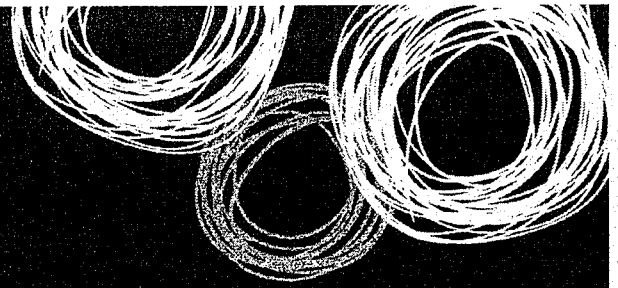


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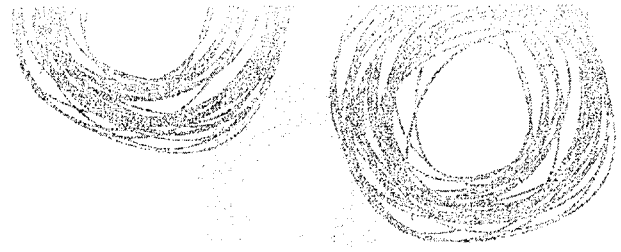


Queensland Department of Education and Training

Submission to the
Productivity Commission Issues Paper

Schools Workforce

August 2011



Background

The Department of Education and Training (DET) is the largest employer within Queensland, providing educational services to state school students through the auspices of *Education Queensland*.

Queensland's state schools vary in size and location and each have a complexity that is unique to their local community. They range from one-teacher schools to sites with more than 2500 students and 200 staff, from single or multi-age classes to teaching across a cluster of schools. All are co-educational and operate in partnership with their community. 70 per cent of all of Queensland's school age students attend a state school, resulting in approximately 490 000 students attending a state school in 2011.

At the commencement of the 2011 school year there were approximately 39 000 teachers employed in the 1 340 state school sites across Queensland, including 39 identified indigenous community schools. Approximately 850 of these sites are in regional, rural or remote locations and include 59 one-teacher schools.

In Queensland, the school workforce consists of not only teachers, but a range of non-teaching professionals, such as Speech Language Therapists, Physiotherapists and Occupational Therapists, Guidance Officers, teachers supporting students with special needs and school based support staff such as Assistant and Community teachers, teacher aides, administrative staff and Schools Officers (Grounds and Facilities).

The following provides a summary of the key characteristics of the Department's teaching workforce.

- As at June 2010 DET employed 39,181 full-time equivalent (FTE) school teachers of which 83.6 per cent were permanent employees.
- 51.3 per cent were employed in primary schools, 34.3 per cent in secondary schools, 9.7 per cent in special education, 3.1 per cent in student support roles and 1.6 per cent working across more than one sector.
- On average the school teacher workforce has grown 1.8 per cent per annum since 2006.
- The average age of school teachers in Queensland state schools is 42 years.
- 28.7 per cent of all school teachers in Queensland state schools have a postgraduate qualification.
- Of those school teachers teaching in their specialist area 98.5% in primary and 95.4% in secondary are either qualified or have five or more years experience in the specialist area.
- There were 4104 teacher education graduates from Queensland universities in 2009 and of these 2760 (65 per cent) applied for work with the department as a school teacher and by May, 68% of these had been appointed in some capacity.
- 88.5% of all 2009 Queensland primary graduates applied to work in the Department as a school teacher.

Given the vast spread and geographical diversity of Queensland schools, the Department faces some supply challenges for some rural, remote and regional locations, especially in specialist teaching



subject areas such as Mathematics B and C, Industrial Technology and Design (Manual Arts), Physics, Chemistry, Senior English, History, Geography, Special Education and some languages.

In response to these challenges, the Department implements a range of targeted attraction and retention strategies that respond to short, medium and long term workforce needs. Strategies such as promoting service in non-metropolitan areas, providing improved incentives for teachers to work in non-preferred locations and the Department's refreshed approach to marketing itself to aspiring teachers through the *Teach Team: Education Queensland Teaching Ambassadors* initiative and the Make a difference - Teach communication and marketing campaigns.

The Department's workforce data indicates more than 90 per cent of teachers who commenced teaching over the past five years remain in teaching. The rate of retention of teachers in Queensland state schools across all sectors remains high at approximately 95.8 per cent. The rate for primary teachers is higher at approximately 96.3 per cent with some spikes occurring in years when Career Change initiatives, through which primary teachers wishing to pursue alternative careers were supported to leave the profession and were replaced by graduates, were implemented.

Response

This submission has been prepared by DET in the context of its role in overseeing state schooling provision. It is expected that the non government schooling sectors will make individual submissions should this inquiry be of interest.

DET welcomes the Productivity Commission's interest in matters relating to the supply, demand and quality of the workforce in schools.

About the sector

With regard to matters raised in relation to salient features and trends within the teaching workforce within the *Schools Workforce - Productivity Commission Issues Paper (June 2011)*, DET notes:

- *incidence of under and oversupply*: the description is accurate for Queensland
- *rising age profile*: Queensland has a relatively young teaching workforce, however in certain sectors the potential impacts of an ageing workforce are being closely monitored (eg school leadership, cleaners)
- *increasing portion of teaching staff positions filled by women*: there is evidence that this trend is continuing and that the supply chain demographics are consistent with that of the existing workforce
- *shift in employment to the non-government sector*: this would seem to be consistent with student enrolment patterns
- *relatively uniform staffing mixes*: staffing matters are influenced by industrial agreements negotiated with employee unions, although DET has been trialling more flexible approaches in some schools
- *shifting community expectations of the teaching workforce*: DET endorses the observations



Workforce issues

There were 4104 teacher education graduates from Queensland universities in 2009, and of these 2760 (65 per cent) applied for work with the Department as a school teacher and by May 2010 68 per cent of these had been appointed in some capacity.

Currently, the overall number of teaching graduates exceeds the Department's requirements for staffing state schools, yet for a number of years the graduate supply has not aligned with demand in specific specialist teaching areas.

The Department has concerns that this imbalance will grow as a result of the *Commonwealth Higher Education Support Amendment (Demand Driven Funding System and Other Measures) Bill 2011*, through which from 2012 the Commonwealth will no longer specify how many undergraduate student places it will fund public universities to provide. The Government will provide its funding contribution for every domestic student enrolled in an undergraduate course of study.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website notes:

Under the demand driven funding system, public universities will decide how many places they will offer and in which disciplines. Universities will be able to make decisions about these matters based on student demand and the needs of employers.¹

The Department contends that – given the needs of the Department as the largest employer of current graduate teachers does not appear to be currently given the priority it seeks – under the new model the imbalance has the potential to grow, at significant cost to both the State as an employer and the Commonwealth as an investor in skill development, as well a continuing to impact on those who study to gain a qualification but will be unable to gain employment within the sector.

In February 2010, the Queensland Government released an Education Green Paper *A Flying Start for Queensland Children*. The Green Paper proposed a review of the quality of teacher preparation provided by Queensland teacher education institutions and the support given to beginning teachers. The Green Paper acknowledged that there needed to be a focus on providing new teachers with a strong grounding in subject knowledge and effective teaching practice, particularly in supporting students with special needs and ensuring classroom discipline through effective behaviour management.

In April 2010, the Government appointed Professor Brian Caldwell and Mr David Sutton to undertake the Review. Professor Caldwell and Mr Sutton have found that Queensland has high standards of teacher preparation and current teacher education programs provide sound theoretical knowledge. However, beginning teachers also need practical skills to apply that knowledge to a wide range of student needs and classroom situations.

The *Review of teacher education and school induction* reports make recommendations about: the content of preparation programs; the practical experience trainee teachers receive; the level and duration of pre-service programs; admissions requirements; school and teacher education institution

¹ <http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Resources/Pages/FundingUndergradStudent.aspx>



partnerships; induction to the profession and peer mentoring; and evaluating the preparedness of graduates for professional practice.

The Queensland Government supports and will immediately implement 24 recommendations relating to good practice and program content in six key areas: Indigenous education, special needs, behaviour management, early childhood education, parental education and professional standards.

Adoption of these recommendations is supported by teacher education institutions and the Queensland College of Teachers. The recommendations include a renewed focus on behaviour management and parental engagement, and requirements for aspiring teachers to be supported to acquire practical skills. The Government's response and comments about the 24 recommendations are available at <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/higher-education/resources/govt-reponse-review-teacher-education-school-induction.pdf>

Parallel to this work, through the *Improving Teacher Quality* National Partnership all jurisdictions have committed to exploring the best ways to prepare pre-service teachers for the classroom, including improving the professional experience aspect to programs. DET is active in the national groups working on these reforms and is partnering with institutions to deliver reforms in this area. In particular, all jurisdictions are working to develop a national teaching workforce dataset that can be used as the basis for a national approach to workforce planning in the sector.

This is one of three *Smarter Schools* National Partnerships through which a number of approaches are being piloted or implemented that address perceived inflexibilities in terms of workforce allocation and mix, as well as the role of school leadership and school governance.

In addition, Queensland's education system has unique demographic features including a relatively high number of Indigenous students (3.5 percent) and students in remote areas (4.1 percent). It is essential that graduates seeking employment as a teacher in Queensland are well-prepared and have undertaken a pre-service teacher education program that includes a significant focus on working with Indigenous students and communities and in rural and remote school settings.

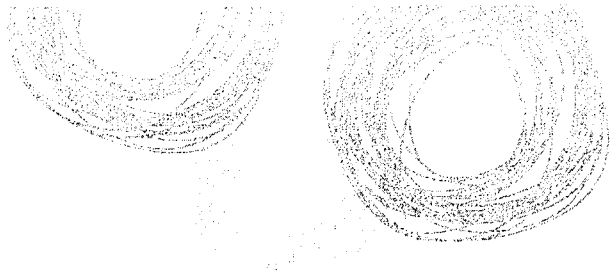
Recent policy developments

The Department has been active in engaging with, and supporting, the reform initiatives driven through COAG, including Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), however holds concerns that AITSL's degree of responsiveness and relevance to jurisdictions will diminish should representation on the AITSL Board be revised too narrowly and unless the Institute ensure its communication mechanisms with jurisdictions remain open and influential.

The National Partnership Agreements have been enormously successful instruments in supporting Queensland to reform agreed areas of schooling to drive improved performance, and will continue to work to drive further reforms, however DET does hold concerns about programs announced without full consultation or without reference to a sound evidence base, such as teacher performance pay.

Whilst significant reform has occurred nationally through the National Partnerships to drive improvements to the quality of teaching in schools, clearly many jurisdictions – especially those servicing significant rural and remote populations – would benefit from sustained investment and partnering to develop national responses to matters such as:

- raising the status of teaching



- promoting service to rural and remote communities
- encouraging motivated and suitable applicants to work in remote Indigenous communities.

With regard to the latter, DET acknowledges the support of the Commonwealth for the multi-jurisdictional ambition of the National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools (NARIS), which is dedicated to improving the education and life outcomes of students in remote locations in Australia and includes joint recruitment, common orientation and induction, and shared professional development strategies for teachers and school leaders in remote regions.

Additionally, the outcomes of the current *Review of Funding for Schooling* are eagerly awaited, as a number of stakeholders have identified the current system as the source of a number workforce issues, flowing from the incentivisation of private schools when workforce allocations are generally enrolment-driven.

Balancing supply and demand

Current and future potential workforce shortages are most likely in rural and remote locations. There would be benefit in policy actions that address cost-of-living and isolation issues in these locations. Consideration of benefits applied through the taxation system and provision of high speed internet services are examples of where Commonwealth policy can support improved staff attraction. Such approaches may also have benefit in supporting attraction to areas such as the Central Queensland coal basin where the demand for workers for the mining industry continues to impact on the retention of qualified teachers and support staff.

An oversupply of workers in any category can be advantageous to an employer. It is useful to have access to a large pool of qualified staff that can be deployed for temporary and casual vacancies which arise daily. However, DET acknowledges both the human and financial cost when large numbers of primary teaching graduates fail to gain adequate employment. As funding for university places remains the responsibility of the Commonwealth, DET continues to use existing mechanisms to lobby for policy change with minimal success.

Queensland has well-established workforce data systems and is working with other jurisdictions to establish a national teaching workforce dataset. DET has a dedicated workforce planning team that works closely with regional staffing teams and other key stakeholders.

Training and professional development

DET has a well-established professional development strategy, supported by processes and standards frameworks, in all schools.

DET's concerns relating to the preparation of teaching graduates are outlined previously in this document.

Remuneration and performance evaluation

Through DEEWR, the Commonwealth is seeking jurisdictional endorsement of *Rewarding Great Teachers* – a new program designed to provide additional remuneration to teachers assessed against a yet-to-be-developed set of performance criteria.