

WESTERN AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT SUBMISSION AGAINST THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION'S DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT OF THE SCHOOLS' WORKFORCE

The Western Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to comment against the Productivity Commission's (the Commission) Draft Research Report of the Schools' Workforce.

Western Australia would like to reiterate that improved student outcomes, particularly in areas that in the past have appeared intractable requires greater innovation, improved use of all available resources and stronger engagement with the community. All of these elements are underpinned by a quality, agile and responsive schools workforce.

The Western Australian Government supports the majority of the Commission's findings and the recommendations are consistent with the direction of reform being progressed by the Western Australian Government.

Investing in systemic reform the Western Australian Government is focused on achieving a sustainable supply of quality staff in schools to improve student outcomes. The Western Australian Government has been:

- progressing an empowerment agenda, through the introduction of Independent Public Schools and the realignment of education regions, enabling local level decision making, innovation and responsiveness to the school community;
- providing incentives to attract people into teaching courses and working with universities to ensure courses better prepare graduates for the classroom;
- providing up-skilling opportunities that enhance career paths of the schools workforce and improve in-class support; and
- developing world class leadership development programs for current and aspiring school leaders.

Western Australian Government comments against findings

F4.1: There is a case for using explicit remuneration incentives to help address workforce shortages, including in hard-to-staff schools and in particular subject areas such as mathematics and science.

Attracting and retaining staff particularly to those schools in rural and remote areas is significantly more challenging and costly in Western Australia due to the size of the State and the current competitive labour market conditions.

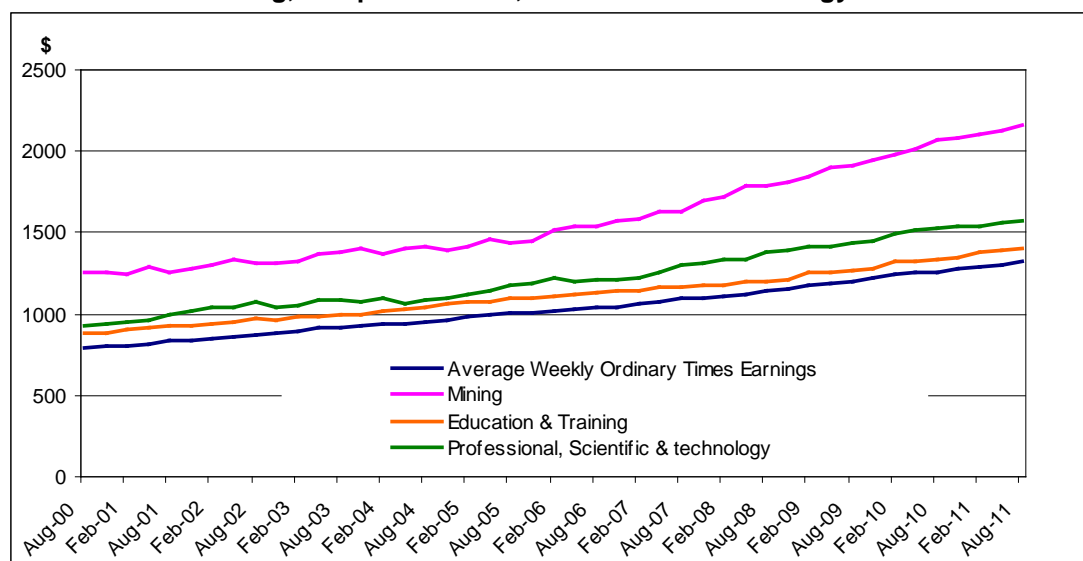
The Department of Education currently provides *location* incentives ranging from \$3 000 to \$19 000 for teachers and school leaders willing to work in rural, remote or difficult to staff locations.

There is within the education community a reluctance to introduce differential remuneration for subject areas of need. However, as highlighted by the Commission, preventing the use of differential remuneration is handicapping the profession to compete with other industries for graduates of particular disciplines.

The Commission's draft report highlights that relative earnings in the education and training sector have declined since 1994, compared to the average weekly ordinary time earnings (ABS 2011b). This decline is exacerbated when average weekly salaries of the education and training sector are compared to that of the

mining/resourcing sector or the professional, scientific and technology sector, refer Figure 1.

Figure 1. Relative weekly salary, Australia, August 2000 to August 2011, by mining, education and training, and professional, scientific and technology sectors



Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 6302.0 - Average Weekly Earnings, Australia, Aug 2011

For Western Australia, the resources (mining) sector is able to offer significantly higher salaries to those skilled in trades (design and technology), mathematics and physical sciences. Whilst teachers in Western Australia remain the highest paid in the country achieving and maintaining salary relativities for particular subject area teachers will be increasingly difficult.

Encouraging skills development within industrial instruments is currently incorporated into Western Australian *Education Assistants' (Government) General Agreement 2010* through a qualifications provision. Education Assistants who attain a relevant qualification receive an additional increment level (within their relevant classification). The qualification is not prescribed nor subject specific in this instance.

Recognising specific qualifications, has been achieved within the Western Australian *Registered Nurses, Midwives and Enrolled Mental Health Nurses Industrial Agreement 2010* through an annual qualifications allowance. The allowance is payable to Registered Nurses and Midwives who hold or acquire specific qualifications and the qualification is relevant to the employee's current position.

With respect to specific teaching areas, implementation and sustainability issues are likely to arise if subject area incentives were to be incorporated into future iterations of industrial instruments including:

- Ø Public Sector Wages Policy constraining the design and implementation of such an incentive;
- Ø development and maintenance of an approved qualifications/skills register;
- Ø consideration of whether an incentive is payable in circumstances of staff teaching in these areas but don't have the recognised formal qualification;
- Ø maintaining relative effectiveness or removal at a later stage becomes problematic if not impossible and would require re-negotiation of the respective Agreement.

Providing principals with the capacity to offer attraction and retention incentives may be an effective strategy in the short to medium term. However, the total number of people qualified in these subject areas continues to diminish. For example, the Australian Mathematical Science Institute highlights that “the demand for mathematical and statistical skills far outstrips supply. Maintaining Australia’s international competitiveness, security, population health and climate stability requires a mathematically literate population. The greatest single challenge to the health of the mathematical sciences is the long term decline in enrolments in calculus-based mathematics subjects, often referred to as *intermediate* or *advanced*, at year 12.”

The Western Australian Government agrees with the Commission’s draft report that remuneration incentives should be viewed as one complementary part of a package of initiatives aimed at overcoming shortages.

In their 2009 review of *Education in Mathematics, Data Science and Quantitative Disciplines*, the Group of Eight¹, highlights that attitudes are formed from when a student first enters primary school. Whilst the new pre-service teacher accreditation standards mandate minimum numeracy skills, these will not be effective until 2013. There are currently no mathematics requirements for entry into primary school teaching.

In order to address the declining numbers of students studying higher order mathematics, the pedagogy of mathematics and science within primary schools needs to invigorate interest and the confidence of students. Maintaining this confidence in these subject areas throughout secondary schooling also requires teachers to not only be qualified in mathematics or science but also be highly skilled in the pedagogy of these subject areas.

Greater systemic efforts are required to address these subject areas of need.

Strategies need to:

- Ø raise the status of mathematics and physical sciences within the community;
- Ø Improve the relative attractiveness of these disciplines as a career choice;
- Ø encourage Universities to lift the entry standards;
- Ø Encourage studying these subject areas through reduction of HECS/HELP fees; and
- Ø partnerships with industry for future career opportunities.

F6.1: Many teachers are not being provided the feedback they need to become better teachers. Efforts to address this deficiency are more likely to be effective if schools determine how appraisals will be undertaken, appraisals are linked to school level indicators and criteria, and various dimensions of teacher performance are captured.

ACER’s *Staff in Australia’s Schools (SIAS)* survey indicates a large proportion of the Australian teaching workforce are participating in annual performance appraisals and being provided feedback to improve teaching outcomes. The *Main Report on the Survey* released in November 2011 indicates that 95.3% of primary schools teachers were appraised annually or more frequently by at least one of either the principal, deputy principal or a head of department or equivalent; and 94.5% of secondary school teachers were also appraised at least annually. The SIAS report identifies that following appraisals, four main actions were taken:

¹ Group of Eight, 2009, *Review of Education in Mathematics, Data Science and Quantitative Disciplines* sourced from <http://www.go8.edu.au/documents/go8-policy-analysis/2010/go8mathsreview.pdf>

- [staff were provided] access to professional learning opportunities (82.1% of primary principals indicated this action was taken nearly all the time or most of the time as did 76.9% of secondary principals);
- feedback provided to individual teachers on their teaching performance (68.6% of primary, 58.5% of secondary);
- support from teaching colleagues such as mentoring or networking (63.7% primary, 63.8% secondary); and
- advice given to individual teachers on improving their teaching performance (61.1% primary, 59.7% secondary).

The Commission's draft report describes that performance appraisals would be more effective if principals and teachers had a major role in determining how the appraisals will be undertaken in their school.

The Western Australian Government's empowerment of school communities supports a culture of continuous improvement in schools. Through the establishment of Independent Public Schools and Education Regions, schools will increasingly be accountable and responsive to their communities. The Western Australian Government sets systemic objectives which articulate targets for school improvement. These targets provide the framework for school level planning, policy and strategy development which are developed and owned by staff.

The combination of greater school level accountability and autonomy is likely to result in greater engagement of staff in addressing school priorities through better alignment of their professional development to identified need.

Management of sub-standard performance in the public sector is governed by the Public Sector Management Act. Through recent amendments of this Act the Western Australian Government has reduced some of the bureaucracy that previously surrounded the management of substandard performance.

The Western Australian Government would like to reiterate that the quality and skills of the school principal and the leadership team underpins successful performance management and appraisal processes.

With respect to performance based remuneration, the Western Australian Government in its first submission recommended "...models of recognition must complement the industrial instrument of each respective sector or employer". However, more extensive trialling of reward and performance payment models is necessary and the evaluation of such trials would then guide policy development in this area.

The Western Australian Government currently has four categories of teachers within the *School Education ACT Employees' (Teachers and Administrators) General Agreement 2008* - graduate, teacher, senior teacher and level 3 classroom teacher. Progressing along the career path requires:

- a satisfactory report from supervisor to transition from graduate to teacher;
- a defined length of service and completion of core professional development modules to transition from teacher to senior teacher; and
- a rigorous assessment process to attain level 3 classroom teacher status.

This career path for teachers in Western Australian public schools has been supported by a set of professional teaching standards:

The concept of a competency based career path has been used by the Western Australian Government to inform long term workforce planning. Career advancement linked to attainment and continued demonstration of competencies, encourages professional development and improved productivity of the schools workforce.

Transitioning Western Australia's public sector's existing teacher career path to a competency based career structure would require consideration of:

- robustness and currency of professional standards being utilised to determine the assessment rubric and processes for assessing teacher competency;
- whether attainment of competencies determines the role or position held within schools;
- whether there would be performance targets and the accuracy, reliability and timeliness of information to measure those targets;
- the quality and skills of school leadership teams;
- the robustness of performance management and appraisal processes and the processes for managing unsatisfactory performance; and
- the costs of developing, implementing and sustaining such a model, particularly in context of current Public Sector Wages Policies.

F9.1: Reducing the adverse effects of individual, economic and social factors on student outcomes must be a high priority for schools workforce policy – especially for students from low SES backgrounds, Indigenous students and those in rural and remote locations.

A central challenge for schooling in Western Australia is addressing the inequities in educational outcomes facing students in isolated rural and remote communities, from disadvantaged social backgrounds and those with special needs and disabilities. These students often face multiple disadvantages, which can include poverty, family dysfunction, disability, homelessness and physical and mental health problems.

Many schools offer extended (or wrap around) services to students and their families in order to address educational disadvantage. This increasing role of schools within communities means that a mix of staff is required on school sites, some of whom require very different skill sets to those in traditional school settings.

The need for schools to work collaboratively with their communities to ensure the design and delivery of education is valued and aligned to community needs and cultural mores calls for high level skills in consultation and negotiation.

The current work program being progressed by Western Australia through the Smarter Schools National Partnership Agreements, specifically focusing on improving teacher and school leader quality combined with access to extended service schooling through the Low Socio-economic Status School Communities National Partnership, is promising and, therefore, investment and reform should be maintained in these areas.

Schools workforce composition and attraction and retention strategies must be broadened to enable a more agile and flexible workforce. The use of multi-disciplinary teams and innovative strategies is required to address educational equity. *The Song Room* program is an example of using a multi-disciplinary team (non-teaching specialists) in classrooms which has achieved encouraging results to-date.

The Song Room program introduces students in disadvantaged communities, to opportunities and experiences they would not have otherwise had. *The Song Room* specialists are not registered teachers but their influence has yielded tremendous results. Evaluations of the program indicate that students participating in the program have improved their resilience and self-confidence, which in turn has resulted in improved class participation, greater team work amongst students and improved academic results.

Not only is the program enhancing academic results by focusing on the well-being of the student, but this program also highlights a different employment model that could be utilised to access subject area specialists.

The Commission's draft report discusses the benefits of using information and communication technology (ICT) to assist in education delivery. The Western Australian Government would like to reiterate that the use of ICT as a tool in education access, delivery, learning and professional support cannot be underestimated.

Access to high quality regional bandwidth has always been very limited with smaller regional centres having 4Mb/s and larger regional centres having 20Mb/s. Whilst the National Broadband Network (NBN) is expected to deliver 100Mb/s bandwidth to schools, where feasible, and upwards of 12Mb/s in small population areas within regional Western Australia, this is not expected to be complete until 2019.

Improving this infrastructure, particularly within rural and remote school communities will not only support delivery of education and learning but will also improve retention of staff who otherwise can feel professionally and socially isolated.

F11.1 Greater flexibility is required in the industrial relations regime governing the employment of school workers.

The Commission's draft report highlights the need for the industrial relations regime to be more accommodating of the direction in which other aspects of schools and school workforce policy are evolving.

The industrial relations regime permeates several key areas of workforce policy and service delivery, including job design and workplace innovation, performance management and remuneration structures, and school autonomy. The Commission acknowledges the importance of awards and enterprise agreements not obstructing reforms, or impeding school-based trialling of approaches that might have application across a wider range of schools. Further, awards and agreements should not discourage the use of remuneration incentives that can help address a wider range of workforce strategies.

The Western Australian Government supports this finding and reiterates that existing industrial frameworks and legislation constrain the pace to which [workforce] reform can be achieved.

Western Australian Government comments against recommendations

R5.1 The Australian Government should commission a longitudinal data collection that:

- follows a sample of recently appointed teachers for at least five years;
- and
- assesses and evaluates the pre-service training, induction and professional development that each teacher receives.

The Western Australian Government supports this recommendation. Western Australia has been trialling extended classroom practicums for pre-service teachers through various models of internship. Whilst early evaluations indicate that the confidence and classroom readiness of interns is superior to those who are completing the traditional on-campus course, the cost and time commitment of the internship models are relatively high. Evaluation of these models will determine not only sustainability of the model but also which models are more likely to achieve classroom-ready teachers.

R5.2: MCEECDYA direct AITSL to modify the mandatory requirement of the two year graduate entry teacher training courses;

The Western Australian Government recognises the significant work that both Jurisdictions and Universities have undertaken recently, in developing innovative pre-service teaching models and the standards and procedures for accrediting initial teacher education programs in Australia. Both of these initiatives will improve both the quality of teaching and the classroom readiness of graduates.

Whilst acknowledging a two year Graduate Diploma will improve the quality of graduates, the increased length of course will impact on the State's supply of teachers in the short to medium term. The Western Australian Government supports the Commission's recommendation to modify the mandatory requirement of the two – year graduate course.

The Australian Government must ensure that sufficient time is provided to enable a phased implementation of the two-year Graduate Diploma and that University funding does not provide a disincentive for Western Australian Universities to maintain the one year program in the short term.

Ultimately the goal for the Western Australian Education sector is improved quality of teachers. Improving quality can also be achieved through innovative courses that attract a higher quality entrant, combining course work with greater classroom experience and the provision of ongoing support throughout a teacher's career, for example, the *Teach Next* or *Teach for Australia* programs.

The new student demand model for University funding commences in 2012. The impact of this new model on the supply of teaching graduates and other school workforce professionals must be closely monitored, particularly if the student demand model constrains implementation of innovative pre-service teaching models which are relatively more costly to operate.

It is imperative that the Australian Government continues to support both undergraduate and post graduate pre-service teacher education.

R6.1: The Australian Government defer the full-scale introduction of its proposed national bonus scheme for teachers and instead support more extensive trialling of performance payment arrangements and improved performance appraisal;

Following release of the Commission's draft report, the Australian Government revised the proposed national bonus scheme for teachers. The initiative now rewards those teachers who attain accreditation at Highly Accomplished Teachers or Lead Teacher level (as described in the National Professional Standards for Teachers).

The Western Australian Government supports the Commission's finding that prior to implementation of a national scheme, more extensive trialling of reward and performance payment models is necessary and the evaluation of such trials guide the policy development in this area.

R7.1: The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership should expand its clearing house to collect and disseminate research into schools workforce composition and job design;

The role of schools within their local communities is increasing. In order to address educational disadvantage facing many students an innovative approach to education is required. This means the creation of new roles, a different mix of staff, some of whom require very different skill sets to their predecessors.

Therefore the concept of a clearing house for school workforce composition and job design is supported by the Western Australian Government. However, the current work program for AITSL is already ambitious and focuses only on teaching and school leadership therefore, the Western Australian Government does not see the clearing house function, as recommended by the Productivity Commission, sitting with AITSL in its current structure.

The Western Australian Government would also like to reiterate that attracting and retaining staff to schools in rural and remote areas is significantly more difficult and costly due to the sheer size of the State. For example, the placement of a teacher in a public school in Karratha comes at an average cost of \$195 000 per annum, compared to the average placement of a teacher in a metropolitan school of \$115 000 per annum. The aforementioned staffing costs do not consider other variables such as the building and maintenance of accommodation, the establishment of core capital and information and communication technology infrastructure.

The approach to staffing schools in rural and remote communities needs to be broadened to ensure the most efficient use of all available resources.

R8.1: State and territory governments, where not doing so, support school autonomy initiatives with measures to help ensure that schools have the necessary leadership skills and school governance arrangements;

The Western Australian Government is progressing with an agenda of greater school autonomy and therefore supports this recommendation.

The introduction of Independent Public Schools (IPS), realignment of regions and roll out of local merit selection are aimed at empowering school communities. Schools,

together with their community will encourage greater productivity, effectiveness and agility from our schools' workforce.

The IPS model provides greater flexibility and autonomy to control budget and management of school staffing profiles. It is this human resource flexibility that has been cited by IPS principals as being the most significant of the IPS flexibilities. Having the opportunity to select their own staff through merit processes and establish a workforce with the specific skills to meet the needs of their student cohort cannot be underestimated as a strategy to improve a wide range of social and academic outcomes for students.

Increased school autonomy, improving the quality of leadership and the quality of the schools workforce, coupled with improved school accountability are foundation elements to improving whole school performance. Achievement of these elements is difficult without the support of stakeholders such as unions and professional associations.

In its draft report, the Commission discusses the increasing expectation on school leadership, recognising the challenges associated with increased administration and management. The Commission highlights that further gains may be achieved through specialisation by leadership function and possibly looking beyond qualified teachers for some senior roles. Quoting examples from the Netherlands, Sweden and England of the appointment of senior non-teaching staff, there appears to be promising outcomes, including an apparent increase in support from school boards for such appointments.

Within Western Australia the composition of the School Board and the support provided through administrative positions will further support school leaders within Western Australian Independent Public Schools.

The Commission's draft report highlights that teachers will remain the best-suited candidates for principal positions in the vast majority of cases, but for those occasions where a non-teaching candidate could make a useful contribution in a school leadership position, the regulatory environment should not impede such appointments.

The Western Australian Government is of the view that teachers will continue to fill the role of principal. However it is recommended that the Commission explore further the concept of senior non-teaching positions in schools, for example managerial positions related to finance, communications, public relations and human resource management.

The Western Australian Government, through the Independent Public School initiative has experienced considerable interest from schools to establish such managerial positions. There may be significant benefits associated with these senior roles for example improved school governance and improved relations with the local community.

R10.1: MCEECDYA should initiate:

- a program-based evaluation of the effectiveness of remuneration-based incentives as a means of addressing shortages of school workers;
- a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of the programs and policies to help ameliorate educational disadvantage; and
- an independent performance review, to commence in five years' time, of ACARA and AITSL.

The nature of workforce reform currently being progressed (under the auspices of the Improving Teacher Quality and Low SES NPs) means it is unlikely improvements will be visible in either quality or improved student outcomes until the reform has been in place for some time. For this reason, it is necessary to maintain teacher quality and workforce reform at the centre of the COAG reform agenda. The Western Australian Government therefore supports this recommendation.

R11.1: MCEECDYA should ensure that non-government schools, the non-teaching workforce and parent bodies are appropriately represented on high level schools policy forums.

Achieving workforce agility will not be possible without support from the non-government sector, the non-teaching workforce and broader community engagement. Therefore, the Western Australian Government welcomes representation from these stakeholders and colleagues on appropriate high level policy forums.