

Addressing Teacher Shortages – WASSEA Position Paper (September 2022)

Introduction

Every student, every classroom, every day. The Department of Education strategic statement summarises the moral purpose of the public education system in Western Australia; recognising the profound impact that teachers have on the lives of children and young people. Implementation of the statement requires a skilled and capable teacher workforce that can deliver an equitable educational program to meet the needs of all children.

A declining number of enrolments in Initial Teacher Education (ITE), increased resignations of dissatisfied teachers and an aging workforce have contributed to a teacher shortage impacting schools in Western Australia, Australia and much of the world. Australian modelling indicates secondary teacher demands will exceed supply by around 4 100 between 2021 and 2025.

Reasons for teacher shortages

The factors impacting on teacher shortages include:

- Decrease in ITE enrolments
 - Increase in length of course from one to two years post-Bachelor degree
 - Compounded by increased cost of Arts degrees reducing specialist teacher supply in English, Literature and Social Sciences
- Employment conditions leading to resignation, particularly beginning teachers (25% in first four years), including:
 - Workload
 - Salary
 - Increased compliance requirements
 - Reduction of professional judgements (e.g. what is taught and assessed and how it is taught and assessed)
 - Lack of recognition of importance of content knowledge (teaching out-of-area)
- Increased workload leading to increased requests for part-time employment
- Aging workforce
- Public perception of teachers and the negative narrative in the media

Disproportionate impact of teacher shortages

Teacher shortages disproportionately impact schools in low-socioeconomic environments. Reasons include:

- Teachers seek employment in schools perceived as having more preferable teaching environments (e.g. less trauma-caused behavioural challenges)
- High socio-economic schools are able to provide better equipment and facilities for teachers as they are significantly larger (leading to greater staffing and resource flexibilities)
- High socio-economic schools achieve higher proportions of parents paying school fees and charges
- Teachers in smaller low-socioeconomic schools are more likely to have to teach in areas in which they are not qualified, resulting in increased workload.

Teacher shortages disproportionately impact public schools for the reasons outlined above. In addition, non-government schools are:

- Free of the more onerous selection processes required of public schools
- Able to offer employment guarantees earlier than public schools
- Frequently seen as more preferable teaching environments
- Able to offer better employment conditions

Teacher shortages disproportionately impact rural and remote schools due to:

- Teachers preferring to live in cities or large rural centres
- Lack of access to quality Government Regional Officer Housing (GROH)
- Lack of access to affordable housing (e.g. when GROH is not provided)
- Perceived inability to return to metropolitan locations following rural/remote service

Addressing the shortages

Addressing teacher shortages requires a multi-faceted response commencing immediately and continuing in the mid-to-long term. Some strategies target all education sectors; whereas others seek to make the Department of Education (i.e. public schools) the employer of choice. Additional information must be urgently sought to enable informed decision-making.

Information gathering

Most employers survey teachers at the point of resignation; however there is little evidence that the recorded information leads to changes in organisations. An external survey of teachers should be conducted to determine:

- Why they are registered teachers, but not working in the profession
- Teachers' perception of workload, as there is evidence of increasing number of early-career teachers seeking part-time employment due to workload.
- Why they have recently resigned

Survey should seek information as to whether or not changes could be made to encourage a return to teaching.

Immediate impact strategies (relevant to all sectors)

- Remove teacher registration rules precluding payment of untrained teachers whilst undertaking practicum experience. If this is not possible, then pay a non-salary stipend (of the same value) to cover living expenses.
- Expand international recruitment for experienced teachers.
- Remove teacher registration rules requiring untrained teachers to be fully supervised whilst undertaking practicum experience, as this requires the employment of a full time teacher.

Mid-to-long term strategies (relevant to all sectors)

- Reduce length of post-degree teacher training from two years to one year. If two years is considered to be critical, then make the second year on-the-job training in which students are paid whilst working.

- Increase Commonwealth Supported Places targeted for ITE students; (and make it easier to find information about this for potential students).
- International recruitment of ITE students with consideration of either transferring to a WA University or payment of international university fees.
- Public recognition that teaching is a profession and that decisions should be made by the profession and in accordance with recognised standards (such as the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers). There is clear evidence of damage caused by ill-informed statements/suggestions or initiatives. For example:
 - Central publication of programs – ignores “Plan for and implement effective teaching and learning”, which requires knowledge of the needs of each individual student.
 - Emergency teacher pools for unexpected vacancies (particularly in rural/remote areas) – ignores “Create and maintain supportive and safe learning environments” and “Know the students and how they learn” in which relationships with students are critical
 - Deploying teachers to backfill any vacancy (regardless of qualification) – ignores “Know the content and how to teach it”.

Public school strategies

Fundamentally, the strategies specific to public schools all lead to offering employment to ITE students before non-government schools are able to do so. This requires removing current inflexibilities relating to school-by-school staffing; taking advantage of the public education system. For example, in 2022 there are only 13 predicted graduates in Design and Technology. Over half have been employed for some time by private schools. Individual public schools are disadvantaged as they cannot predict/confirm a vacancy 18 months in advance.

A process enabling the Department of Education to use the strength of a large system to engage/employ teachers for “unspecified” regional or metropolitan positions is essential. Advanced/Early-offer recruitment should not be limited to regional and remote schools as this will limit the employment of metropolitan-focussed applicants and encourage non-government school employment.

It is essential that strategies do not lead to teacher dissatisfaction for existing employees. For example, if wages or conditions for new appointments exceed those provided to existing teachers in the same location/speciality teaching area.

The strategies required to make the Department of Education the employer of choice have financial implications. The costs involved cannot be accommodated within existing school or departmental budgets and require additional resourcing. These costs are insignificant compared to the long term consequences of children not accessing quality education.

Immediate impact strategies (public schools)

- Recognise non-teaching service when determining pay rates. Currently, only previous teaching experience is recognised. This means that a tradesperson with 20 years’ experience commences teaching at the base salary rate.
- Creation of additional increments in the untrained teacher pay scale to accommodate additional experience; and to provide a reasonable salary whilst untrained teachers commence/complete formal teacher training.

Mid-to-long term strategies (public schools)

- Scholarships with significant funding for third and fourth year ITE students; or M. Teach/Dip Ed students requiring commitment to employment in public sector. Appendix A outlines some scholarships offered in other Australian states for public school teachers. The scholarships will come with a cost that cannot be covered by existing school resources.
- Increase opportunities for ITE students to complete practicum experience in rural/remote settings. Provision of travel expenses, housing, living expenses (above those provided to metropolitan students) required.
- Promote the HELP Debt concessions applicable to teachers working in “very remote schools” to teacher recruits (refer to Appendix B).
- Expand/change the definition of “very remote schools” to incorporate difficult-to-staff schools (refer to Appendix B).
- Recognition of prior learning for subject specialist content. For example, trade qualifications reducing the requirements associated with a teaching qualification.
- Increase opportunities for supporting targeted existing employees to complete ITE, such as Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers and Education Assistants – maintaining full salary whilst studying part-time. This could include an additional focus on employees living in rural or remote areas.
- Identify a mechanism for rewarding teachers undertaking rural and remote employment including:
 - Guaranteed return to metropolitan teaching positions. This does not need to be a return to the teacher transfer system. For example, metro schools could be required to employ a proportion of vacant positions with teachers in rural/remote areas.
 - Increased subsidy of housing
 - Increased availability of housing or rent assistance in large regional communities (e.g. Bunbury)
 - Payment of broadband internet for teacher residence.
- Improved salary sacrifice provisions including:
 - Housing rental
 - Housing loan interest
 - Costs of purchasing or building a property
- Continuation of Teach for Australia program. Consider payment of TFA Associates at a higher level by recognising prior employment.
- Continuation of Public School Teaching Pathway; allowing students to complete final practicum experience at the school in which they are appointed. Ensure teacher can meet secondary timetable needs i.e. part-time work across multiple days.
- Remove costs associated with the Entry and Orientation Program for teachers interested in working for – or returning to – the Department of Education. Currently, participation in the two-day program costs individuals \$75.00 per person

Appendix A – Existing Scholarships/Incentives for public school teachers in Australia

(Note: this list is not exhaustive and is correct as at September 2022)

Department of Education (WA)

- Bob Hawke Aboriginal teacher scholarships
- Regional professional experience program –\$250 to \$350/ week for 4 to 10 weeks
- Public School Teaching Pathway program – complete final year of study whilst teaching part-time (up to 0.6 FTE); paid as an untrained teacher. Not paid during practicum placement.

NSW Department of Education

- The Teacher Education Scholarship provides financial support of up to \$7,500 per year whilst studying full-time and a permanent teaching position in a high-demand subject area following successful completion of studies, plus a \$6,000 appointment allowance.
- Recruitment bonus - \$20 000 bonus available when teaching role has been difficult to fill in eligible rural and remote schools
- Rural Teacher Incentive – between \$20 000 and \$30 000 per annum to attract/retain teachers

Queensland

- One off payment of up to \$5,000 for Year 12 graduates
- Professional Experience Grant of up to \$5,000 for third or fourth year ITE students
- Regional, rural and remote scholarship – up to \$15,000 and permanent employment for final year ITE
- Turn to Teaching Internship program (career change) – \$20,000 scholarship in the first year of the full-time postgraduate ITE to assist with study expenses; paid internship (full-time) in a Queensland state school with a reduced teaching load (50%) during second year; permanency in priority subjects or regions (two to three year commitment)

South Australia

- Incentive payments for working in the country (including school leaders) based on school zone including an “Incidentals payment” (one-off) – up to \$10 000 per annum for two years

Victoria

- Category 1 schools (priority subjects and rural) – incentive up to \$11,000
- Category 2 schools (provincial and outer metro growth schools) – up to \$7,000
- Category 3 schools (all other schools with a hard-to-staff teaching vacancy) – up to \$4,000
- Early Childhood teachers – up to \$9,000 plus relocation expenses for qualified teachers

Tasmania

For designated regional schools:

- Incentive payments (\$2 759 upon appointment and after three years; \$5 523 at the end of four, five and six years of continuous employment)
- Paid time (two days per year) to attend to personal business
- Accommodation provided for between \$10 and \$50 per week

Northern Territory

- Aboriginal Teacher Education Scholarships - \$15,000 per year (dependent on study load) to Aboriginal people in urban, rural and remote locations who are aspiring teachers and are currently studying

ACT

- Salary packaging (in-house, additional to WA) – Membership fees for Professional Associations, Airline Lounge Membership, Income Protection Insurance

APPENDIX B

Proposed expansion of HELP Debt waiver – rural and remote WA

Very remote schools

List of schools in a very remote location in Australia (using ASGS Remoteness Structure) that that are eligible for reduction of HELP debt and waiver of indexation applications (Nov 2021).

Remoteness Structure – Australian Statistical Geography Standard (ASGS) Edition 3

Remoteness Areas divide Australia and the States and Territories into 5 classes of remoteness on the basis of relative access to services. Remoteness Areas are intended for the purpose of releasing and analysing statistical data. Remoteness Areas are based on the Accessibility and Remoteness Index of Australia (ARIA+), produced by the Hugo Centre for Population and Migration Studies. Remoteness Areas are aggregates of SA1s that are grouped together based on their average ARIA+ score.

Two incentives currently exist:

1. Waiver of indexation on accumulated HELP debt – for each day in a very remote area
2. Reduction of accumulated HELP debt (from 2023) – must complete 1460 days (four years) in a six year period

HELP Debt – List of current WA Secondary “Very remote schools” (Nov 2021)

School Name	Town	Region	ICSEA*
Carnarvon Community College	CARNARVON	Midwest	773
Kununurra District High School	KUNUNURRA	Kimberley	893
Newman Senior High School	NEWMAN	Pilbara	911
Tom Price Senior High School	TOM PRICE	Pilbara	933

Proposed additional schools (secondary only, either remote or ICSEA < 950):

School Name	Town	Region	ICSEA*
Katanning Senior High School	KATANNING	Wheatbelt	900
Champion Bay Senior High School	GERALDTON	Midwest	903
Geraldton Senior High School	GERALDTON	Midwest	905
Kalgoorlie-Boulder Community High School	KALGOORLIE	Goldfields	905
Northam Senior High School	NORTHAM	Wheatbelt	915
Hedland Senior High School	SOUTH HEDLAND	Pilbara	918
Newton Moore Senior High School	BUNBURY	South West	921
Collie Senior High School	COLLIE	South West	929
Broome Senior High School	BROOME	Kimberley	931
Mount Barker Community College	MOUNT BARKER	South West	941
Karratha Senior High School	KARRATHA	Pilbara	941
Eaton Community College	BUNBURY	South West	946
Merredin College	MERREDIN	Wheatbelt	948
Harvey Senior High School	HARVEY	South West	948
Busselton Senior High School	BUSSELTON	South West	950
Central Midlands Senior High School	MOORA	Wheatbelt	950
Eastern Goldfields College	KALGOORLIE	Goldfields	986

ICSEA*: Index of Community Socio-Economic Advantage. Based on student socio-economic advantage (parent occupation and education), remoteness and proportion of indigenous student enrolment). Median ICSEA = 1000.