. As a member of ATRA, the Institute is committed to an increasing national focus in the registration and certification of teachers and has contributed to various initiatives that provide for common approaches and understanding of aspects of regulation.

## 2. ABOUT THE SECTOR

### *Trends within the teaching workforce*

Data from the Institute's register of teachers indicates an increase in teachers registering in Victoria over the previous two years. (Table 1)

Category of Registration	30 June 2011	% of profession	30 June 2010	30 June 2009	% change
Full registration	100,576	86.8	98,265	95,817	4.7↑
Provisional registration	10,782	9.3	9,618	8,869	17.7↑
Permission to Teach	3,570	3.1	4,034	3,862	7.6↓
Non-practising registration	920	0.8	1,105	1,201	23.4↓
TOTAL	115,848		113,022	109,749	5.3↑

Table 1: Registered teachers by registration category

All teachers granted provisional, full or non-practising registration have met qualification requirements of at least four years tertiary study, including at least one year of teacher education. The Institute assesses and approves teacher qualifications from Australian and overseas tertiary institutions as meeting the requirements to be qualified to teach in Victoria. This provides public assurance that teachers who are registered have appropriate qualifications to undertake the role of a teacher in a school. As indicated there has been a 5% increase in registered teachers in Victoria during the previous 2 years.

Teachers granted Permission to Teach (PTT) do not meet qualifications requirements for registration and have a limited authority to teach. These teachers generally fill a need where there is no qualified teacher available. During the previous two years there has been an 8% reduction in grants of PTT. Institute policy changes that define more clearly those members of the teaching workforce who are required to hold registration with the Institute may have contributed to this change. Sports coaches and instrumental music teachers, who are not teaching the core curriculum, no longer require registration. This has reduced the regulatory burden for many schools.

Non-practising registration is granted to teachers holding full registration who cannot meet the professional practice requirements for renewal of registration at the time of renewal of registration. These teachers are unable to teach in a Victorian school but have met requirements for continuing suitability to be a teacher, including a current and satisfactory National Criminal History Records Check. The reduction in these numbers over the previous two years is indicative of teachers actively returning to the profession.

### *Rising age profile*

The age profile of registered teachers from 2009-2011 indicates that the number of new graduates and teachers aged 39 or younger is increasing. (Table 2) The number of teachers of 60 years or greater has increased during the previous 2 years, which indicates the expected trend for early retirement and retirement after 55 is not reflected in a drop in registrants in the relevant age bracket.. Of interest is the employment status of these teachers. The Institute has found that teachers may retire from full time teaching at age 55 and older but tend to work on short-term contracts or as casual relief teachers for a number of years after this.

Age group	2011	% of profession	2010	2009	% change
< 25	4,683	4	4,536	4407	5.9↑
25-29	14,073	12.1	13,493	13,047	7.3↑
30-39	26,367	22.75	25,259	24,178	8.3↑

40-49	25,517	22	25,604	25,746	0.9↓
50-59	31,917	27.55	32,117	31,947	0.1↓
60-69	12,498	10.8	11,095	9,917	20.7↑
60+	793	0.7	914	507	36↑
TOTAL	115,848		113,022	109,749	5.3↑

Table 2: Age groups of registered teachers

The Institute has noticed an increase in the average age of teachers who are registering for the first time. From the 2010 cohort of provisionally registered teachers who responded to the annual evaluation survey, 46% of teachers entering the profession were between 20 and 25 years of age, 41% were between the ages of 26 and 40, 12% were between the ages of 41 and 60 and one teacher was over 60 years of age.

This is partly due to an increase in career change courses and people who are undertaking post graduate studies in teaching after working for a time in another capacity. A sample of the 2010 cohort of provisionally registered teachers who were granted full registration indicates that 49% had previous work experience. The breakdown of these teachers is illustrated below:

Previous work experience outside teaching	%
<1 year ('gap year')	9
1 – 5 years	41
6 – 10 years	25
10 + years	24

Table 3: PRTs' years of previous work experience outside teaching

In summary, during the period July 2010 to June 2011 there were 1,869 teachers who left the profession and 6,131 new registrants providing a net increase of 4,262. Of new registrants, 642 applied for registration through mutual recognition and 585 had interstate qualifications. This indicates that 20% of new registrants in Victoria were from other Australian states or territories or from New Zealand..

These statistics indicate the range of data teacher regulatory authorities hold that can provide understanding of demographic profiles and trends across the teaching profession in Australia. In conjunction with employment data from school sectors this provides a detailed snapshot of the profession that can support workforce planning. Currently ATRA member organisations are working with the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) under the Smarter Schools National reform initiative to develop a National Teaching Workforce Dataset.

#### 4. RECENT POLICY DEVELOPMENTS

The Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has led reforms affecting teacher regulatory authorities, such as the development of the National Professional Standards for Teachers, standards and procedures for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia and nationally consistent registration. The Institute has been fully involved in these reforms and supports a national focus for State-based regulation.

While reforms initiated within the AITSL remit seek to address the issue of teacher quality and improved equity and learning outcomes for students, which is to be applauded, the work of the introduction of these initiatives is the responsibility of the regulatory authorities. Consequently, the Institute will need to implement these changes progressively and work closely with teachers, principals and other educational

stakeholders in Victoria to ensure the intent is achieved. ‘Change fatigue’ in schools is a very real danger if these reforms are not handled sensitively and with clear understanding of the different contexts within which teachers work. The purpose of the change will need to be carefully articulated to registrants, particularly in jurisdictions such as Victoria where there is already a strong standards-based regulatory system, and a well supported accreditation process.

The expectations of policy outcomes also need to be realistic. An approach that allows for revision and evaluation during implementation will provide the strongest framework for future growth.

### *Reforms in the early childhood sector*

In January 2010, the Victorian Government released its response to the Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Recommendation 3 of the Review proposed the inclusion of early childhood teachers under the regulatory scope of the Institute. Government accepted this recommendation.

Regulation of early childhood teachers by the Institute has the following objectives:

- to provide assurance to parents that teachers delivering kindergarten programs have the necessary qualifications and meet defined professional standards of practice and conduct;
- to improve the status of early childhood teachers through maintenance of defined professional standards and assist workforce growth; and
- to improve the quality of early childhood teachers through compliance with consistent professional development requirements and application of a consistent disciplinary process for serious misconduct and unsatisfactory performance.

The establishment of a National Quality Framework for the early childhood workforce is a significant COAG initiative which will take effect from 1 January 2012. This Framework will introduce a new regulatory system for the early childhood sector, including national approval of training courses, which will have implications for the regulation of early childhood teachers. In its proposed role as regulator of early childhood teachers in Victoria the Institute will liaise with relevant bodies such as the Australian Children’s Education and Care Quality Authority (ACECQA).

The requirement that all licensed Early Childhood Education Services employ a qualified early childhood teacher by 2014, and the requirement that all children have access to 15 hours of a pre-school program in the year before school by 2013 will have a significant impact on the demand for qualified early childhood teachers.

While early childhood teachers are currently required to have specified qualifications and a Working with Children notice, there is no standardised application of professional standards of practice and conduct in relation to teachers across the sector. Inclusion of early childhood teachers into regulation by the Institute will provide greater consistency in the application of all aspects of regulation including professional standards and in dealing with disciplinary issues relating to a teacher’s professional practice.

## 5. FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS IN SCHOOLS WORKFORCE OUTCOMES

*Are there regulatory, institutional or cultural impediments to beneficial adjustments in job design and staffing mixes? To what extent do the national accreditation and registration requirements recognise changing demands for school workers?*

The Institute has been aware of the need for alternate pathways into teaching and has worked closely with a number of stakeholders and programs to support initiatives in this area. Since 2006, the Institute has been a partner with Victoria University and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) to provide registration for students undertaking Career Change programs where they work in schools while undertaking teaching qualifications. In addition, agreements allow these

teachers to develop their evidence of professional practice for full registration while they are completing their qualifications meaning they can be granted immediate full registration on completion of their course and application to the Institute. Similar agreements exist with teachers undertaking the Melbourne University Master of Teaching (Secondary – Induction & Mentoring) program, where the process for full registration is incorporated into the course requirements.

The Institute has worked closely with the Teach for Australia organisation and the DEECD to ensure registration is granted for Associates undertaking the Teach for Australia program in Victoria. In their second year of the course Associates undertake the preparation of evidence for full registration as part of their assessed course work, thus ensuring a grant of immediate full registration once they are qualified and meet all other registration requirements.

The nationally consistent registration and accreditation processes, whilst promoting national consistency will not increase the responsiveness the Institute has already demonstrated to having a regulatory system that supports alternative pathways to registration.

## Training and Professional Development

*Is sufficient attention paid to professional development – not only for classroom teachers, but also principals and other school workers? What specific changes, beyond that already in prospect, would be appropriate?*

Standards-based regulation of the teaching profession is central to consistent expectations for the professional learning and currency of practice of teachers across all school sectors and teaching contexts. All registered teachers are expected to regularly engage with professional development activities that update their knowledge about pedagogy, content and practice. This includes school principals who are generally registered teachers.

The Institute has developed an online professional development search facility (Pdi [www.pdi.edu.au](http://www.pdi.edu.au)) that ensures all professional development activities listed on it are referenced to the standards. This has been built and managed for the Institute by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), who undertakes rigorous quality assurance processes with PD providers. Providers include the three school sectors and the Catholic Education Office Melbourne is working closely with the Institute to develop consistencies and links to their online processes for teacher professional development from Pdi. Such measures develop the quality of professional development teachers undertake and allow a better assessment of the activities to meet individual teacher and school professional development needs. By inference, this should also improve the professional learning of teachers and contribute to improved practice and improved student learning.

Without registration renewal a considerable proportion of the workforce would undertake little or no professional development that is not linked to employment requirements. These teachers include those working as casual relief teachers, as education officers outside schools and those returning to work after an absence. This area of attention does not appear to have been identified in the study.

The Institute has sought to address some of the issues facing casual relief teachers (CRTs) by supporting the development of professional networks for these teachers. This model of professional learning for teachers who work in isolation and have little access to professional communities has been very successful. The networks are self-supporting and cost effective and often linked to a school. The schools usually support the professional learning of the CRTs with professional development activities and this ensures those they employ understand the learning environment and priorities in the school. Other activities are organised by the network leaders who are trained and supported by the Institute. From June 2010, the DEECD has provided financial support for the networks to organise approved professional development activities that address areas of strategic priority for Victorian government school teachers. They have also provided access to email for these teachers, which has supported their professional interaction. Through the program other organisations, such as the Teacher Learning Network have offered special deals for CRTs to subscribe to their publications and activities. Inters tint his initiative has been expressed by the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

The Institute has been working with the Teachers Registration Board of the Northern Territory to support the establishment of similar CRT networks and programs.

These examples of initiatives by the Institute illustrate the need to take a profession-wide approach to professional learning for all teachers regardless of their employment circumstances. This ensures that currency of knowledge and practice within the profession is maintained and leads to greater professional engagement by teachers. In addition, schools will have expectations for teacher professional learning but these are often driven by sector priorities and school strategic planning and may fail to address the specific professional learning needs of individual teachers.

*Are adequate resources available to mentor new teachers? Is there a need for formalised system-wide mentoring structures, or should the processes for inducting new teachers be left to each school?*

The Institute believes that support for teachers to meet and maintain standards of professional practice is part of a regulator’s role and ensures the quality of the teaching workforce. Support is particularly important for teachers entering the profession. The Institute trains teacher mentors to support and assist provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) in their school to develop their professional practice to meet the standards for full registration. This operates as a formal two-day program offered in 30 locations across Victoria in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and with the support of the Catholic Education Offices in all Victorian dioceses and the independent schools sector. During 2011 over 900 mentors attended the training days and over 11,000 mentors have been trained since the program’s inception in 2004.

Mentor training is a key component of the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program and this is independently evaluated annually. Findings from the evaluation of the 2010 cohort of provisionally registered teachers (PRTs) who were granted full registration indicates that:

- 80% of PRTs and 90% of mentors believed that the PRTs had made beneficial changes to their teaching through feedback from mentors;
- 85% of PRTs indicated they had changed aspects of their classroom work for the better and developed their teaching knowledge and practice;
- 91% of PRTs and 97% of mentors felt that working collegially had allowed the PRT to see what good professional practice looks like and had focussed reflection on student learning;
- 88% of PRTs were satisfied with the mentoring they received;
- 84% of PRTs and 90% of mentors agreed that the standards had highlighted areas for professional learning and had led to the growth of professional practice and knowledge;
- 84% of PRTs and 91% of mentors thought the standards were valid and legitimate statements about teaching and learning; and
- 95% of PRTs reported that being involved with the Institute’s *Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program* had helped them improve their professional knowledge and skills.

In addressing the issues of teacher retention in the first years of teaching, PRTs report that being involved with the Institute’s *Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program* has increased the likelihood they will stay in the professional of teaching as illustrated in Table 4. This has increased 12% in positive responses since 2007.

Teachers indicating that involvement in the <i>Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program</i> has increased the likelihood they will stay in the professional of teaching				
Year	2007	2008	2009	2010
% agree	62	68	69	74

Table 4: Influence of the *Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program* on teacher retention

The success of the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program has been largely due to the ability of the Institute to require all beginning teachers to meet standards using a common evidence-based process that supports collegial and reflective practice and acknowledges different teaching contexts. Support from all Victorian school sectors and key stakeholders has been central to the success of this program and development of programs such as the Performance and Development Culture model in government and Catholic schools have complemented the Institute’s aims. While the process to evidence practice for full registration is sited in schools and requires a recommendation from a panel of peers, the ability of the Institute to quality assure the process and ensure consistency across all school sectors and



workplaces is its strength. Evaluation has consistently emphasised that the greater the support from school leadership for the induction and mentoring of beginning teachers, the greater the development of professional benefits to these teachers.

One of the findings of recent evaluations has been the perception of less school support for the induction of beginning teachers who are mature age and/or had a career prior to teaching. They are indicating that they require the same level of mentoring and induction as their younger colleagues who have little work experience. As the number of these teachers continues to increase, the workforce strategies related to their retention need to address this issue.

## CONCLUSION

The Victorian Institute of Teaching believes that teacher regulatory authorities in Australia play a unique and important role in the development of the schools workforce. Regulation through teacher registration and certification provides consistent standards of expectation for the qualifications, suitability to teach and professional practice of teachers. This ensures public confidence in the profession. It also frees school principals and employers from responsibility for these aspects of school employment and provides benchmarks and standards that are common and accepted across the teaching sector. This supports equity in education for all students.

The establishment of the Australian Institute of School Teaching and Leadership (AITSL) and its remit to address the quality teaching agenda, has advanced work by the Australasian Teacher Regulatory Authorities (ATRA) to develop consistencies in registration policy and practice that develop teachers of quality nationally. Individual school principals and State and Territory school sector authorities do not have the ability to develop this level of consistency and expectation for all teachers across the nation. However, the teacher regulatory authorities have the potential to bridge the national priorities articulated through AITSL and the work that occurs in schools by teachers in Australia. It is partnerships such as these that will provide the best opportunity for the school teacher workforce to grow and develop professionally and to be recognised publically.