Productivity Commission Education and Training Workforce Study

# Schools Workforce: Issues Paper June 2011

Submission from the **Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations**

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# 1. Executive Summary

Teachers play a critical role in shaping the lives of our children and great teachers have a profoundly positive and lasting impact on their students. For this reason, the Australian Government is committed to teacher quality and to reforms that support, develop and enhance the quality of Australia's education workforce and ultimately deliver better outcomes for students.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Australian Government welcome the Productivity Commission's review of Australia's schools workforce. As the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper (the 'Issues Paper') highlights, results from international assessments tell us that although Australian children are performing well against international benchmarks, there is considerable variation across the nation.

The Government is responding to this evidence primarily through reforms targeted at improving teacher quality, as evidence shows that teacher quality has the single greatest impact on student engagement and performance.

Through the *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality (TQNP[1])*, the Australian Government has made a record investment of $550 million over five years (2008-09 to 2012-2013) towards sustained improvement in teacher quality across the teaching 'life cycle'. The TQNP has focussed the efforts of all governments on national reforms linked to:

- **attracting the best entrants** through reforms that provide more flexible pathways into teaching and enhance public perceptions of the professionalism of teaching;

- driving national consistency and quality in processes and approaches to **teacher training and development**. Under the TQNP, the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) has developed *National Professional Standards for Teachers*[2] and is developing a national framework to ensure that teachers and leaders have the essential skills and knowledge; and

- **retaining high quality teachers** through providing incentives that recognise high performing teachers and reward them for the value they bring to the classroom.

As well as progressing national reforms, the Government is focussed on ensuring that its efforts and resources are directed to where there is the greatest need for improvement and the greatest potential to achieve. This is why the Government, through DEEWR, is working directly to improve the evidence base for strategic policy development by developing nationally consistent and robust schools workforce data.

The Government has also made record investments to improve educational outcomes for disadvantaged students, recognising the positive impact of quality teaching on educational

[1] Council of Australian Governments (COAG), *National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality*. At: http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_improving_teacher_quality.pdf

[2] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *National Professional Standards for Teachers February 2011*. At: http://www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au/Static/docs/aitsl_national_professional_standards_for_teachers_240611.pdf

outcomes. The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan*[3] is one example of how the Government is prompting the critical role of quality teaching in improving outcomes for Indigenous students.

In the future, there remain key challenges for our schools education workforce that require sustained attention and a strong commitment to improvement from all governments.

An issue of particular relevance for the Commonwealth is the challenge of balancing the supply of teachers with the demand from the education sector. As noted in the Issues Paper, a number of states and territories have an oversupply of primary trained teachers and an undersupply of secondary teachers, particularly in disciplines such as maths and science. Under the *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*[4] *agenda*, the Australian Government is building a new relationship between governments and educators based on mutual respect, trust and shared goals that will promote a better balance between supply and demand.

A number of initiatives announced as part of the 2010 Federal Election, commit the Government to further address the challenges of attracting and training new teachers and retaining a quality education workforce. The *Teach Next* and *Teach Remote* initiatives are two examples of approaches that the Government is taking to provide more flexible pathways into teaching and to attract high quality teachers to areas where they are really needed.

DEEWR is currently working closely with state and territory governments to progress the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative. This reform will deliver local empowerment to more schools to enable them to better respond to local school community needs, including more control over their staffing profile. Two other Election Commitments*, Rewards tor Great Teachers* and *Rewards to School Improvement*, aim to recognise quality teaching and schools showing improvement.

Facing up to the challenges of building and maintaining a quality workforce for Australian schools requires ongoing commitment and collaboration from all governments. The Australian Government is working to make the investments in schools today that will pay dividends in decades to come through higher participation, stronger productivity, increased economic growth and the achievement of individual aspiration and potential.

## 2. The importance of workforce reforms

### 2.1 Student outcomes

DEEWR supports the assertion in the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper that Australian children are performing relatively well compared to their OECD peers in reading, writing and mathematics. Australian students performed well in PISA 2009 with Australia's mean scores in all three domains significantly higher than the OECD Average. Table 1 shows student achievement by country / economy grouped with countries of similar performance.

[3] Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA), *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Action Plan*. At: http://www.mceetya.edu.au/verve/_resources/A10-0945_IEAP_web_version_final2.pdf

[4] Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System.* At http://www.deewr.gov.au/HigherEducation/Documents/TransformingAusHigherED.pdf

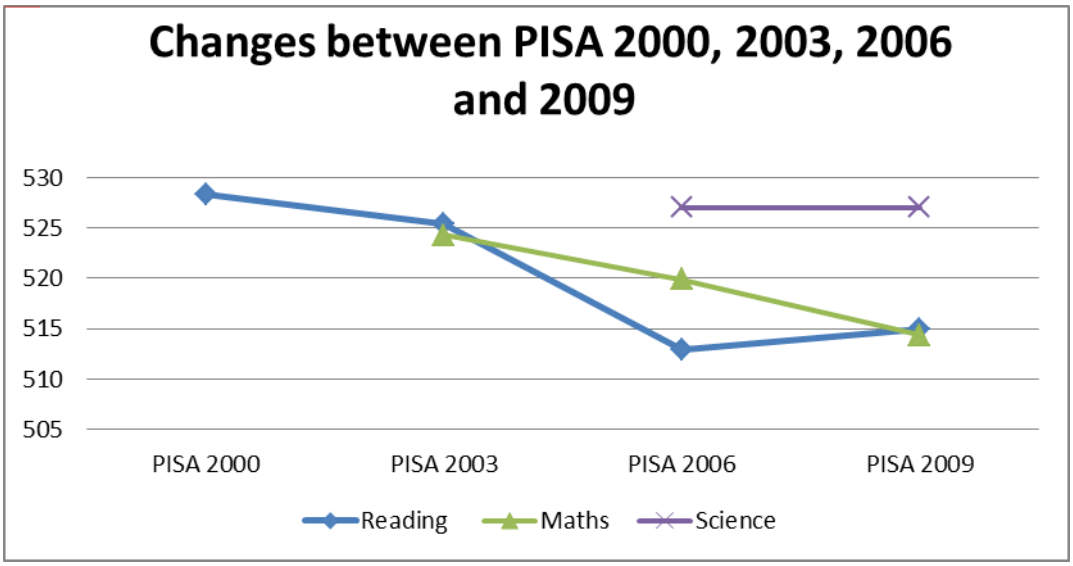
Table 1 **Mean scores in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy, PISA 2009**

| *Assessment domain* | *Country / Economy* | *International comparison* |
|---|---|---|
| **Reading Literacy** | Shanghai – China 556 | *Mean score significantly higher than* |
| OECD Average 493 | Korea 539 | *Australia* |
| | Finland 536 | |
| | +3 countries / economies | |
| | New Zealand 521 | *Not significantly different from* |
| | Japan 520 | *Australia* |
| | **Australia 515** | |
| | Netherlands 508 | |
| | Belgium 506 | *Significantly lower than Australia* |
| | +37 countries / economies | |
| **Mathematical Literacy** | Shanghai – China 600 | *Significantly higher than Australia* |
| OECD Average 496 | Singapore 562 | |
| | Hong Kong – China 555 | |
| | +9 countries / economies | |
| | New Zealand 519 | *Not significantly different from* |
| | Belgium 515 | *Australia* |
| | **Australia 514** | |
| | Germany 513 | |
| | Estonia 512 | |
| | Iceland 507 | *Significantly lower than Australia* |
| | +33 countries / economies | |
| **Scientific Literacy** | Shanghai – China 575 | *Significantly higher than Australia* |
| OECD Average 501 | Finland 554 | |
| | Hong Kong – China 549 | |
| | +3 countries / economies | |
| | New Zealand 532 | *Not significantly different from* |
| | Canada 529 | *Australia* |
| | Estonia 528 | |
| | **Australia 527** | |
| | +4 countries / economies | |
| | Switzerland 517 | *Significantly lower than Australia* |
| | +35 countries / economies | |

**Note:** Partner economy results (such as for Shanghai – China) are not for comparison with country results. However, Shanghai – China has been included in the table above to provide a benchmark of high performance.

Since the last assessment cycle in 2006 Australia's performance in science literacy has remained steady and Australia has arrested the decline in reading performance. However, Australia's performance in mathematical literacy has continued to decline slightly from previous high levels (Table 2).

Table 2 **Mean scores in reading, mathematical and scientific literacy,**




These results, taken together with the findings reported in the Issues Paper, suggest that there is room for improvement in student outcomes and a need for reform, not only to maintain high performance, but also to reduce the risk of decline in student performance over the long term.

The Australian Government is making a significant investment in a range of national reforms and initiatives to improve the quality of Australian school education. The Government believes that one of the most effective ways to achieve this outcome is through initiatives that recognise the relationship between teacher quality and student performance.

## 2.2 Workforce issues

The Australian Government is committed to improving the quality of teaching and school leadership in Australian schools because it recognises that teachers, along with school leaders, are the primary school-based drivers to improving student outcomes.

Recognising that the workforce arrangements for school teachers and leaders are the direct responsibility of state and territory government and non-government education authorities, the Australian Government is working with them through the *Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements*[5] and other separate initiates to promote nationally consistent and robust approaches and national teaching standards. Ultimately, these reforms are designed to drive quality and improve public perceptions of the professionalism of teaching.

[5] COAG, *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy,* 2008/09. At http://smarterschools.gov.au/Pages/default.aspx; COAG, *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-Economic Status School Communities* 2008. At http://smarterschools.gov.au/nationalpartnerships/Documents/SSNatPartnerAgreem.pdf; COAG, *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* (footnote 1 refers).

Under the *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* (TQNP), the Australian Government and states and territories are taking an approach that targets critical points in the teacher 'lifecycle' relating to:

- **attracting** the best entrants to teaching, including mid-career entrants to the workforce and those returning to the profession;
- **training** them through a world-class pre-service education system;
- **placing and supporting** quality teachers and leaders in schools where they are needed most;
- **developing** their skills and knowledge throughout their careers; and
- **retaining** quality teachers and leaders in our schools and rewarding them for the value they bring to the classroom/student achievement.

The focus on these critical points reflect a range of issues and shared concerns about current workforce arrangements and the quality of the teaching workforce more broadly.

**Challenges and Concerns**

*Attracting the best entrants to teaching*

There is considerable debate around the quality of entrants into teacher education and their suitability for a teaching career. As noted by the *2007 House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education*[6], a particular concern has been the selection criteria for entry into teacher education, such as whether the relatively low cut-offs, compared to other fields of study, ensures that prospective teachers will be of sufficient academic quality, or whether other attributes considered important for teaching are also adequately taken into account.

More broadly, there is concern as to whether the profession's low level of appeal as a career (particularly in a strong labour market), and its poor pay dispersion in comparison to other occupations, lead to potentially good or high quality candidates not seriously considering teaching as a career. A 2006 synthesis of attitudinal research (prepared by the former Department of Education Science and Training[7]) found that while teacher remuneration, conditions and workload are not significant factors for those who actually enter teaching (they do so mainly for intrinsic factors such as wanting to teach and work with children and to make a difference), they are important factors for those who decide not to pursue teaching.

*Teacher training*

There is similar concern as to what is seen as the variable quality of initial teacher education, as indicated by survey data of teachers and school principals. *Staff in Australia's Schools* (SiAS) 2007[8], an Australian Government funded survey of teachers and school leaders, found that:

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[6] House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Education, *Top of the Class, Report on the Inquiry into Teacher Education,* 2007. At http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/evt/teachereduc/report/fullreport.pdf

[7] Department of Education Science and Training (DEST) *Attitudes to teaching as a career – a synthesis of attitudinal research*, 2006. At http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/150309C9-CDCE-46D3-9D76 00C8C14F2125/10732/SynthesisofDESTattitudinalResearchTeaching.pdf

[8] Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), *Staff in Australia's Schools 2007.* At http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Documents/SiASSurveyDataReport2007.pdf

- a majority of early career teachers considered that their pre-service teacher education was helpful or very helpful in only 4 (primary) or 6 (secondary) areas out of 14 specified areas of teaching; and
- a majority of school principals considered that recent teacher graduates were well prepared or very well prepared in only 2 (primary) or 6 (secondary) areas out of 10 specified areas of teaching.

It should be noted that, at the time of writing this submission, the *2010 Staff in Australia's Schools* (SiAS) survey report was being finalised. The report will provide an overview of the results obtained from the SiAS 2010 survey commissioned by DEEWR and is anticipated to be made available publicly in late 2011. Once the results are finalised, DEEWR will provide the final report to the Productivity Commission.

Evidence about the effectiveness of teacher training can also be obtained from results of the *OECD Teaching and Learning Survey* (TALIS) 2008[9]. This survey found that principals of just over a third of Australian teachers considered that lack of pedagogical preparation of their teachers hindered student instruction to some extent or a lot.

The 2007 House of Representatives *Inquiry into Teacher Education* acknowledged that Australian teachers achieve excellent learning outcomes in schools and that teacher education courses must share some part of the credit for this, but that it was important to continue to strengthen all the components that contribute to quality schooling, including teacher education.

*Retaining quality teachers*

There has been ongoing concern with teacher shortages, and ensuring that schools have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers, for at least the past decade. A number of national reports produced for the former Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA)[10] during this period found that while there has been no overall (aggregate) shortage of teachers, there have been ongoing shortages in certain subject areas, particularly mathematics and science, as well as more broadly in rural and remote areas. These findings have been broadly confirmed by data provided in more recent reports, such as *SiAS 2007*, those published by some states, and in national skill shortage assessments (such as that produced by Skills Australia, as part of its Skilled Occupations List).

A particular concern has been the age profile of the teaching workforce. *SiAS 2007* data, for example, indicates that around a third of teachers were aged 51 years or more, and around 10 per cent of teachers reported that they intended to leave teaching before retirement, with another third unsure. While this continues to be an important issue for education authorities to address, there has been no definitive evidence so far that it has caused a significant exodus from the teaching workforce.

Shortages of qualified teachers can potentially undermine the quality of student instruction, as identified by Australian principals in *TALIS 2008*. They also place considerable pressure on principals to adopt unsatisfactory strategies, such as reported in *SiAS 2007*, of using teachers outside their field of expertise or to reduce the curriculum areas offered to students due to insufficient staff.

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[9] Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), *Creating effective teaching and learning environments - first results from TALIS*, Paris, 2009.

[10] Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), *Demand and supply of primary and secondary school teachers in Australia, 2001, 2003,2004*. At http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/mceecdya/publications,11582.html

*Recognising and rewarding great teachers*

It is generally accepted across the education community that the retention and recognition of quality teachers and school leaders needs to be improved. The current pay systems available to teachers fall short of rewarding individual effort and performance and do not encourage the best teachers to remain in the classroom. This means that many experienced teachers are tempted to move to leadership positions to increase their earnings or leave teaching permanently rather than staying in the classroom where they can make the biggest difference to students.

The Grattan Institute reports[11] that in respect to Australian teachers:

- 91 per cent felt that the most effective teachers in their schools did not receive the greatest recognition;
- 92 per cent thought they would receive no recognition in their school if they improved the quality of their teaching; and
- 83 per cent of teachers report that the evaluation of their work has no impact on the likelihood of their career advancement.

Further evidence from the *OECD's 2010 Education at a Glance*[12] publication highlights the limited spread of pay available for many teachers. In Australia, a teacher at the top of the salary scale earns 1.39 times the salary of a teacher at the beginning of their career. This compares to the OECD average where a teacher at the top of the top of the scale earns 1.71 the salary of a teacher at the bottom of the scale.

Performance based pay systems are now common in professions across the country but generally there are no financial returns to reflect ability or skill in teaching, with a rigid pay scale structure, based on years of experience, that limits the ability to reward for greater effort in the classroom. This means the most able teachers are paid the same salary as the least able.

*Developing and supporting the schools workforce*

There is also concern about the variable quality of professional learning for teachers and school leaders and the impact this has on the ongoing development of the schools workforce.

Issues reported by the *2007 House of Representatives Inquiry into Teacher Education* included:

- a decline in the number of teachers interested in postgraduate study and in the amount of professional development undertaken;
- the ad-hoc nature of its provision and the need for a more coordinated approach so that it is better matched to the needs of particular schools and districts;
- the need to involve universities more and to recognise the role of professional associations as providers; and the difficulties in accessing on-going professional learning for teachers in rural and remote areas.

Survey data from *TALIS 2008* found that compared to other countries, Australian teachers had one of the highest participation rates in professional development, but had one of the lowest levels of intensity (i.e. average number of days undertaken). The results also indicated a degree of unmet demand for professional development, suggesting that teachers were interested in developing their skills but were not provided with the opportunities. The TALIS

[11] Grattan Institute, What Teachers Want: Better Teacher Management: Dr Ben Jensen, 2010. At http://www.grattan.edu.au/publications/033_report_what_teachers_want.pdf
[12] OECD, *Education at a Glance*, Paris, 2009.

found that just over half of Australian teachers wanted more professional development than they received.

These issues are currently being addressed through a series of major reforms and initiatives involving the Australian Government and states and territories. Details on these are provided in Section 3.

# 3. The Government's response - Recent Policy Developments

The Australian Government is committed to improving the quality of the Australian teaching workforce through the *TQNP.* The *TQNP* involves a range of significant reforms targeting critical points in the teacher 'lifecycle' to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and leaders in our schools and classrooms. Funding under the *TQNP* consists of $550 million over five years (2008-09 to 2012-13). This includes up to $444 million to be paid directly to states and territories in facilitation and reward funding and $106 million retained by the Australian Government to support joint national activity and principal professional development.

The Australian Government has focused on building a national architecture to underpin teacher quality reform through the establishment of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). AITSL was created by the Commonwealth in 2010 on behalf of the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) and is funded solely by the Australian Government under the *TQNP*.

AITSL was established as the key driver of the Australian Government's reform agenda for schools, particularly those elements of the *TQNP* that will benefit from national coordination, and are the foundations of reform for jurisdictions. These include:

- rigorous national professional standards for teachers and school leaders
- fostering and driving high quality professional development for teachers and school leaders; and
- working collaboratively across jurisdictions and engaging with key professional bodies.

AITSL's Letter of Expectation from the Commonwealth Minister for School Education (on behalf of MCEECDYA) set an ambitious agenda for school reform. During the first year of operation AITSL has advanced a range of initiatives aimed at promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership including developing the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*. The TQNP reforms (and AITSL's role in progressing these and other relevant initiatives) are set out below.

## 3.1 Quality Teaching Reforms and Initiatives

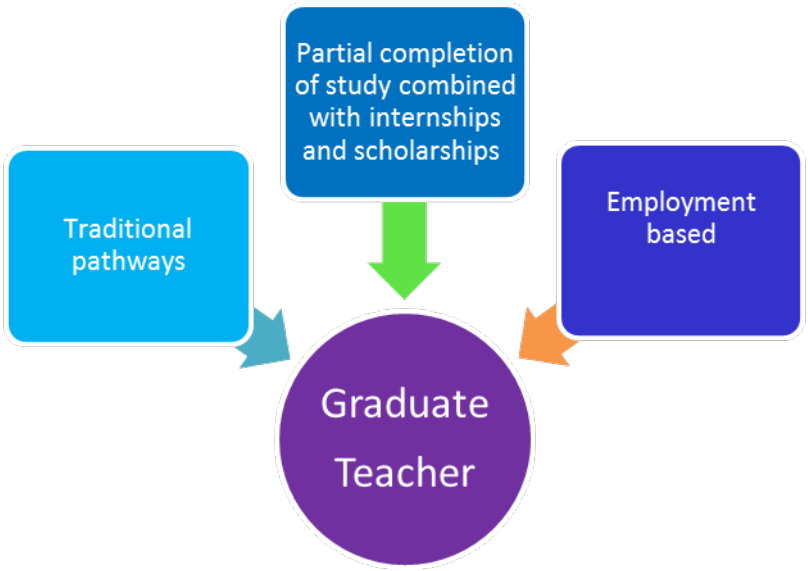
*Attracting the best entrants to teaching*

New pathways are being developed to expand traditional pathways into teaching by attracting people who may not have previously considered teaching - including top non-teaching graduates, career changers and Indigenous people.

Raising entry requirements and implementing national accreditation and standards aim to ensure Australia's teaching workforce is highly qualified and meets the needs of employers. State and territory level reforms and initiatives such as the Queensland literacy, numeracy and science exit testing will continue to complement national level reforms in teacher education.

Through the *New Pathways into Teaching* reform, the *TQNP* aims to expand traditional pathways into teaching to broaden the teaching workforce and attract a more diverse range of

talented people into the profession. These measures are targeted to workforce needs with tailored solutions to local conditions.




The Australian Government is implementing the *Teach for Australia* initiative as a new pathway into teaching. Teach for Australia is an employment-based pathway into teaching for high-achieving non-teaching university graduates. The training commences with an initial intensive training component prior to a two-year placement in disadvantaged secondary schools, with a reduced teaching load whilst they continue studying towards their Postgraduate Diploma in Teaching. *Teach for Australia* champions a number of reform elements of the *TQNP* – the attraction of high quality graduates and training them via a new, accredited employment-based pathway into teaching.

The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) has been commissioned by the Australian Government to conduct a three-phased evaluation of the *Teach for Australia* program. The findings from the Phase 1[13] evaluation report show the following to be key strengths of the program:

- The use of a rigorous selection process for Associates that has successfully chosen high quality candidates with the necessary ability and personal attributes to succeed in the program;
- The quality of the Melbourne Graduate School of Education preparation program; and
- The provision of significant support to the Associates.

The key achievements for the *Teach for Australia* initiative have been breaking open new ways to obtain qualifications and attracting high achieving entrants into teaching.

Teacher training

The quality of beginning teachers and teacher education courses has been highlighted as an issue requiring attention in a significant number of education-focused inquiries and reports.

*National Consistency in Pre-service Teacher Education Course Accreditation* is a key reform under the *TQNP*, with the aim of improving the quality of entrants to the teacher workforce.

[13] Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), *Teach for Australia Pathway: Evaluation Report Phase 1 of 3 (April-July 2010)*, 2010. At http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Documents/EvaluationReport.pdf

MCEECDYA endorsed the first national standards and procedures for the accreditation of initial teacher education programs[14] developed by AITSL on 15 April 2011.

National course accreditation is an historic step in improving teacher quality in Australia. For the first time, programs preparing teachers will be assessed based on whether their graduates meet the Graduate Standard under the *National Professional Standards for Teachers*.

Many of the world's best performing education systems draw their teachers from the ranks of the highest performing school students (Closing the Talent Gap: Attracting and Retaining Top-Third Graduates to Careers in Teaching , McKinsey & Company, 2010). The national approach to accreditation of initial teacher education takes Australia in this direction by committing that entrants to initial teacher education will have literacy and numeracy levels equivalent to the top 30 per cent of the population.

A better alignment of teacher education enrolments with teacher workforce needs will assist in addressing the critical problem of number of practicum placements and suitable practicum supervisors. There is a continual need to encourage innovation and share effective practice in initial teacher education to ensure teachers are prepared for the diversity of students in Australian classrooms, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and students with special needs.

The *School Centres for Teacher Education Excellence* under the *TQNP* reform aims to address this and is designed to support schools to provide specialist professional experience for pre-service teachers. In 2010, there were 50 Centres for Excellence operating across Australia in all school sectors. While models vary across Australia there are key features across jurisdictions. Centres for Excellence are linked with university teaching faculties and provide extended practicum so that pre-service teachers can observe high quality teaching first-hand and gain practical experience under close supervision. Immersing pre-service teachers in supportive learning environments develops quality teachers who are equipped for the real world of teaching.

The *TQNP* reform *Quality Placements for the Practical Component of Teacher Education Courses* involves other specific measures to support beginning teachers and is closely linked to *School Centres for Teacher Education Excellence.* This reform aims to achieve a stronger linkage between the practicum and the theoretical components of beginning teacher training and to promote partnerships between governments, universities, employing authorities and schools.

*Retaining quality teachers and recognising and rewarding great teachers*

Under the reward element of the *TQNP* there are two reform areas of *Improved Pay Dispersion to Reward Quality Teaching* and *Improved Reward Structures for Teachers and Leaders who Work in Disadvantaged Indigenous, Rural/Remote and Hard-to-Staff Schools*. These reforms are being implemented in several jurisdictions to improve ways to recognise and reward excellent teachers, to keep them in the profession and in schools where they are most needed and to build public respect for the teaching profession.

[14] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures*, July 2011. At http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/_resources/NationalProfessionalStandardForPrincipals_July25.pdf

In addition, through the *TQNP* jurisdictions will be rewarded for achievement against the reforms *Improved In-School Support for Teachers and School Leaders who Work in Disadvantaged Indigenous, Rural/Remote and Hard-to-Staff Schools* and *Increased School-Based Decision-Making about Recruitment, Staffing Mix and Budget*. These initiatives are also aimed at encouraging quality teachers into the schools where they are needed most and giving school leaders greater flexibility in the management of their schools.

Another key component of the *TQNP* is the reform *National Consistency in the Registration of Teachers*. The new nationally consistent system for teacher registration will enable the mobility of teachers, at all levels, between jurisdictions; identify teacher quality in a comparable manner nation-wide; enhance confidence in the quality and consistency of teaching and school leadership and the impact teaching has on student outcomes; and promote teaching as a quality profession. AITSL is currently working with the states and territories and other key stakeholders to finalise the registration system for implementation from 2013.

*Developing and supporting the schools workforce*

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* (the Standards) are the foundation of the *TQNP* and work to increase public confidence in the professionalism of teachers by providing a nationally agreed quality assurance mechanism that will ensure Australian teachers have the required competencies to be effective educators. AITSL's work to develop the Standards was recently cited by the OECD as a major policy development for improving school outcomes.[15]

The Standards, endorsed by all Education Ministers in December 2010, describe the professional knowledge, practice and engagement expected of teachers at four levels (Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead). The Standards underpin all efforts at improving the quality of teaching at the national level

Minister's also recently endorsed Australia's first *National Professional Standard for Principals*[16]*.* The Principal Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. School leadership is a key element of the *TQNP* and jurisdictions are delivering strategies to provide world leading professional development and support to school principals, to help them improve student results through better managing their schools at the local level. These strategies are designed to target the specific professional development needs for principals and school leaders and focus on providing them with the tools and professional development to ensure a school improvement culture is pursued in Australia's Schools. AITSL are also delivering this national flagship program.

## 3.2 Other current reforms and Initiatives

*Improving workforce data*

There is currently no nationally available and comparable data to enforce workforce planning across Australia. Although some states and territories collect their own data, the scope of the collections and the definitions underpinning the data vary greatly across jurisdictions. Consistent, high quality national data is needed to assess the characteristics of Australia's teaching workforce, to identify teacher shortages and surpluses, to understand future career intentions and to inform the ongoing implementation of the *TQNP* and other relevant policies.

[15] DEEWR, OECD, Review on Evaluation and Assessment Frameworks for Improving School Outcomes: Country Background for Australia, 2010, p.67.

[16] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *National Professional Standards for Principals July 2011*. At: http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/_resources/NationalProfessionalStandardForPrincipals_July25.pdf

Under the *TQNP*, the Australian Government is commissioning the establishment and collection of a *National Teaching Workforce Dataset* and a *Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study*. These projects are overseen by the Australian Education Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs Senior Officials Committee (AEEYSOC) Teaching Workforce Dataset Working Group. Both reforms are intended to inform workforce planning, particularly at the national level, by facilitating an increased understanding of teacher shortages and the mechanisms needed to ensure schools have a sufficient number of appropriately qualified teachers.

Ernst and Young have been contracted to develop the initial version of the dataset, and provide a report analysing this data, by the first half of 2012. A procurement process for selecting a consultant to develop the *Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study* is planned to be released in the second half of 2011. Both projects are being managed by DEEWR.

The National Dataset project will involve the collection and storage of national data on Australia's workforce to facilitate analysis and reporting. It will generate reliable data to monitor workforce trends and to inform decision-making nationally on a range of workforce planning issues including current and projected supply and demand in the teaching workforce.
It will also reduce burden for many education providers through streamlining current processes for data collection and making data more accessible to stakeholders.

The project will involve the collection of a range of data about the Australian schools workforce including:

- demographics
- employment details
- qualifications and professional development
- supply of teachers
- demand for teachers
- exits from teaching.

It is intended that these data items will be collected where possible in relation to State and Territory, school sector (Government, Catholic and Independent), school level (primary and secondary), school geographic location (metropolitan, provincial and remote), and school socio-economic status.

The second project, the *Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study,* will track a select group, or cohort, of persons through a series of surveys over time, with the intention of identifying changes in specified characteristics of that cohort. The study will greatly improve understanding of employment decisions, career patterns and retention. It will also provide vital information regarding the impact of teacher education and experience on quality and on the supply and distribution of teachers at a national level.

The study will consist of two phases. Phase 1 will track individuals into, through and out of the Australian teaching workforce, providing a comprehensive picture of the teacher life cycle. This phase also presents a unique opportunity to obtain information on the relevance and effectiveness of teacher education for new teachers. Phase 2 is designed to broaden the scope and depth of Phase 1 through collecting data from other sources and increasing understanding of pre-service education and its impact on teacher supply and quality.

It is expected that results from this reform, particularly how it will have contributed to workforce planning, will be considered as part of a broader evaluation of the *Smarter Schools National Partnerships*.

**Improving outcomes for disadvantaged and vulnerable populations**

*Children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds*

As part of the Closing the Gap agenda, the Australian Government has committed to improving the lives of Indigenous Australians, and in particular, to providing a better future for Indigenous children. A primary focus for the Government is to ensure that all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are taught by high quality teachers in schools led by effective and supportive principals who are assisted by a world-class curriculum that incorporates Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives.

The *Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan (2010-2014)* (Action Plan) was launched by MCEECDYA on 9 June 2011. The *Action Plan* outlines how governments will work together to achieve the Closing the Gap targets for education. The Plan identifies national, systemic and local level actions in six priority domains, one of which is dedicated to leadership, quality teaching and workforce development.

The key commitment under this priority domain is the development of a *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Educator Workforce Strategy* to assist education providers to make progress towards an equitable ratio of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff to students. The Strategy will support aspiring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education leaders, include initiatives to attract more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians into the education workforce and bureaucracies and provide pathways through the workforce. The Strategy will also help to recognise and clarify the role of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education workers and support their professional development and career aspirations (Action Number 33).

The importance of every teacher understanding and respecting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island culture is deeply imbedded within AITSL's National *Professional Standards for Teachers* and *The National Professional Standard for Principals*. The Standards reinforce the importance of teachers at all levels having an understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages and promoting reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within their classrooms.

There are also a range of other initiatives being facilitated by the Government through DEEWR which focus specifically on improving outcomes for Indigenous children including:

- The *More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers* project will be led by Professor Peter Buckskin of the David Unaipon College of Indigenous Education and Research of the University of South Australia and will analyse the incentives and barriers to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people taking up teaching careers. The project has arisen from evidence that shows us that in 2008 only around one per cent of teaching staff in Australian schools were Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islanders compared to around five per cent of the total student population.

- *Teach Remote,* a collaborative $5 million initiative that is being undertaken between the Australian Government and the National Alliance for Remote Indigenous Schools (NARIS). The overall aim of the project is to build a high status, high quality, committed and competent workforce in remote Indigenous communities across Australia.

- Supporting the *What Works* and *Dare to Lead* projects over the last decade and the *Stronger Smarter Institute*. Teachers and school leaders have found these projects to be

invaluable, offering a range of resources and support to improve pedagogy and the way schools and classrooms are set up to meet the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

- Boosting the supply of teachers through the Australian Government's 2007 commitment to support an additional 200 teachers in the Northern Territory. An additional 200 teachers are to be recruited by the end of 2012 at a total cost of $107.8m. The Northern Territory Government has advised that this initiative was used as the basis for its recently implemented Remote Teacher Workforce, which is making real and positive changes to recruitment, placement and support for teachers in remote Northern Territory schools.

*Students with Disabilities*

It is estimated that school students with disabilities, including learning difficulties total between 15-20 per cent of the school population in Australia, with 89 per cent of these students attending mainstream schools. As a result, most teachers will have at least one student with disabilities in their classroom every school year.

The *National Disability Strategy*[17] is a collaborative commitment from all governments that sets out a ten year national plan for improving life outcomes for Australians with disability, their families and carers. It has identified four policy directions in relation to the education of students with disability:

- Strengthen the capability of all education providers to deliver inclusive high quality educational programs for people with all abilities from early childhood through adulthood.

- Focus on reducing the disparity in educational outcomes for people with a disability and others.

- Ensure that government reforms and initiatives for early childhood, education, training and skill development are responsive to the needs of people with disability.

- Improve pathways for students with disability from school to further education, employment and lifelong learning.

The *More Support for Students with Disabilities* initiative will also provide $200 million in funding to government and non-government education authorities for the 2012 and 2013 schools years to support their work with students with disability and/or learning difficulties. Funding will be used to build the capacity of schools and teachers to better meet the students' needs.

As well as supporting the capacity of the existing workforce to support students with disabilities, the Government is also focussed on making sure that teachers receive appropriate training prior to entering the workforce. Pre-service training in teaching students with disabilities has not previously been a required component of current teaching qualifications in all jurisdictions. There is also a widespread shortage of teachers with post graduate special education qualifications and research has found that only 10 per cent of teachers have received training in teaching methodologies for students with disabilities or learning difficulties. [18]

[17] COAG, *National Disability Strategy* 2010-2020, 2011. At http://www.coag.gov.au/coag_meeting_outcomes/2011-02-13/docs/national_disability_strategy_2010-2020.pdf

[18] Standard 1.6 - Report to Minister Peter Garrett AM MP, Minister for School Education, from the students with disabilities working group, "Strategies to Support the Education of Students with Disabilities in Australian Schools", December 2010, page 6.

In most jurisdictions teacher's aides are utilised to support students with disabilities within the classroom. Whilst it is generally recognised that teacher's aides play an important role in the support and integration of students with disabilities in schools, there are no required minimum qualifications or training needed for staff to be employed in this role. Consequently it is often the most complex students in a school are being supported by the most inexperienced staff.

The *National Professional Standards for Teachers* is aiming to address these issues through introducing a specific Standard[19] in relation to knowledge and expertise in teaching students with disability.

Low Socio-economic Status (SES) School Communities

The *Smarter Schools - Low Socio-economic Status (SES) School Communities National Partnership* aims to assist schools in disadvantaged communities to improve educational outcomes for their students.

The Low SES National Partnership is providing $1.5 billion in Australian Government funding to implement reforms progressively over seven years from 2008-09 to 2014-15. These are directed at school leadership, teaching, student learning and community engagement. Approximately 1,700 disadvantaged government and non-government schools (17 per cent of all Australian schools) are participating in the Low SES NP.

# 4. The Government's response – Future improvements

## 4.1 Balancing supply and demand

As the Productivity Commission's Issues Paper highlights, teacher shortages in certain subjects (like maths and science) and more broadly in rural and remote areas have been persistent for at least the past decade. It is widely considered that more attractive salary progression and working conditions offered by other professions, the workload and stress associated with classroom teaching, and a preference to live and work in metropolitan areas, are important factors in contributing to these shortages. It is also possible there may be additional factors, however there is little publicly available research on the extent to which teachers in shortage areas are fully utilised by education authorities.

ABS Census 2006 data suggests that there is an overall aggregate surplus, with the number persons qualified to teach in excess of those actually employed as teachers, while the number of teachers registered with state and territory registration authorities (which does not include NSW or the ACT) is equivalent to the number of employed teachers. Recent state reports indicate that there is a surplus of primary teachers in NSW and Victoria (although WA has projected a shortage of primary teachers in future years), and it is known that it can be difficult to obtain teaching employment in popular coastal regions.

These surpluses probably reflect individual preference to teach primary-aged rather than secondary-aged students, and may also reflect the perceived value of a teacher education qualification for the broader labour market outside of teaching. The resulting teacher pool is of potential benefit to employers but can cause considerable frustration for those unable to obtain teaching employment and may represent underutilised public funding where those with teaching qualifications do not utilise those qualifications.

[19] Strategies to support full participation of students with disabilities.

A number of states and territories have reported an over-supply of primary trained teachers, and an under-supply of secondary teachers, particularly for mathematics and sciences. The introduction of the higher education demand driven funding system from January 2012 means the Australian Government will no longer allocate a prescribed number of Commonwealth supported undergraduate places to each higher education provider, except in the case of courses of study in medicine. However, the Australian Government has mechanisms by which it can influence or if necessary directly control, the number of places offered in different courses.

In *Transforming Australia's Higher Education System*, the Australian Government announced a new relationship between Australian Government and educators based on mutual respect, trust and shared goals. Mission based Compacts were introduced as three-year agreements outlining the relationship between the Australian Government and individual universities. They provide a framework for jointly achieving the Australian Government's reform agenda and individual university's missions. Through Compacts, universities and the Australian Government will share responsibility to report publicly on performance against clear and measurable goals. To ensure sufficient places are offered in areas of skill shortages, the Australian Government can work with universities to include relevant goals in their Compacts.

The Australian Government undertook consultations with state and territory education agencies during the first round of Compacts with universities. The issue of over-supply of primary teaching graduates was raised as problematic during a number of these meetings.

While the Australian Government has a role to play by funding teacher training, it would like to promote direct interaction between the 'industry', with the main employer of teachers being the state and territory education agencies, and higher education providers in terms of workforce supply.

If the Australian Government believes there is an over-supply of graduates in a particular discipline, it is able to specify that a course is a *designated course of study*. This would enable the Australian Government to allocate student places for that course of study, effectively removing it from the demand driven arrangements and regulating its provision. The Australian Government would be able to specify the number of places offered and the region in which they are offered through allocations and funding agreements for each university. Designating a course of study results in it being regulated 'system wide'.

Currently, only non-research postgraduate and medical courses of study have been classified as designated courses of study.

The Australian Government may specify in funding agreements with universities either a minimum or maximum number of Commonwealth supported places in a particular course of study. These can be specified at the individual university level and do not have to be specified for all universities.

- Specifying a maximum number of places for one or more universities would act to prevent excessive course offerings in a particular area.
- Specifying a minimum number of places would act to ensure that a provider continued to offer a particular course or courses in a particular discipline area.

The Australian Government may also specify, the regions in which such places are to be provided if a university has multiple campuses. Again such a condition can be specified at the individual university level and does not have to be 'system wide' regulation.

The specification of a minimum or maximum number of places and the region in which such places are to be provided would be a condition of grant.

In addition to influencing the number of places offered by universities, the Australian Government can also influence student demand for particular courses. The government uses a variety of incentives to encourage students to undertake particular courses. These include:

- reductions in student contribution amounts for study in mathematics and sciences (together with compensation to universities for this lower amount); and
- HECS-HELP Benefits that reduce the compulsory HELP repayment amounts to encourage graduates in particular fields of study to work in that field.

Currently the Australian Government provides a HECS-HELP benefit for teachers, early childhood education teachers, and graduates from mathematics and sciences' courses who go on to work in related fields including teaching mathematics and sciences at the secondary school level.

These reforms to Australia's higher education system are complemented by the Government's work under the TQNP described in Chapter 3, where there are specific facilitation reforms designed to improve the quality and availability of workforce data. This data will help provide a foundation for analysis and help to promote more effective workforce planning.

## 4.2 Flexible pathways into teaching

*Teach Next*

Another way that the Australian Government is working to balance the supply for teachers with demand is through its *Teach Next* initiative. *Teach Next* recognises that career-change teachers are considered a valuable source of new entrants to teaching, both in terms of addressing shortages and reinvigorating teaching practice of subjects, by combining theory with real world application and experience.

Traditional teaching pathways require career-changers to give up one career in order to study for another with no guarantee of success. There are also ongoing difficulties in filling vacancies in regional and remote areas.

The Australian Government has committed $18.1 million, over 2011-12 to 2014-15, to Teach *Next* to address ongoing teacher shortages in specialised subject areas, such as mathematics and science, by attracting highly skilled and experienced professionals and placing them in hard-to-staff schools, particularly in regional areas, through establishing an employment-based pathway. The initiative also builds on the work the DEEWR is already doing through the TQNP to provide more flexible pathways into teaching.

## 4.3 Recognition, rewards and performance evaluation

Currently, each state and territory and education authority has processes in place in regards to performance management and teacher performance appraisal, however, each jurisdiction varies in its approach. Recent analyses of current performance management processes reveal that teacher evaluation needs to be more systematic and meaningful and provide a better indication of where teachers are at in relation to career progression. It is recognised that the links between the efforts and professional development of individual teachers and school-level goals and improvement also need to be strengthened.

The *Rewards for Great Teachers* initiative announced in the lead up to the 2010 Federal election recognises that not only do we need to attract high quality teachers but we also need to retain the best people and provide incentives for teachers to stay in the workforce and develop their skills. Central to this commitment is the development of nationally consistent 'Australian

Teacher Performance Management Principles and Procedures' that will enable all teachers to reflect on their practice, develop their skills and receive constructive feedback about their performance and future training needs.

Responsibility for the development and implementation of the Australian Teacher Performance Management Principles and Procedures has been assigned to AITSL. It is expected that the Principles and Procedures will be informed by, and complement, the recently developed National Professional Standards for Teachers described in Section 3.

### 4.4 School autonomy and leadership

*Increased autonomy*

The Australian Government has recently committed $484 million to its *Empowering Local Schools* Initiative that will deliver more power into the hands of principals and schools communities. Starting from 2012, this reform will provide greater local impendence in decision making about elements such as budgeting and staff selection, enabling schools to improve their performance, respond to local school community needs and provide the services to ensure their students achieve the best educational outcomes. In 2012 and 2013 1,000 schools (just over 10 per cent of Australian schools) will participate in Phase One in preparation for a national rollout from 2015.

The *Empowering Local Schools* initiative is supported by a strong evidence base that clearly demonstrates the benefits of increased empowerment for teachers, school leaders and students in making local decisions. In most of the countries that performed well in PISA 2000, local authorities and schools had substantial autonomy with regard to adapting and implementing educational content and/or allocating and managing resources. In some countries, including Australia, the relationship between school autonomy and student performance is strong and significant, even when other school characteristics are held constant.[20]

Conversely, research on autonomy from the school leader perspective has found that a lack of control over the school environment can obstruct school leaders in efforts to improve student learning:

> *"Principals say they need more autonomy to reward good teachers...and feel they can make an enormous difference in student learning if certain conditions can improve in their day-to-day working lives"[21].*

In its 2010 report, McKinsey & Company provided a strong argument for the benefits of high performing systems in "creating an environment that will unleash the creativity and innovation of its educators and other stakeholder groups ... [by giving] their teachers the time, resources, and flexibility to reflect upon and try out new ideas to better support student learning".[22]

*Leadership*

Ministers also recently endorsed Australia's first *National Professional Standard for Principals*[23]. The Principal Standard sets out what principals are expected to know, understand and do to achieve in their work. School leadership is a key element of the *TQNP* and jurisdictions are

[20] OECD Policy Brief (2004) *Raising the quality of educational performance at schoo*l.
[21] Feldsher, M. (2001) *Politics and Bureaucracy, not lack of funding, are Chief Irritants for Superintendents and Principals*, Public Agenda.
[22] McKinsey & Co (2010) *How the world's most improved school systems keep getting better.*
[23] Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), *National Professional Standards for Principals July 2011*. At: http://www.aitsl.edu.au/verve/_resources/NationalProfessionalStandardForPrincipals_July25.pdf

delivering strategies to provide world leading professional development and support to school principals, to help them improve student results through better managing their schools at the local level. These strategies are designed to target the specific professional development needs for principals and school leaders and focus on providing them with the tools and professional development to ensure a school improvement culture is pursued in Australia's Schools. AITSL are also delivering this national flagship program.

The *National Professional Standard for Principals* described in Section 3 complement the *Empowering Local Schools* initiative by setting the foundation for the professional preparation, development and self-reflection of aspiring and practising principals in all schools across Australia. The Standard was developed by AITSL following an extensive process of research and consultation involving national and international experts and stakeholders, as well as testing of the Standard in ten pilot studies.

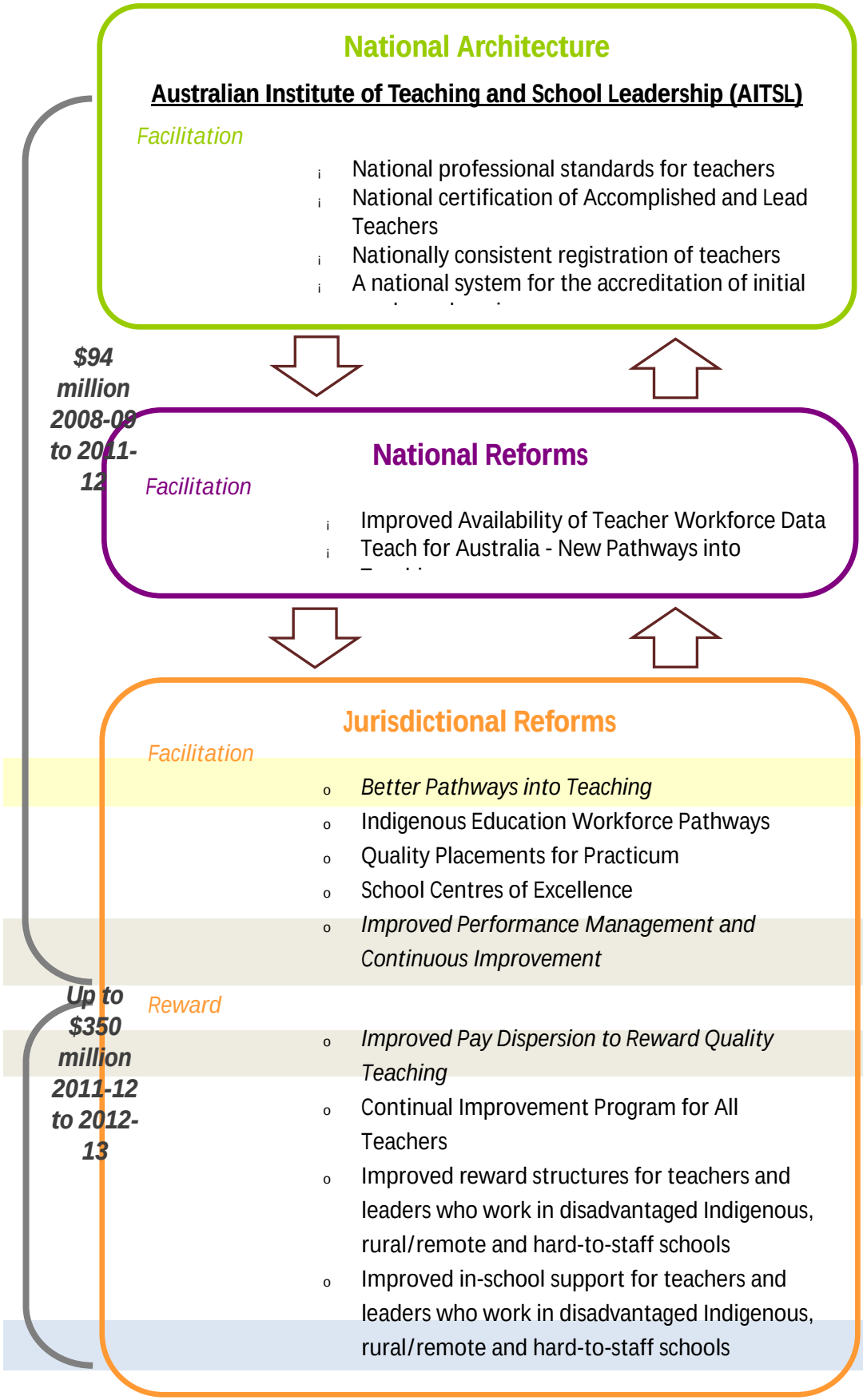
## Concluding remarks

The Productivity Commission's Issues paper highlights many of the challenges faced by governments and policy makers in building and retaining the quality schools workforce that underpins improved student performance.

As the diagram opposite shows, through the *TQNP,* the Australian Government is making record investment in initiatives that are already beginning to make significant improvements to the attraction and retention of teachers, training and performance management, available data and evidence for assessing reforms and providing support for our most disadvantaged students. Reforms announced during the 2010 Federal election campaign are designed to build on the work already progressed under the *TQNP*.

These existing and recently announced reforms, focussed on teacher quality and cross government collaboration, also provide the best foundation to respond to inevitable new challenges that will arise as the schools workforce evolves.

## IMPROVING TEACHER QUALITY NATIONAL PARTNERSHIP



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