

Response to the

Productivity Commission Schools Workforce Draft Research Report

from the
Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute

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AMSI supports a number of the recommendations made by the Commission in its draft report. In particular,

- two year graduate entry teacher training courses not be mandated
- the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership collect and disseminate research into schools workforce composition and job design
- future assessments of ways to improve pre-service training, induction and professional development be supported by longitudinal data collection
- the Ministerial Council initiate some specific policy evaluations, including a comprehensive assessment of measures to address educational disadvantage.

We believe that there is an urgent need to identify the exact nature and scope of out-of-field teaching in mathematics in Australia so as to inform policy responses from both State and Commonwealth governments. We would like the Commission to make an explicit recommendation to this effect.

We were disappointed that the draft report avoids discussion of the policy measures made in the AMSI submission on the pretext that current significant policy change in the schools workforce area means “that the Commission considers that it would be unhelpful for this study to propose a plethora of new initiatives” (p41). This remark seems curious in a study of the school workforce and we were disappointed with the abbreviated analysis under the heading “Measures targeting current teachers” on page 53. We believe that the Commission should recommend a study of the structural impediments to the recruitment of mathematics teachers which arise from an overall shortage of graduates rather than an absence of incentives for mathematics graduates to choose teaching over other careers. Such a study is beyond the remit of both the Ministerial Council and AITSL and needs to be commissioned within the Commonwealth tertiary education portfolio. International experience in dealing with these impediments is available and needs to be explored in conjunction with the study.

Nonetheless we also support the Commission's view that differentiated remuneration is an approach worth pursuing although such measures are likely to provoke industrial opposition. We also agree with the Commission's scepticism about the cost-effectiveness of the various measures which have been put in place to address discipline-based teacher shortages and we go further and identify a policy failure in the current national partnerships. This failure lies in the absence of nationally coordinated measures, necessary because the supply of graduates is a tertiary and hence Commonwealth matter and not a State one.

Our response to the Commission's draft report comes at a time when the Chief Scientist has been commissioned by the Prime Minister to examine measures to increase enrolments in mathematics and science. It also follows AMSI's national forum *Maths for the future: Keep Australia competitive* held in Canberra 7-8 February. The purpose of this event was to influence policy makers and stakeholders, it was attended by a wide range of senior figures from government, government agencies, the business sector, politics and the universities. The school workforce situation in mathematics was the single biggest issue addressed by the forum and in a communiqué the participants called on government to appoint a national mathematical sciences advisor and run a 5-year awareness campaign to increase participation and achievement in mathematics and statistics in Australia.

We have attached policy, profile documents from this forum to this response and we invite the Commission to consider them in forming its final report.

Yours sincerely,

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