

# Spotlight on Australia's Progress on the Education Sustainable Development Goal – SDG 4



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Australian Coalition for Education &  
Development



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# Table of Contents

<i>Acronyms and Abbreviations</i> .....	3
<i>Executive Summary</i> .....	5
<i>Background</i> .....	11
<i>Country and Education Context</i> .....	13
School Funding in Australia .....	13
Vocational Education and Training .....	14
Adult and Community Education (ACE) .....	15
<i>Rollout and Implementation of the SDGs and SDG 4</i> .....	17
Australia's Coordination and Implementation of the Program .....	17
Efforts to localize goals at Sub-National Level .....	19
<i>Role of CSOs in SDG Review and Implementation Process</i> .....	23
<i>The VNR Report and Role Played by CSOs</i> .....	26
<i>Review of Progress so Far</i> .....	30
Equity and Inclusion .....	31
Sector wide Approaches and Frames .....	32
Funding and Resourcing .....	37
Capacity Building and Quality .....	47
<i>Conclusion and Recommendations</i> .....	56
<i>Works Cited</i> .....	59
<i>Appendix 1 – Adult and Community Education Case Studies</i> .....	63
<i>Appendix 2 – The State of the Teaching Profession in Australia</i> .....	68

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# Acronyms and Abbreviations

**ABS – Australian Bureau of Statistics**

**ACE – Adult and Community Education**

**ACED – Australian Coalition for Education and Development**

**ACFID – Australian Council for International Development**

**AEDC – Australian Early Development Census**

**AEU – Australian Education Union**

**AITSL – Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership**

**ALA – Adult Learning Australia**

**ASPBAE – Asia South Pacific Association for Basic Adult Education**

**ATAR – Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank**

**CoM – City of Melbourne**

**COAG – Council of Australian Governments**

**CSIRO – Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation**

**CSO – Civil Society Organisation**

**CtG – Closing the Gap**

**CYDA – Children and Young People with Disability Australia**

**DEE – Department of Environment and Energy**

**DET – Department of Education and Training**

**DFAT – Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade**

**ESD – Education for Sustainable Development**

**FNCSD – Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development**

**GPE – Global Partnership for Education**

**HLPF – High Level Political Forum**

**IDC – Interdepartmental Committee**

**ITE – Initial Teacher Training**

**LLN – Language, Literacy and Numeracy**

**LLL – Lifelong Learning**

**MATSITI – More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative**

**NAPLAN – National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy**

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**NCVER – National Council for Vocational and Educational Research**  
**NERA – National Education Reform Agreements**  
**OECD – Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development**  
**PIAAC – Program for International Assessment of Adult Competencies**  
**PISA – Program for International Student Assessment**  
**PMC – Prime Minister and Cabinet**  
**RTO – Registered Training Provider**  
**SDG- Sustainable Development Goal**  
**SDG 4 - Sustainable Development Goal 4**  
**SRS – School Resourcing Standard**  
**TAFE – Technical and Further Education**  
**TIMMS – Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study**  
**UN ECOSOC – United Nations Economic and Social Council**  
**VET – Vocational Education and Training**  
**VNR – Voluntary National Review**  
**YCC – Yarraville Community Centre**

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# Executive Summary

This Spotlight Report was prepared by ACED, a coalition of CSOs in Australia committed to achievement of SDG 4. The Spotlight Report aims to review the current status of SDG 4 in order to motivate a conversation about Australia's commitment to the achievement of SDG 4 both within and outside Australia.

## 1. Country and Education Context

- Population of 25.1 million<sup>1</sup>
- Education compulsory from age 6- 16<sup>2</sup>
- 9.3% of total government expenditure is spent on education
- Funding education is a joint responsibility between the Federal Government and State and Territory Governments, with State and Territory Governments providing a majority of funding for government schools.

## 2. Rollout and Implementation

Australia takes a 'whole of government' approach to implementation of the SDGs, and has established a national Interdepartmental Committee (IDC) for this purpose. The IDC is co-chaired by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet with a view to coordinating the implementation of the SDGs domestically and internationally. The IDC was established just prior to the release of Australia's 2018 Voluntary National Review (VNR). Importantly, Australia does not have a clear national plan for implementation of the goals. Nor does it have any specific financial commitments or regular progress reviews. The effectiveness of the IDC has been called into question in a recent Senate Inquiry into the SDGs, with some submissions noting a lack of visibility and with no obvious reporting mechanism. In line with the 'whole of government' approach, individual agencies are given responsibility for individual SDGs. The Department of Education and Training (DET) currently

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (2018) 'Australian Demographic Statistics, 2018.' Retrieved from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/0/D56C4A3E41586764CA2581A70015893E?Opendocument>

<sup>2</sup> Sources for evidence, which appears in later sections of this report, will be excluded from the executive summary.

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holds responsibility for the implementation of SDG 4, the education goal.

The Australian Government has developed a 'Data Reporting Platform', which is funded by DFAT and produced by the Department of Environment and Energy, (DEE), in close cooperation with The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). The platform aims to provide a single point of access to data pertaining to Australia's progress on the SDGs. The ABS mapped existing data sources against selected SDG indicators in order to identify which data sources aligned well with the indicators.

There have been some efforts towards localisation of the SDGs at a sub-national level. For example, the City of Melbourne conducted a review to determine how many of its goals and plans aligned with the SDGs. However, as of yet, there is nothing comparable to the United States (US) Cities' SDG Index, which ranks the 100 most populous metropolitan areas in the US on the Sustainable Development Goals. In general, Australia could learn from other countries which are performing well against the SDGs, and 'typically have a national plan for the SDGs, clear reporting mechanisms, and the work is led by government from within the office of the head of government or state'. Germany, for example, has successfully aligned its national development strategy with the SDGs in terms of their domestic and international policy objectives.

### **3. The Role of CSOs in the SDG implementation and review process, focusing on SDG 4**

The Australian Government partnered with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), for example through DFAT providing funding for both the Australian SDGs website, Monash's 2018 SDG Summit, and the CSIRO's support for the development of SDG toolkits by each of ACFID and Collaboration for Impact. However, community organisations must be sufficiently resourced to engage with the SDGs on a significant level. Towards this end, ACFID has suggested the creation of a scheme for the provision of small grants through each government department in order to enable stakeholders to access funding for communicating the SDGs. In particular, provisions to support the active participation and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the SDGs could be made.

There is currently no formal consultation mechanism whereby CSOs may contribute in a significant and ongoing manner to SDG implementation and review, although civil society was invited to make submissions to DFAT's mid-term review of the *Strategy for Australia's Aid Investments in Education 2015-2020*. Establishing a multi-sectoral reference group consisting of members of civil society, and



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with the role of advising the Government on SDG implementation issues through formal consultation may help to fill this gap. An example of good practice is that of Finland<sup>3</sup>, which has established a Development Policy Committee including political parties, NGOs and Trade Unions for monitoring and evaluating Finnish development policy, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda.

#### **4. Brief comments on the VNR report and the role played by CSOs in its development**

In the lead-up to the 2018 VNR, consultations across different sectors in Australia were undertaken, with agencies contacting stakeholders requesting case studies, of which more than 300 were received. In 2019, the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Reference Committee tabled its report inquiring into Australia's implementation of the SDGs. The report raised the concern that the Government had not done enough to consult all stakeholders. A submission from Children and Youth with Disabilities Australia (CYDA), for example, noted the minimal mechanisms for input from people with disabilities and their organisations. Australia's VNR is really a collection of case studies of best practice programs and policies. What is conspicuously absent is any mention of indicators, target setting, or any baseline data from which to measure future progress.

#### **5. Reviewing the progress made so far on SDG 4**

As mentioned, Australia's implementation strategy has been far less formalised than some other countries such as Germany and Finland, as exemplified by the absence of a formal national policy and strategy on lifelong learning.

There are a number of critical gaps and challenges for Australia in reaching many of the SDG 4 targets.

- Australia under-invests in early childhood education, and sits behind many OECD countries in terms of the amount of free tuition it provides for pre-school aged children.
- Disadvantaged primary and high school students such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, rural students and /or learners with disabilities, continue to have poorer educational outcomes than their more advantaged classmates.

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<sup>3</sup> Directorate General for External Policies, European Parliament (2018) 'Europe's Approach to Implementing the Sustainable Development Goals: Good Practices and the Way Forward'. Retrieved from: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/cmsdata/160360/DEVE%20study%20on%20EU%20SDG%20implementation%20formatted.pdf>

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- School principals continue to report a lack of resources required for learners with disabilities,
  - The recent Closing the Gap (CTG) report shows no progress in closing the education gap for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, except for Year 12 school attainment. Compounding these problems is a shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers. Despite repeated calls by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to have a greater voice in decision making, as recently as 2017, the School Enrolment and Attendance Measure added conditions to families' welfare payments if their children didn't meet school attendance requirements. Punitive policies such as these have not resulted in positive outcomes. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people need to be given a leadership role in decisions affecting their communities.
  - Australia has the largest gap between rural and city learners out of OECD countries, evidence of which can be seen in the results of the National Assessment Program—Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) results, along with the Australian PISA, and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) scores.
- There is a shortage of teachers including those that teach specific subjects such as mathematics.
  - The last OECD Survey of Adult Skills (or PIAAC) which measures adult skills and competencies in literacy, numeracy, and problem solving in technology-rich environments indicated that approximately 53% of working age Australians have difficulty with numeracy skills; 46% of Australian adults have difficulty with reading skills, and 13% are classified in the lowest literacy category.
  - The issue of public versus private education funding is a common theme through many cases referred to in the report. Nationally there have been significant cuts totaling AUD \$1.9 billion over two years, while at the same time, there has been an increase in funding to private schools. A common civil society contention is that, as many studies have shown, the commercialisation of education undermines the right to education. However, marketisation of both the early education sector and the VET sector has led to inequities and declining quality. This report asserts that the increased marketisation of multiple levels of the education system is a driver of inequality in Australia, and needs to be reversed.
  - There is no national approach to the adult and community education (ACE) sector which reaches across all states and territories in urban, rural and remote communities. All governments and organisations should use adult and community education as a process to engage with the SDGs and include resourcing effective, high quality professional development that focuses on teaching and learning practice designed to improve SDG outcomes for high needs cohorts.



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- The lack of investment in public vocational education and training has led to a crisis in this sector, with significant barriers for many students to undertake skills training.
  - A further problem is the lack of a national policy on lifelong learning (LLL) as a core component of SDG 4. Such a policy would highlight the need for all Australians to learn and continue learning throughout life in order to face the challenges of the twenty-first century. A formal policy would also clearly outline economic and social goals; integrate efficiency and equity, and set out roles and responsibilities for community, business and all levels of government. It would emphasise the life-skills required and the inter-connected pathways between learning opportunities. If we are to truly ‘leave no one behind’, then quality educational opportunities need to be accessible at all ages and stages of life.

With regard to aid investments to support developing country partners in achieving SDG 4, Australia’s strategy focuses on priority areas of early childhood development (SDG 4.2), equity (4.5) and skills for employment (4.4). However, some of the other SDG 4 targets receive scant attention and resources. While there is also an overarching focus on raising quality education across partners’ education systems through capacity development, there is serious concern that the many are still missing out on basic and ongoing education opportunities. Further, funding for the education aid program has dwindled and there are questions over the distribution of scarcer funds, 50% of which are disbursed through Australia Awards scholarships.

## 6. SDG 4 Indicator Framework

Of the 11 global indicators for SDG 4, Australia has aligned 5 with data sources. Data sources for 4 further indicators are currently being investigated for compatibility, and 2 indicators have been deemed ‘not applicable’.
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## 7. Concluding comments and recommendations

Along with the absence of a national plan or strategy for implementing the SDGs, no funds have been made available specifically for the SDGs, neither have there been any specific funding commitments. The targets within SDG 4 are ambitious, and they will not be achieved without specific and significant funding commitments.

Central to the Education 2030 Agenda is that no one is to be left behind. Likewise, at the heart of SDG 4, educational opportunities are to be both inclusive and equitable. Yet, in Australia, many of the most marginalised and vulnerable learners are finding themselves at an extreme disadvantage.

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They are not included, and opportunities are not equitable. One of the biggest drivers of this inequity is the under-funding of public schools and the over-funding of private schools. This seems to run against the spirit of equity and inclusiveness called for by SDG 4. More than ever, it is crucial to allocate resources where and to whom they are needed the most.

A National Adult Literacy Strategy should be a key foundation of a National LLL policy; one that prioritises language, literacy and numeracy (LLN), in various contexts, including a funded workplace LLN program and a national family literacy program that is focused on socially and economically marginalised Australian communities.

Further engagement with CSOs is imperative. The Australian Coalition for Educational Development (ACED) supports recent recommendations made for the establishment of a multi-sectoral reference group to advise the Government, along with the establishment of a small grants scheme to resource community organisations and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people for the purpose of engaging with the SDGs. In order to progress on SDG 4, the driving forces behind much of the inequality in the education system need to be addressed. Needs-based funding should be re-established, and funding restored to public schools, and significantly increased. The establishment of a new National Partnership Agreement for VET is needed. Such an Agreement should, at minimum, return Government funding to pre-market reform levels, and immediately quarantine a minimum 70% of funding to not-for-profit institutions.

Australia's approach to implementing the SDGs, along with SDG 4, could be significantly enhanced by adopting the recommendations outlined in this report. A national strategy and implementation plan, for both domestic and international development portfolios, along with clear national targets and financial commitments are essential to progress implementation of the goals in Australia and the region.

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# Background

The Australian Coalition of Education and Development (ACED) was established in 2008 and brought together 15 civil society organisations in Australia working on education and development in Australia and overseas, with a particular focus on contributing to the then Education for All movement. The purposes of ACED are:

- to develop a common advocacy agenda amongst members for education as a human right and as a tool for international development
- to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), especially as related to education and lifelong learning, and equity and access, and in particular SDG 4
- to affiliate with the Global Campaign for Education (GCE).

All ACED members are committed to increasing Australian aid to education, and supporting the education of disadvantaged children and adults in Australia and around the world. ACED member organisations are non-government and not for profit. ACED has been an active participant in a range of consultations with both the Global Partnership for Education, the Global Campaign for Education and the Asia South Pacific Association for Basic Adult Education (ASPBAE) on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

A spotlight report is a Civil Society analytical paper on the implementation status of SDGs. These may be a stand-alone report of civil society or may be parallel or alternative to the official government report. These reports were earlier referred to as ‘shadow reports’, but many CSOs have argued for a change since civil society perspectives should not be seen to be in the “shadows” of the official one, but should take “centre-stage” or take the “spotlight.” ASPBAE is collating Spotlight country reports across the AP region, to be tabled during the High-Level Political Forum (HLPF).

Internationally, a High-Level Political Forum is a space on the international level where countries can come together and share best practice, progress, gaps, and challenges. As with any endeavor, this kind of reflection is needed to vitalise actors and to drive further progress. In the 2019 HLPF, SDG 4 will be reviewed, along with a few other SDGs, particularly SDG 10 on Reducing Inequality. Moreover, HLPF 2019 will also be organised under the auspices of the UN General Assembly where earlier HLPFs were facilitated through UN ECOSOC. As such, for the 2019 HLPF, the UN General Assembly will convene a Summit Meeting where Heads of States are expected to attend.

Australia presented a Voluntary National Review (VNR) at the 2018 HLPF. It is disappointing that the Australian government’s 2018 VNR did not adequately address gaps and challenges, but rather presented a collection of case studies illustrating what is being done in Australia. It is, therefore, the

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aim of this report to ‘spotlight’ some of these gaps and challenges in Australia’s implementation of SDG 4, both domestically and internationally.

The spotlight report targets policymakers, advocates and implementers at local, national, regional and global levels. The report expects to draw actions and results particularly at the national level with the global platforms and actors providing added visibility and pressure.

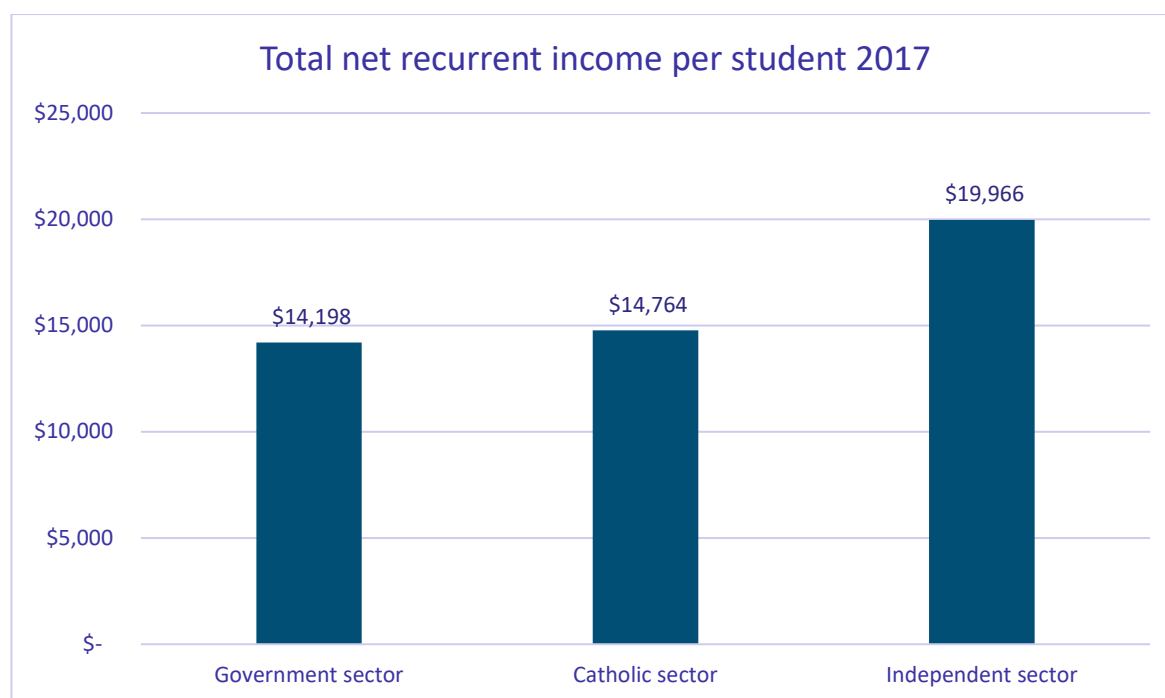
However, this report will not be a comprehensive analysis of all the targets and means of implementation of the goal. By contributing to the ongoing conversation and collaboration around the 2030 Agenda, ACED hopes that this report will be informative for all manner of stakeholders; from fellow CSOs from other countries, to policy makers from those countries, and of course to policy makers in Australia.

# Country and Education Context

The Spotlight Report will make reference to the following terms: School funding in Australia, Vocational Education and Training, and Adult and Community Education (ACE). This section briefly introduces and contextualises these terms to clarify how they are used in this report.

## School Funding in Australia

There are three sectors of education in Australia; government schools, Catholic schools and Independent private schools. Funding for each sector is a joint responsibility for the Commonwealth Government and the eight states and territories that make up Australia's federal system. The funding mechanisms are negotiated through National Education Reform Agreements (NERAs).



**FIGURE 1: Total net recurrent income per student, 2017 <sup>4</sup>**

Following findings from the Gonski Review in 2011, which showed considerable gaps in educational outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students, Australia adopted a needs-based model

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<sup>4</sup> Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority portal at [www.acara.edu.au](http://www.acara.edu.au)

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of funding education. The primary motivation was to ensure that educational outcomes for young Australian learners would not be determined by their level of disadvantage.

The funding system was reformed into a base per-student funding level with additional needs-based loadings targeted to disadvantage – the objective was to bring all schools across the country up to an appropriate level of resources, the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS). This standard was recognised as the minimum requirement to give every child, regardless of background, the opportunity to achieve their potential. It was regarded as the fairest way to lift the achievement of all students through increased investment in schooling that targeted disadvantaged cohorts, thus reducing the impact of aggregated social disadvantage on learning outcomes. However recent funding decreases have put this system under threat.

The *Australian Education Act 2013* legislated for significant growth in Commonwealth support to government education in order to meet student need and deliver the SRS. Recurrent funding to schools was to increase according to the dictates of a range of bi-lateral NERAs between the federal government and states, typically aimed at bringing schools to 95% of the SRS by 2019. These arrangements commenced in 2014 and the additional resources provided and distributed according to the NERAs between states/territories and the Commonwealth had a demonstrable impact on learning, as documented by the Australian Education Union (AEU)<sup>5</sup>.

However, in 2017, the federal government changed the funding arrangements under *The Australian Education Amendment Act 2017* by capping Commonwealth funding for public schools at 20% of the school resources standard while funding 80% of the school resource standard for Catholic and Independent schools. This has curtailed the progress that was made as a result of the original 2013 act toward equity and makes educational opportunity in Australia often a matter of privilege.

## Vocational Education and Training

The Vocational Education and Training (VET) sector in Australia is provided by a mixture of public Technical and Further Education colleges (colloquially known as TAFEs), Adult and Community Education (ACE) Providers, and private Registered Training Organisations (RTOs). The sector has a history of providing education to a considerable number of learners from disadvantaged groups. For

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<sup>5</sup> Australian Education Union (AEU), “Getting Results – Gonski funding in Australian Schools”, Vol.1 (2016) & Vol. 2 (2017)



this reason, VET has traditionally been seen not just as a sector for skilling workers, but also as a sector with a key function of education and social inclusion.

Category	Community Education (student %)	TAFE (student %)	Private for-profit providers (student %)
Aged 45+	40.8	16.3	18.3
With a disability	23.4	10.4	7.6
Indigenous	6.2	8.0	6.4
Non-English speaking backgnd	30.0	20.2	18.1
Rural regional & remote	41.1	39.3	36.0
Socio-Econ disadvantage	53.4	47.6	47.0
Female	66.4	46.6	49.6

**FIGURE 2: Government Funded VET Student Percentages<sup>6</sup>**

As demonstrated in the table above, both TAFEs and Community Education providers tend to have a much higher enrolment rate of disadvantaged learners than private RTOs. However, there has been an increasing marketisation of the VET sector and an accompanying decrease in public funding towards Public TAFEs and ACE providers. All of the above signals a further move away from VET's function as a facilitator of social inclusion and towards a narrow conception of the sector simply concerned with producing a labour force.

## Adult and Community Education (ACE)

The ACE sector is a discrete 4<sup>th</sup> sector of education in Australia. ACE organisations are community-based and non-profit and largely consist of community learning centres and cooperatives, neighbourhood houses, community colleges, and workers educational associations. According to a 2016 scan<sup>7</sup> of the sector by Adult Learning Australia (ALA), there are at least 2,500 ACE organisations in Australia. Most of these organisations provide personal interest courses, along with basic adult education in literacy and numeracy. A minority of ACE providers, concentrated mostly in Victoria and New South Wales, also provide formal VET training.

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<sup>6</sup> Community Colleges Australia (2018) 'Vulnerable and Disadvantaged Students of NSW Not-for-profit Education Providers: Summary of NCVER 2017 Data'. Retrieved from: <https://cca.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/Vulnerable-and-Disadvantaged-Students-of-NSW-Community-Education-Providers-Analysis-of-2017-Data.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Adult Learning Australia (2016) 'Australian ACE Environmental Scan Research Project 2016'. Retrieved from: <https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Australian-ACE-Report-2016-Final.compressed.pdf>

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Having its roots in the 1880s<sup>8</sup>, the ACE sector seems to have been increasingly relegated to the back seat by governments over time. In the 1990s, two Australian Senate inquiries saw both government recognition of ACE temporarily increase along with increased funding in some states. However, more than two decades later, both have once again, regressed.

A 2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE by the Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education sought to encourage a collaborative approach to ACE in order to make a greater contribution to supporting COAG's<sup>9</sup> productivity agenda. It also identified ACE as a "Key Player" in the Australian Government's Social Inclusion Policy Agenda<sup>10</sup>. The Ministerial Declaration confirmed the "value of ACE in developing social capital, building community capacity, encouraging social participation and enhancing social cohesion."

Although welcome in 2008, the world of work, education and employment in Australia has changed 11 years later, and continues to change. It is, therefore, imperative that this declaration be renewed, not just to take into account the factors described above, but also to align whatever goals and strategies flow from renewal with the Sustainable Development Goals.

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<sup>8</sup>Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (1991) *'Come in Cinderella: the emergence of adult and community education'*. Retrieved from: <https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/03/Come%20in%20Cinderella%20Report.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) is the peak intergovernmental forum in Australia. It is chaired by the Prime Minister and deals with policy matters that require municipal, state, territory and federal governments to co-ordinate their actions.

<sup>10</sup> Ministerial Council for Vocational and Technical Education (2008) *'Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education'*. Retrieved from: <http://vital.voced.edu.au/vital/access/services/Download/ngv:5909/SOURCE2?view=true>

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# Rollout and Implementation of the SDGs and SDG 4

## Australia's Coordination and Implementation of the Program

Australia's approach to implementing the SDGs is led by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), and the Interdepartmental Committee (IDC). The IDC, which was established just prior to the release of Australia's 2018 VNR, is comprised of senior officials and is chaired by the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (PMC). Individual agencies are given the responsibility for integrating the individual goals into their policies, with the Department of Education and Training being given responsibility for SDG 4.

The UNDP<sup>11</sup> makes the point that a traditional 'siloes' approach to implementation can fail to do justice to the interlinked nature of the SDGs, and reminds us of the importance of having a strong and central body to oversee implementation. By this measure, the IDC is a step in the right direction, as central body situated at the level of Prime Minister and Cabinet. However, the recent Senate Inquiry<sup>12</sup> into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)<sup>13</sup> heard that not only was there something of a lack of visibility of the IDC, but also a lack of understanding of its actual role. It is not clear how much the IDC is guiding implementation, how regularly it meets, and the level of accountability the individual agencies have to the committee. From a senate hearing<sup>14</sup> with

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<sup>11</sup> UNDP (2017) 'Institutional and Coordination Mechanisms: Guidance Note on Facilitating Integration and Coherence for SDG Implementation', p.11. Retrieved from [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional\\_Coordination\\_Mechanisms\\_GuidanceNote.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional_Coordination_Mechanisms_GuidanceNote.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade References Committee (2019) 'United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)', p.39. Retrieved from: [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/SDGs/~/media/Committees/fadt\\_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs/~/media/Committees/fadt_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf)

<sup>13</sup> The inquiry was referred to the Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade References Committee on 4<sup>th</sup> December, 2017, and submitted on 14<sup>th</sup> of February, 2019.

<sup>14</sup> Foreign Affairs Trade and References Committee (2019) 'Committee Hansard 7 December, 2018' p.16-17. Retrieved from: <https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;db=COMMITTEES;id=committees%2Fcommsen%2F09f475da-e7ed-4b7d-9aae-21ce9c04013f%2F0000;query=id%3A%22committees%2Fcommsen%2F09f475da-e7ed-4b7d-9aae-21ce9c04013f%2F0000%22>

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representatives of the PMC, the senate committee discussed the level of accountability the IDC holds individual agencies to for their engagement with integrating the SDGs and the reporting of this in their annual reports. Beyond, DFAT and the PMC informing agencies that they themselves will be referencing the SDGs in annual reports, there is no explicit directive issued for individual agencies to do the same. Some departments (for example the Department of Social Services) do not reference the SDGs in their annual reports. The Department of Education and Training (DET), however, does reference the goals<sup>15</sup> The DET's annual report seemed more to reference the SDGs to show they are generally compatible with the department's activities in terms of sentiment rather than to measure or identify their actual implementation.

Perhaps one of the most glaring gaps in Australia's implementation is its lack of national strategy for implementation of the SDGs, or any finances or budgets set aside for implementation. In 2017, an independent review of VNRs submitted called on member countries to develop national plans. There are a number of good practice examples of this amongst countries currently implementing the SDG nationally such as Germany. Just as Australia has the IDC, Germany has established the State Secretaries Committee for Sustainable Development. The Committee is tasked with steering Germany's National Sustainable Development Strategy. In addition, the committee acts as a forum for different government departments to share information on their sustainability activities at a high level<sup>16</sup>. The case for developing a national plan or strategy is strengthened by evidence which shows that countries which tend to perform well against the SDGs<sup>17</sup> have developed national plans and strategies. These national plans typically include national goals, and financial commitments; two things that are also lacking in Australia's case. The creation of a national strategy along with distinct national goals and financial commitments would function as a clearer guide for stakeholders towards implementation of the goals.

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<sup>15</sup> Department of Education and Training (2018) 'Annual Report', p.2, p.17. Retrieved from: [https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/education\\_and\\_training\\_annual\\_report\\_2017-18\\_0.pdf](https://docs.education.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/education_and_training_annual_report_2017-18_0.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> German Federal Government (2016) 'Report of the German Federal Government to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, p.7. Retrieved from: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10686HLPF-Bericht\\_final\\_EN.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/10686HLPF-Bericht_final_EN.pdf)

<sup>17</sup> Bertelsmann Stiftung – 'Sustainable Development Solutions Network (2018) SDG Index and Dashboard Report 2018: Global Responsibilities, Implementing the Goals', and p.16. Retrieved from: <http://sdgindex.org/assets/files/2018/01%20SDGS%20GLOBAL%20EDITION%20WEB%20V9%20180718.pdf#page=22>

## Efforts to localize goals at Sub-National Level

For the SDGs to be implemented successfully, they need to be implemented in an integrated fashion across all levels of government, from local through state/territory to federal. There have been some efforts at the state and territory level to implement the goals. There is evidence of state and territory governments using the goals as part of their planning processes in various areas.

In the Victorian State Government's *Plan Melbourne Metropolitan Planning Strategy* reference is made to the goals and the opportunity for their alignment with Plan Melbourne's directions. The use of the SDGs as a framework from which to understand and build on existing policies and strategies is positive, however no evidence of similar efforts relating to SDG 4 were found.

Sustainable Development Goals alignment with Plan Melbourne		
Sustainable Development goal	Relevant Plan Melbourne directions	
Good health and wellbeing	Direction 5.3	Deliver social infrastructure to support strong communities
Clean water and sanitation	Direction 6.3	Integrate urban development and water cycle management to support a resilient and liveable city
Affordable and clean energy	Direction 6.1	Transition to a low-carbon city to enable Victoria to achieve its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
Decent work and economic growth	Direction 1.1	Create a city structure that strengthens Melbourne's competitiveness for jobs and investment
Sustainable cities and communities	Direction 5.1	Create a city of 20-minute neighbourhoods
	Direction 5.2	Create neighbourhoods that support safe communities and healthy lifestyles
Responsible consumption and production	Direction 6.1	Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and transition to a net zero carbon city by 2050
	Direction 6.7	Reduce waste and improve waste management and resource recovery
Climate action:	Direction 6.1	Transition to a low-carbon city to enable Victoria to achieve its target of net zero greenhouse gas emissions by 2050
	Direction 6.2	Reduce the likelihood and consequences of natural hazard events and adapt to climate change
Life below water	Direction 6.5	Protect and restore natural habitats
Life on land	Direction 6.4	Make Melbourne cooler and greener
	Direction 6.5	Protect and restore natural habitats

**FIGURE 3: Sustainable Development Goals Alignment with Plan Melbourne<sup>18</sup>**

There have been some efforts to localize the SDGs at a sub-national level in Australia's case. A good example is a recent assessment of City of Melbourne's (CoM) to understand how it is delivering

<sup>18</sup> State of Victoria Department of Environment, Land, Water, and Planning (2017) *Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 Metropolitan Planning Strategy*, p.137. Retrieved from: [http://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/377206/Plan\\_Melbourne\\_2017-2050\\_Strategy.pdf](http://www.planmelbourne.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0007/377206/Plan_Melbourne_2017-2050_Strategy.pdf)

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against the SDGs. The Desktop Assessment<sup>19</sup> was undertaken in September 2017. Findings showed that many of City of Melbourne's plans and strategies align with one or multiple SDGs, including SDG 4<sup>20</sup>. However, it also identified areas in which it could strengthen delivery against key SDGs, with SDG 4 among those.

Decisions on further action resulting from the review were:

1. Consider SDG thinking in the Municipal Strategic Statement (MSS) review.
2. Incorporate SDG thinking into City of Melbourne's strategy framework.
3. Engage with SDG stakeholders to share lessons learned and gain insight from others, as the CoM aligns with the SDGs.

City of Melbourne's work in this area shows the potential for implementation of the SDGs on a municipal and local government level. An example of good practice in this area is that of the US Cities SDG Index, which ranks major American cities in terms of their performance against the SDGs. Benefits of such an approach can be used to inform policy on a sub-national level, and measure success. In 2018, Spain launched the 'Spanish Cities Index'<sup>21</sup>, which is intended to be used as a monitoring tool of the implementation of the 2030 agenda in metropolitan areas. In a hearing for the last year, a representative of City of Melbourne's project team noted<sup>22</sup> that the CoM wanted to contribute more closely with the Australian government regarding implementing the goals on a sub-national level. Also mentioned was the benefit of working with the Australian Government to establish a similar index to the US Cities Index. The ability of cities to benchmark their performance against other cities would be most valuable in terms of enabling cities to learn from each other, but

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<sup>19</sup> City of Melbourne (2017) 'Opportunities and Recommendations Report'. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/sitecollectiondocuments/sustainable-development-goals.pdf>

<sup>20</sup> The report listed City of Melbourne's '[Reconciliation Action Plan](#)' and '[Music Strategy](#)' as two of the programs delivering on SDG 4. It also identified the renewal of Melbourne's 'Food City' Policy, which aims to create a food system that is secure, sustainable, healthy, and socially inclusive, as an opportunity through which to closer align the policy with SDG 4 (Among other SDGs).

<sup>21</sup> SDG Watch Europe (2018) 'Launch of the 2018 Spanish Cities Index'. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.sdgwatcheurope.org/launch-of-the-2018-sdg-spanish-cities-index/>

<sup>22</sup> Foreign Affairs Trade and References Committee (2019) 'Committee Hansard 29 October, 2018,' p.52-53. Retrieved from:  
<https://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query=Id%3A%22committees%2Fcommsen%2F9b226f7b-c3a5-42bd-9bb0-ab9b0a639838%2F0000%22>



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could also bring increased awareness to the goals. However, City of Melbourne and other local governments who are performing well against the SDGs seem to be doing so of their own volition. This includes the City of Newcastle, New South Wales, which has taken the initiative to incorporate the SDGs into their refreshed community strategic plan<sup>23</sup>.

The Council of Australian Governments meets and includes federal, state, and the Australian Local Government Association could be an appropriate place to discuss and coordinate matters relating to SDG implementation at various levels of government. However, and unfortunately, COAG has never made a formal statement about the 2030 Agenda<sup>24</sup>.

### **Case Study: US Cities SDG Index**

The US Cities Index covers the 100 most populous cities (measured as Metropolitan Statistical Areas, or MSAs) in the United States. It synthesizes data available today across 49 indicators spanning 16 of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that were agreed upon by all countries in September 2015.

The idea of the index is to encourage local action, with federal government support. By acting as a benchmarking tool on different aspects of sustainable development at the city level, the index allows where a city is doing well, and where it is not, to be seen, to help local government authorities and planners examine their progress relative to their peers. The UNSDSN writes that it is also intended to serve as an advocacy tool, and will motivate the US federal government to take action.

There are opportunities to link SDG 4 to existing policies and frameworks. There is currently a review of the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians<sup>25</sup> underway through the education council in COAG. The Declaration was signed and agreed upon by all education ministers in 2008, prior to agreement of the SDGs. However, and despite being a product of the pre-SDG era,

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<sup>23</sup> City of Newcastle (2018) '*Community Strategic Plan 2030*'. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/Council/News/Latest-News/UN-goals-included-in-city-s-Strategic-Plan>

<sup>24</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade References Committee (2019) '*United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*', p.75. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt\\_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf)

<sup>25</sup> [The Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australian](#)'s full text is available here.

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much of the declaration itself is not dissimilar to sections of SDG 4<sup>26</sup>. The Melbourne Declaration sets the directions for Australian schooling for the ten-year period 2009–2018 as agreed to by all Australian education ministers. It contains 2 overarching goals: Goal 1: Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence; Goal 2: All young Australians become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens.

The review of the declaration provides an opportunity for government of all levels and civil society to jointly focus on integrating the values underpinning SDG 4 into the declaration, which will inform policy. Unfortunately, not only has the process not been particularly transparent, but the government has ruled out the discussion of issues such as funding, resulting in a number of stakeholders boycotting the review. There has also been no noticeable mention of SDG 4 or any of the SDGs by COAG, or in the Education Council's recent discussion paper of the Declaration's review<sup>27</sup>.

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<sup>26</sup> The declaration commits to improving outcomes for indigenous Australian youth, and young disadvantaged Australians from low socioeconomic backgrounds. In addition, a focus on environmental sustainability is compatible with SDG 4 Target 7.

<sup>27</sup> Education Council (2019) *'Review of the Melbourne Declaration Discussion Paper'*. Retrieved from: [https://uploadstorage.blob.core.windows.net/media/education-au/20190415\\_FINAL\\_Melb%20Dec\\_Discussion%20Paper.pdf](https://uploadstorage.blob.core.windows.net/media/education-au/20190415_FINAL_Melb%20Dec_Discussion%20Paper.pdf)

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# Role of CSOs in SDG Review and Implementation Process

The UNDP recognizes that the successful implementation of the 2030 Agenda requires the broad participation of multiple stakeholders, and states that any Inter-ministerial Commission tasked with addressing the SDGs should include the presence of Civil Society<sup>28</sup>. Various countries, such as Finland and Germany have engaged the participation of CSOs in similar bodies/forums. More generally, the United Nations Economic and Social Council affirmed that:

*“A key aspect for institutional arrangements for planning and implementation at the national level is the effective engagement of civil society, local authorities, indigenous peoples, local communities, academia and all other relevant actors. Such approaches are most effective when they are adopted at the earlier stages of planning and decision-making. Support should be provided to strengthen the capacity of stakeholders and availability of the information that enables the use of those approaches in decision-making processes.”*

And,

*“To ensure that the voices of stakeholders are adequately heard in the intergovernmental processes, for example through multi-stakeholder dialogues, hearings or through gathering inputs.”<sup>29</sup>*

Yet, despite recognition of this importance at the global, intergovernmental level, Australia’s recent senate inquiry into the implementation of the SDGs revealed that despite some consultation leading

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<sup>28</sup> UNDP (2017) ‘Institutional and Coordination Mechanisms: Guidance Note on Facilitating Integration and Coherence for SDG Implementation’, p.12. Retrieved from: [https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional\\_Coordination\\_Mechanisms\\_GuidanceNote.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/2478Institutional_Coordination_Mechanisms_GuidanceNote.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> United Nations Economic and Social Council (2018) ‘Synthesis of voluntary submissions by functional commissions of the Economic and Social Council and other intergovernmental bodies and forums’, p.5. Retrieved from: [https://www.un.org/ga/search/view\\_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2017/3&Lang=E](https://www.un.org/ga/search/view_doc.asp?symbol=E/HLPF/2017/3&Lang=E)

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up to the VNR writing process, there is a shared feeling among civil society that there could be more done to engage civil society meaningfully in the implementation and review process<sup>30</sup>

There are two ways in which the Australian Government could improve in this area. The first is the establishment of a permanent structure to involve civil society in decision making processes etc., and improved funding to enable civil society to implement the SDGs.

Civil Society is well positioned to engage with the SDGs. Many CSOs are doing excellent work in this area. For example, Adult Learning Australia (ALA) is a not for profit entity and has been in operation for 59 years. It is the largest national peak body for adult and community education (ACE) in the country and has both organisational and individual members in all states and territories who reflect the diversity of adult and community education ALA's vision is for equitable access to lifelong and lifewide learning for all Australians. Case studies illustrating some of ALA's contribution to achieving SDG 4 are shown in Appendix 1.

ALA's engagement with promotion of SDG 4 and the wider 2030 Agenda can be seen in its efforts to build capacity of citizens and the community education sector to engage with the goals. For example, on 10 December 2018, ALA hosted a joint forum with RMIT as part of an International Human Rights Day event focusing on the importance of lifelong learning to sustainable development, the achievement of the UN SDGs and its effectiveness in enabling and empowering citizens to take action. To coincide with the forum, ALA produced and launched a special edition journal with the theme lifelong learning and sustainable development based on the SDGs.

ALA also contributes directly to Target 4.7 of SDG 4 in its efforts to ensure that all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and live sustainable lifestyles. This can be seen in its project '*A Greenhouse Around the Corner*'<sup>31</sup>, which aims to provide useful energy efficiency information and resources to the adult and community education sector. The program, which received funding from the Australian Department of Industry, includes 6 web-episodes showcasing the implementation of various energy-efficient measures by community houses and centres. The program also contains a significant selection of accessible resources for community education providers and citizens who are looking to implement sustainable energy solutions at home and at school. These include resources on, understanding and managing energy bills, understanding

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<sup>30</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade References Committee (2019) '*United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)*', p.39 Retrieved from: [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt\\_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf)

<sup>31</sup> More information available here: <https://ala.asn.au/a-greenhouse-around-the-corner/>

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the energy star rating system, installing solar power, sustainable cooling and ventilation options, and much more.

The support of the government towards CSOs for this purpose has been patchy. The Australian Government partnered with Civil Society Organisations (CSOs), for example through DFAT providing funding for both the Australian SDGs website, Monash's 2018 SDG Summit, and the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation's (CSIRO) support for the development of SDG toolkits by ACFID and Collaboration for Impact.

However, many of these organisations are not well enough resourced to sustain their engagement, regardless of how positive the outcomes are. The Australian Council of Social Services (ACOSS), which is the peak body for the community services sector, points this out and adds that Community Organisations must be sufficiently resourced to engage with the SDGs on a significant level. Towards this end, ACFID has suggested the creation of a scheme for the provision of small grants through each government department in order to enable stakeholders to access funding for communicating the SDGs. In particular, provisions to support the active participation and leadership of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the SDGs are crucial.

In addition to increased funding and support from the government, CSO engagement with the SDGs could be greatly facilitated by the establishment of a multi-sectoral references committee. Again, CSOs are well placed to engage with the SDGs, and many of them bring expert knowledge. The space to work collaboratively and in partnership with government is not only desirable, it is necessary if the 2030 agenda is to be achieved. Australia could learn a lot from the approach of Finland (and other countries, such as Germany, which have adopted similarly inclusive approaches). The establishment of a multi-sectoral reference group could ensure a place for civil society to be engaged in the important processes in a sustained and meaningful manner. This has already been one of the 17 recommendations made by a recent Senate inquiry.

### **Case Study: Finland**

Finland effectively involves a broad range of stakeholders in its implementation of the 2030 Agenda by way of two main bodies.

The Finnish National Commission on Sustainable Development (FNCSD) is a Prime Minister-led partnership forum. Established well before the 2030 Agenda, the Commission has the stated aim of 'integrating sustainable development into Finnish policies, measures, and everyday practices. In addition, a Sustainable Development Expert Panel (comprising professors from various disciplines) exists to provide assistance and advice to the National Commission.

The Development Policy Committee is a parliamentary body tasked with monitoring the

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implementation of global development policy in Finland. Both bodies contain a large variety of non-governmental stakeholders, including CSOs.

## The VNR Report and Role Played by CSOs

The purpose of the VNRs is improved efficiency in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda as a whole. According to the UN, the VNRs aim to facilitate the sharing of experiences, challenges and good practice, and to ultimately strengthen policies of government and mobilize multi-stakeholder support and cultivate partnerships. They are to be state-led, but also to involve multiple stakeholders<sup>32</sup>.

Australia released its VNR in June 2018 and presented it at the HLPF the following month. The process of consultation involved a process of stakeholder outreach whereby individual agencies called for case studies, mostly via their websites. Over 300 case studies were received<sup>33</sup>. The website of the Department of Education and Training included the following:

*“Stakeholders may contribute case studies and experiences that showcase Australia’s commitment to SDG 4. Please limit your response to 500 words. Contributions received by 4 December 2017 may inform the Department’s contribution to the VNR.”<sup>34</sup>*

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<sup>32</sup>United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) ‘Handbook of preparation of voluntary national reviews’, p.57. Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

<sup>33</sup> Foreign Affairs and Trade References Committee (2019) ‘United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)’, p.43. Retrieved from: [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt\\_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/SDGs/~media/Committees/fadt_ctte/SDGs/report.pdf)

<sup>34</sup> Department of Education and Training (ND) ‘2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development’, Retrieved from: <https://www.education.gov.au/2030-agenda-sustainable-development>



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According to the recent senate inquiry, views on the consultation process were generally positive'. However, there was also limited time for some stakeholders to make submissions and contribute to the process. In addition, and considering the catch-cry of "No one left Behind", it is disappointing to hear that groups such as Children and Youth with Disability Australia and DPO claimed that there was minimal promotion of this initiative specifically to the disability representative and advocacy sector<sup>35</sup>. It is imperative that Australia ensures there is adequate time for consultations with CSOs in preparation for the next VNR, with consideration made for groups, which noted a lack of time to prepare for 2018's VNR (Disability Advocacy Groups, and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Groups).

It is worth remembering that there are very visible and available 'Common Reporting Guidelines' which have been made available to guide the development of VNRs. These guidelines ask that VNRs be structured in such a way as to allow for consistency and comparability across countries, and also include information that is deemed necessary in order to:

*"...mobilize the necessary means of implementation and partnerships, support the identification of solutions and best practices and promote the coordination and effectiveness of the international development system."<sup>36</sup>*

Unfortunately, Australia's VNR fails to adhere to the Common Reporting Guidelines not only in terms of content, but also in terms of structure. The VNR reads as a collection of case studies, rather than an evidence-based analysis of Australia's progress against the goals. Focusing on SDG 4 within the VNR, there is simply no mention of individual targets. Inclusion of statistics and indicators around the specific targets would not only have allowed for measurement of Australia's current progress against the goals, but also to act as a baseline against which to measure further progress. The Common Reporting Guidelines do ask that where it is not baseline data provided in the report, information be provided on what is being done to produce such data. There is mention towards the end of the Australian VNR of a baseline report by the National Sustainable Development Council<sup>37</sup>, tracking

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<sup>35</sup> Children and Young People with Disability Australia and Disabled People's Organisations Australia (2018) 'Joint Submission to the Inquiry into the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals', p.2. Retrieved from: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=a3308d08-4825-4c03-8b59-9a9325080cdb&subId=564950>

<sup>36</sup> United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs (2019) 'Handbook of preparation of voluntary national reviews', p.57. Retrieved from: <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/vnrs/>

<sup>37</sup> The Council is an independent body, which includes experts from the business, civil society and academic sectors. The Council's report "Transforming Australia", reviews Australia's performance against the 7 targets of SDG 4 (among the

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Australia's progress, but the question should persist "why is data not included in the VNR?" Among the 2018 VNR submissions, there are various examples of countries that did get this right. Canada, for example, makes explicit mention of several of SDG 4's Targets' indicators in relation to the country's performance<sup>38</sup>.

It is also disappointing to find that of the 46 Countries that provided VNRs in 2018, Australia was one of only 2 (along with Singapore) to not provide any mention of how the SDGs were being integrated into national frameworks.

As mentioned, the reporting guidelines are in place to ensure that country reports contribute to the review process of the 2030 agenda, and through the highlighting of gaps, challenges and good practice, assist all countries in maximizing and tracking progress. It is, therefore, vital that Australia's future VNRs adhere to the Common Reporting Guidelines, ensuring that targets and indicators are explicitly reported on and addressed in the report. In addition, Australia must not only make reference to what's working in the next VNR, but identify challenges and gaps in achieving the SDGs, including SDG 4.

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other SDGs), and established some alternative indicators for doing so. The report can be found here:

<https://www.sdgtransformingaustralia.com/>

<sup>38</sup> Government of Canada (2018) '*Canada's Implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development: Voluntary National Review*'. Retrieved from:

[https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20312Canada\\_ENGLISH\\_18122\\_Canadas\\_Voluntary\\_National\\_ReviewENV7.pdf](https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/20312Canada_ENGLISH_18122_Canadas_Voluntary_National_ReviewENV7.pdf)



# Review of Progress so Far



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The approach this report takes to measuring progress in SDG 4's implementation is a thematic one. This decision was made due to the fact that many ACED member organisations are well placed to draw on first-hand experience of engaging with various elements of SDG 4. ACED has identified 4 thematic areas of concern for SDG 4; *Equity and Inclusion, Sector-wide Approaches and Frames, Funding and Resourcing, and Capacity Building and Quality*. The aim of this report is to shine a spotlight on Australia's progress regarding these 4 themes that cut across different elements of SDG 4.

## Equity and Inclusion

***By 2030, eliminate gender disparities in education and ensure equal access to all levels of education and vocational training for the vulnerable, including persons with disabilities, indigenous peoples and children in vulnerable situations (SDG Target 4.5)***

The phrase “no one left behind” is commonly heard in Australian political discourse and the idea that everyone has ‘a fair go’ is considered such an important national value that the concept is a testable item in the test of citizenship<sup>39</sup>. Achieving equity and inclusion is a stated priority for Australia's education aid program and the strategy states:

*‘... Australia will continue to advocate for: disability inclusive education systems; girls’ participation; and equal education opportunities for rural and remote communities, as well as ethnic and linguistic minorities. Australia will strategically support initiatives that enable access and participation in education and training at all levels, with a focus on the most marginalized. Interventions to improve access and participation (such as school feeding, conditional cash transfers and school infrastructure improvements) will incorporate specific tools (such as better targeting and monitoring) to maximize their impact on marginalized groups.’<sup>40</sup>*

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<sup>39</sup> Australian Department of Home Affairs (2019) *Australian Citizenship: our common bond*. Retrieved from: <https://immi.homeaffairs.gov.au/citizenship/test-and-interview/our-common-bond>

<sup>40</sup> Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (2015) *Strategy for Australia's aid investments in education 2015-2020*. Retrieved from: <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Documents/strategy-for-australias-aid-investments-in-education-2015-2020.pdf>

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This need for monitoring tools has made data collection a significant part of the sector’s approach to inclusion; a more sophisticated approach, including disability inclusion and gender equality in education, that changes the nature of the projects is required.

The overarching policy on Australian aid across all sectors directs that 80 per cent of all projects must address gender issues in implementation<sup>41</sup> and education aid interventions must comply with this requirement. However, the diversity of learners in any given country will present a different mix of factors leading to marginalized or disadvantaged groups – for example minority languages in one country, gender in another, indigeneity elsewhere – and it is important to balance the aid portfolio to reflect that diversity, ensuring that the program is not biased or exclusive.

In the VNR, Australia highlights achievements in equity by giving an example of the inclusive nature of its own student travel program, which supports Australian undergraduates to travel to other countries. “From 2014–18, the Government has supported 30,000 students to have overseas education experiences through New Colombo Plan scholarships or mobility projects in 37 host locations. The program is inclusive: more than 50 per cent of participants are female and approximately five per cent have identified as having a disability.” While this may serve as an illustration of the Australian government ‘leading by example,’ it is problematic if the strongest evidence of achieving equity across the aid program is limited to internal procedures.

## Sector wide Approaches and Frames

***By 2030, ensure that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education so that they are ready for primary education (SDG Target 4.2)***

The first strategic priority in Australia’s aid in education recognizes that investments in early years provides a return on investment for later, for example with improved transition to primary school and reduced dropout rates. Australia delivers a package of investment in the early years sector to improve health, nutrition and education outcomes in an integrated way.

The concept of Lifelong Learning is central to SDG 4, with post-school provision and early childhood development as important as schooling. However, a ‘traditional’ view of learning as a linear process seems to be most prevalent amongst policy makers in Australia. This idea that learning and education

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<sup>41</sup> DFAT (2014) ‘Australian aid: promoting prosperity, reducing poverty, enhancing stability’. P.25 Retrieved from: <https://dfat.gov.au/about-us/publications/Pages/australian-aid-promoting-prosperity-reducing-poverty-enhancing-stability.aspx>



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takes place as a series of sequential and formal stages culminating in employment and petering out, with perhaps some level of ‘on the job’ up skilling, not only fails to take into account that for many this is not the case, but leads to a ‘hierarchy of educational importance’<sup>42</sup>, in turn leading to the belief that some sectors are more deserving of funding, due to their position in this linear ‘journey of education’ and tier on the hierarchy.

Viewing education and learning as an ecological arrangement takes into account their complex and interconnected nature. According to Brown<sup>43</sup>,

*In the educational environment an inter-connected and inter-dependent array of providers and opportunities co-exist, where the health and sustainability of one element is strengthened by the mutual health of the others. Thought of this way, it is easier to appreciate the link between pre-school learning and higher education, between professional development, craft courses and community health programs, between community adult literacy and job programs, and so on. It not only applies to institutions, but to individuals as well as they move in and out, and between different educational settings and are equally reliant on the availability of quality and relevant learning opportunities. It accords more closely with how adults go about organising their own learning, which is arranged through communities of interest, through local organisations and networks and is often place-based, self-help and special interest groups, or individually motivated learning.*

The policy implications of the linear conception are an increased funding focus on formal education. Considering roughly 75% are outside the formal education sector<sup>44</sup>, the education of a large proportion of the Australian population is not receiving the policy attention it is due.

This limitation is reflected in Australia’s education aid program. Much of the systems work supported by the Australian government is narrow in its focus on formal education systems, employability and productivity, including in the formal VET sector. It is important to remember that SDG Target 4.4 does address skills development and it is a priority in the 2015-2020 plan. However, in many partner countries, there is a strong tradition of non-formal vocational education and training that should also be recognised and validated as a valuable pathway for some learners. In some cases, indigenous providers and non-state providers can reach marginalised groups and support learners who would otherwise be excluded.

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<sup>42</sup> Brown (2018) ‘Lifelong Learning: An organizing principle for reform’, p.322, Australian Journal of Adult Learning. 58 (3) (pp. 312-335)312-335) <https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/AJAL-Nov-2018-Featuredlogo.pdf>

<sup>43</sup> Ibid (2018), p.323

<sup>44</sup> Ibid (2018), p.320.

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***By 2030, substantially increase the number of youth and adults who have relevant skills, including technical and vocational skills, for employment, decent jobs and entrepreneurship (SDG Target 4.4)***

Greater attention is needed to provide education for 21st century life skills such as critical analytical skills, problem solving, conflict resolution, communication and community building. These skills need to be incorporated into training for employment programs. The latter need to be more realistic in relation to the actual jobs available in the market in each partner country. Learning and training programs should be pitched to the large majority of youth and adults that are currently not enrolled in TVET programs. In Australia, the public system of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) plays a strong role in skills development for youth and adults.

It is important to acknowledge that skills development is a lifelong endeavor. Within Australia, community based learning – in education schemes, community centres and libraries – plays a significant part in achieving SDG 4.

For example, The State Library Victoria and Victoria's 47 public library services are working together to address this issue. Recent initiatives have included the *Reading and Literacy for All* framework (2015), which clearly articulates both the unique role of public libraries in the adult literacy space and strategies for improvement, and the best practice guidelines *Reading and Literacy for all: Adult literacy – Victorian public libraries in action* (2016). Sector-wide training has helped public library staff to work more effectively in partnership with other adult literacy service providers. Seminars and forums have brought together public library and other adult literacy service providers, building relationships and fostering collaborative approaches.

A three-year grants program was instigated in 2017 to support individual public library initiatives addressing low literacy amongst adults. The grants have enabled development of the *Welcome to the library* reader and teacher resource to assist adult literacy service providers in engaging their non-English speaking background students with their local library; a family literacy program, helping low-literacy adults learn how to read stories to their pre-school children; and development of apps and face-to-face workshop programs to help low-literacy adults with the functional literacy skills needed to navigate government services and manage their finances.

Libraries across Victoria deliver programs that encourage women to connect and interact socially as well as develop new skills. These programs empower women to gain confidence, feel less isolated, apply for employment and enter education. For example, Stepping Stones and Job Club are programs offered by libraries in partnership with not-for-profit organisations that are tailored to the needs of migrant and refugee women.

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Although the programs described above are extremely positive, libraries have a limited capacity and cannot be expected to reach all learners that need to be reached. In order to ensure that education in Australia is both lifelong and lifewide, there needs to be recognition of, and more support for, the important role played by Adult and Community Education providers, which have a history of providing learning to Australians.

Research has shown<sup>45</sup> that ACE providers tend to engage a high number of disadvantaged learners that mainly comprises unemployed Australians, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, Australians with a disability, and those from Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities.

The Skills First Reconnect Program in Victoria is a good example of the government working collaboratively with ACE providers to provide better long-term outcomes for Australians who find themselves excluded. The program is funded by the Victorian Government and targets Australians who may find a barrier to learning and transitioning to the workforce. Specifically:

- high-needs learners aged 17 to 19 who have not completed year 12 or equivalent and are not in education, training or full-time employment;  
or
- individuals aged 20 to 64 who have not completed year 12 or equivalent and who are long-term unemployed.

The program is provided through TAFEs and Learn Local RTOs (which are ACE providers) who receive funding to:

- address barriers to enrolling in and completing an accredited training program and a supervised work experience placement
- with access to specialist support services such as health, accommodation, and personal and relationship supports<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>45</sup> Adult Learning Australia (2016) 'Australian ACE Environmental Scan Research Project 2016', p.8. Retrieved from: <https://ala.asn.au/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/Australian-ACE-Report-2016-Final.compressed.pdf>

<sup>46</sup> State Government of Victoria: Department of Education and Training (2019) 'Skills First Reconnect Program'. Retrieved from: <https://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/Pages/reconnect-program.aspx>

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According to the Yarraville Community Centre's (YCC) 2017 annual report, participants in the program achieved outcomes of Certificate II<sup>47</sup> or higher in hospitality, retail, beauty, building and construction and community services. YCC Also noted that the program resulted in direct employment pathways for 80% of learners<sup>48</sup>.

The Skills Reconnect Program aligns well with the Lifelong Learning Aspect of SDG 4 through targeting those who are not currently in formal education or employment, and are vulnerable to social exclusion. Although the program is currently funded by the Victorian State Government, the support of the Federal Government in funding such programs would be helpful in extending its reach, both in and outside of Victoria.

Unfortunately, along with the under-funding of TAFE<sup>49</sup>, the ACE sector does not receive the policy attention that it should. Over the past 25 years, as Governments have changed, courses provided by organisations have come under increasing pressure, with some closing, and others merging<sup>50</sup>.

There is no national approach to the adult and community education sector which reaches across all states and territories in urban, rural and remote communities. Governments and organisations should use adult and community education as a process to engage with the SDGs and include resourcing effective, high quality professional development that focuses on teaching and learning practice designed to improve SDG outcomes for high needs cohorts.

The need to renew the 2008 Ministerial Declaration on ACE provides an opportunity to align a national approach to the sector, with the SDGs. In addition to there being a policy gap regarding ACE, there is also no formal lifelong learning policy in Australia. A formal policy would allow for the creation of economic and social goals, as well as the definition of roles and responsibilities for both government and non-government actors. The lack of such a policy leadership mirrors the lack of political leadership in regarding the implementation of the SDGs, in general. Due to a narrow conception of learning as a linear progression, and primarily tasked with skilling entrants into the workforce, there exists something of a bias in Australia's approach to certain sectors. This leads to a lack of focus and policy on adult education. ACED believes that if we are truly committed to LLL, we need to re-balance the value of each of the different education sectors.

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<sup>47</sup> See: Australian Core Skills Framework: <https://www.education.gov.au/australian-core-skills-framework>

<sup>48</sup> Yarraville Community Centre (2018) p.16. Retrieved from: [https://www.ycc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2017-Annual-Report-Final\\_opt.pdf](https://www.ycc.net.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/2017-Annual-Report-Final_opt.pdf)

<sup>49</sup> More details regarding this are available in 'funding and resourcing' section of this report.

<sup>50</sup> Brown (2018) *Lifelong Learning: An organizing principle for reform*, p.329, Australian Journal of Adult Learning. 58 (3) (pp. 312-335)

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## Funding and Resourcing

### Education Aid Funding

In ACED's opinion, Australia's education aid program needs a substantial increase in funding if it is to achieve the objectives it sets out. In some partner countries, the domestic tax base is low and the needs for educational improvement high so international funds must bridge the gap. Historically, Australia has been a generous donor in this sector but its poor contribution was noticed at the recent Global Partnership for Education (GPE)<sup>51</sup> Replenishment Conference in Dakar in February 2018.

It would be helpful if there was more transparency of the different delivery mechanisms used within the aid program, i.e. when using managing contractors, being clear on costs, value add and reporting / accountabilities. Many agencies and organizations are involved and a more transparent approach to reporting would facilitate sharing lessons learned that could improve the effectiveness of the sector as a whole. DFAT could be more open to strategic engagement with NGOs including at the contract management level. For example, the 2015 review of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program (ANCP) by the ODE found that "one fifth of the results for the Australian Government's aid program are delivered by Australian aid organisations for just 2.7% of the aid budget."<sup>52</sup>

As well as increasing the overall spend on education aid, we recommend that funding to two neglected areas should be prioritized:

- Production and improved quality of in-country education data collection, and its timely and streamlined interpretation.
- Investment in adult and youth literacy and community learning centres, along with a family education approach, so that children go home to families where at least one parent is literate and supportive of the child's education.

ACED believes that the current allocation of over 50% of education aid funds to scholarships, while supporting capacity building and generating soft power benefits in the region, brings the budget seriously out of balance. This means there are fewer funds to spend on in-country education support,

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<sup>51</sup> The [Global Partnership for Education](#) is a global multi-stakeholder partnership and funding platform with the aim of strengthening education systems in developing countries. Australia has been a GPE partner since 2008.

<sup>52</sup> Office of Development Effectiveness (2015) '*Evaluation of the Australian NGO Cooperation Program Final Report*'. Retrieved from: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/how-we-measure-performance/ode/Documents/ode-evaluation-australian-ngo-cooperation-program-final-report.pdf>

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where the amounts disbursed would improve education outcomes for many more people.

## Early Childhood Funding

According to the Australian Early Development Census (AEDC), there is substantial evidence that a person's life success and physical and mental health are rooted in early childhood<sup>53</sup>.

It follows, then, that education and care in the early years of a child's life are crucial in ensuring positive outcomes.

Despite this, the Australian Early Development Census finds that approximately 1 in 5 children have developmental vulnerabilities<sup>54</sup>. In regards to cognitive and linguistic development, children living in the most socio-economically disadvantaged locations were 4.6 times as likely to be developmentally vulnerable than those from the least disadvantaged areas<sup>55</sup>

While it is certainly positive that 96.3% of 4 year old Australia children are enrolled in 15 hours of ECD, the number is significantly behind other OECD countries on the percentage of 3 year olds in early-childhood education and care (64% vs. 76%). Many other OECD countries, such as the UK, provide free ECC to not only 4 year olds, but 3 year old learners, as well. There is a significant difference here, and one that may well have consequences for the future success of young Australians.

Australia is one of only eleven OECD countries that do not provide universally funded access to early childhood education for 3-year olds. Such a move would be very much in the national interest and, while there is universal access to preschool for four year olds, there is no funding certainty. Unlike other education sectors, early childhood education has to wait year by year for funding announcements; the current Commonwealth funding runs out at the end of 2020. All children benefit from high quality preschool education, but particularly those from disadvantaged and vulnerable backgrounds, from whom 15 hours a week in the year before schooling is simply not enough to

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<sup>53</sup> Australian Early Development Census (2019) *'The Importance of Early Childhood Development'*. Retrieved from: <https://www.aedc.gov.au/parents/the-importance-of-early-childhood-development>

<sup>54</sup> Australian Early Development Census (2019) *'2018 National Report'*, p.4. Retrieved from: <https://www.aedc.gov.au/Websilk/Handlers/ResourceDocument.ashx?id=c3cf2764-db9a-6d2b-9fad-ff0000a141dd>

<sup>55</sup> Australian Early Development Census (2019) *'2018 National Report'*, p.33. Retrieved from: <https://www.aedc.gov.au/Websilk/Handlers/ResourceDocument.ashx?id=c3cf2764-db9a-6d2b-9fad-ff0000a141dd>

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ensure they are on the path to long-term health and wellbeing, successful education and a positive future.

## School Funding

As previously mentioned, following the Gonski review in 2011, Australia moved to a needs-based system for funding the primary and secondary schools. The system is based on payments of Schooling Resource Standard (SRS)<sup>56</sup> according to student disadvantage. However, inequality in educational outcomes persists in Australian schools.

Disadvantaged primary and high school students such as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, rural students and/or learners with disabilities, continue to have poorer educational outcomes than their more advantaged classmates. For example, the most recent Australian NAPLAN results show that while 93% of non-indigenous year 9 students were above the minimum standards for reading, only 71% of indigenous students were<sup>57</sup>.

Regarding socio-economic status, only 5% of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile were high performers compared to 8% of students in the second socioeconomic quartile, 12% in the third socioeconomic quartile and 21% in the highest socioeconomic quartile. In addition, 30% of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile were low performers compared to 20% of students in the second socioeconomic quartile, 13% in the third socioeconomic quartile and 7% in the highest socioeconomic quartile.

The 2015 Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) data provides further confirmation of the long-term trend whereby students from relatively advantaged backgrounds perform significantly better than those from disadvantaged backgrounds.<sup>58</sup> It shows that achievement gaps in Science, Maths and Reading performance between students in the highest and lowest Socio Economic Status

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<sup>56</sup> An estimate of how much total public funding a school needs to meet the educational needs of its students.

<sup>57</sup> Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority (2017) *'National Assessment Program Literacy and Numeracy: Achievements in Reading, Writing, Language Conventions and Numeracy'*, p.196.

Retrieved from:

[https://www.nap.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/naplan-national-report-2017\\_final\\_04dec2017.pdf?sfvrsn=0](https://www.nap.edu.au/docs/default-source/default-document-library/naplan-national-report-2017_final_04dec2017.pdf?sfvrsn=0)

<sup>58</sup> ACER, *PISA 2015: a first look at Australia's results*. Sue Thomson, Lisa De Bortoli, Catherine Underwood. December 2016. pp.60–63



(SES) quartiles are comparable to around three years of schooling; one and a half years between metropolitan and remote school students;<sup>59</sup> and over two years between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students.<sup>60</sup>

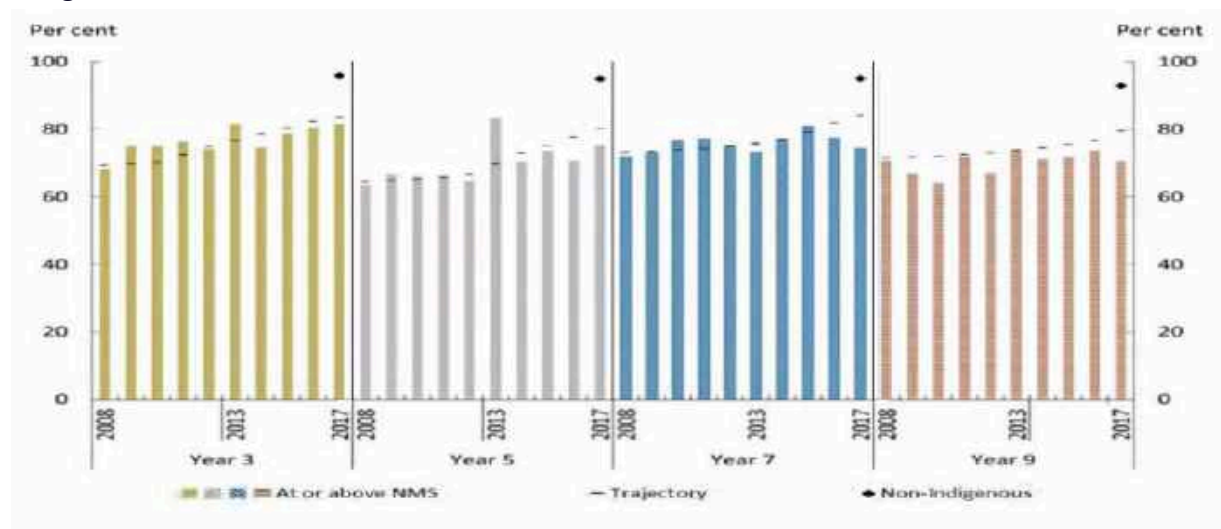
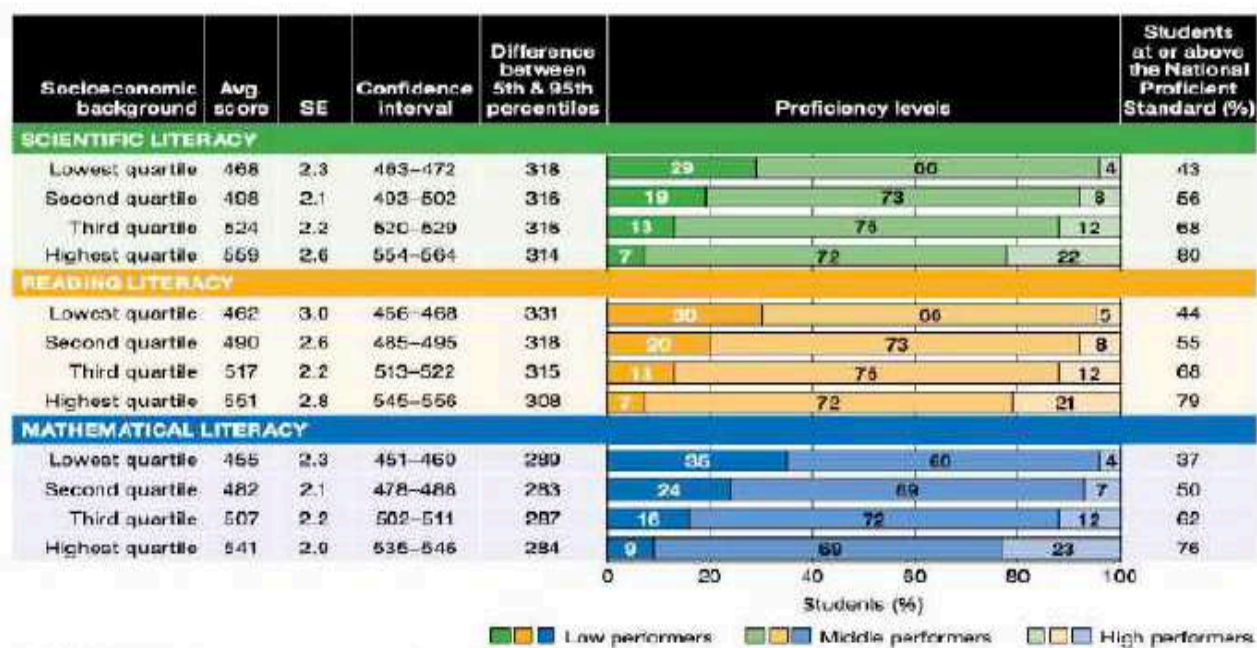


FIGURE 4: Indigenous Students at or above national minimum standards for reading<sup>61</sup>



<sup>59</sup> ACER, PISA 2015, op.cit., pp.56–59

<sup>60</sup> Ibid

<sup>61</sup> Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2019) 'Closing the Gap Report 2019', p.77.

Retrieved from: <https://ctgreport.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/ctg-report-2019.pdf?a=1>

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**FIGURE 5: Average scores and proficiency levels in scientific, reading and mathematical literacy, by socioeconomic background<sup>62</sup>**

Under current funding arrangements only 1.3 per cent of public schools will be funded to the Schooling Resource Standard by 2023. Yet nearly 99 per cent of private schools will be funded at, or in excess of, the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) by 2023.<sup>63</sup>

Reductions in funding have meant that Australian public schools were forced to abandon plans to reduce class sizes, employ more specialist teachers in areas of literacy and numeracy, improve ongoing support for teachers, provide intensive support for students who are in danger of falling behind and employ more specialist staff such as speech pathologists<sup>64</sup>.

In the Australian Education Union's 2018 State of our Schools survey of thousands of principals and teachers across Australia, nearly four in five (81%) of public school principals said that they do not have sufficient resources to cater for students with disability and nearly nine in ten (88%) said that they divert funds from other areas to assist students with disability.<sup>65</sup>

Australia is now at the point where public funding of education has fallen significantly behind that of other OECD countries. In 2005, the OECD reported Australia's total public funding of education at 10.6% of total government expenditure, and by 2015 this had fallen to 9.3% - far below the 2015 OECD average of 11.0%.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>62</sup> Thomson, De Bertoli, Underwood (2016) '*PISA 2015 a first look at Australia's results*', p.60-61. Retrieved from: <https://research.acer.edu.au/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1021&context=ozpisa>

<sup>63</sup> Australian Department of Education and Training (2018) '*The National School Reform Agreement*'. Retrieved From: <https://www.education.gov.au/national-school-reform-agreement-0>

<sup>64</sup> Australian Education Union (2016) '*Getting Results: Gonski Funding in Australian Schools*'. Retrieved from: <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/application/files/5714/6249/3812/GonskiResults2016.pdf>

<sup>65</sup> The AEU (2018), [State of Our Schools Survey](#), demonstrates most principals (88%) agree they have "students with disability at your school who you have to assist using funds from other areas of your budget because they are ineligible for targeted government funding or the amount you receive is inadequate".

<sup>66</sup> Australian Education Union (2018) '*New OECD Report Reveals the real cost of Morrison Govt Education Cuts*'. Retrieved from <http://www.aeufederal.org.au/news-media/media-releases/2018/september/120918>

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The underfunding of government schools is a barrier to equity. The disparity in the funding between government and non-government is significant because the socioeconomic profile of schools in each of the sectors is very distinct. According to Preston,

*“Government schools have almost twice as many students from low-income families as they have from high-income families, while other (non-Catholic) non-government schools reverse this, having twice as many students from high-income families. Catholic schools have more students from high-income families than from low-income families, and the largest proportion of students in Catholic schools are from medium income families.”<sup>67</sup>*

This trend toward household income differentials between students in the different school systems is more acute at the secondary level than the primary level. This means that as children grow older, they are exposed to increased socio-economic segregation in schooling.

Only sector blind, needs based funding will ensure that every child has the opportunity to fulfill their potential through access to a high-quality education. This will be achieved only if all schools are funded to 100% of the SRS to ensure they have the resources required to meet the needs of their students.

## **Vocational Education and Training (VET)**

While VET remains a destination for disadvantaged groups, there has been a decline in the participation of several equity groups in recent years. They include people from remote and very remote areas, those in the most socio-economically disadvantaged group, female students and students in the youngest age group (15 to 19).

The Productivity Commission recently echoed the concerns of all major stakeholders and<sup>68</sup> the Business Council of Australia stating the sector is a ‘mess; and warning that the residualisation of TAFE will ‘fail to deliver a good long-term outcome’.

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<sup>67</sup> Preston. B (2013) ‘*The Social Make-up of Schools*’, p. 5. Retrieved from: <http://www.barbaraprestonresearch.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2018-BPreston-Social-make-up-of-schools-Report-.pdf>

<sup>68</sup> Productivity Commission (2017) ‘*Shifting the Dial: 5 Year Productivity Review*’, Report No. 84, Canberra, p86. Retrieved from: <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/productivity-review/report>

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In 2017, states, territories and the Commonwealth spent a combined total of \$6.1 billion on vocational education, but an ever decreasing portion of this spending is being made in the public system and vocational training has borne the brunt of the decline in public spending.<sup>69</sup> Funding was cut by more than 15% in the decade from 2007 to 2016 and government expenditure declined by 31.5% over that time.<sup>70</sup> This was swiftly followed by another cut of \$177 million in 2017.

The damage inflicted on the sector has led to the closures of public institutions around the country, with the number of TAFEs decreasing by a third from 2012 – 2017 to only 40 institutions<sup>71</sup>. These institutions played an integral role in communities, offering pathways to future employment for unemployed people and leaving students in regional and remote areas to suffer the most. Closing campuses results in closing off opportunities for all members of communities to access education. It has also eroded the viability of colleges and undermined confidence in the system. As a result of this continual assault, enrolments have declined steadily in recent years, from nearly 800,000 in 2015 to 680,000 in 2017.<sup>72</sup>

Despite the clear and undisputed societal and economic benefits that a robustly funded and administered vocational education sector provides, there has been a concerted and continual drive from successive federal governments over the last decade to marketise vocational education. Publicly funded institutions have been de-prioritized, which has resulted in a shift of public money to for-profit private providers, and disinvestment by governments in vocational education.<sup>73</sup> This deliberate recalibration has resulted in the extremely rapid proliferation of opportunistic private training providers and the unrestrained growth in the for-profit sector, primarily at the expense of Australia's previously world leading publicly funded and delivered vocational education system.

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<sup>69</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2018), *Total VET Students and Courses 2017: data slicer*. Retrieved from: <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/all-data/total-vet-students-and-courses-2017-data-slicer>

<sup>70</sup> Australian Education Union, (2018), *Stop TAFE Cuts Manifesto*, p1. Retrieved from: [http://www.stoptafecuts.com/application/files/1115/4457/1474/TAFE\\_Manifesto\\_A4.pdf](http://www.stoptafecuts.com/application/files/1115/4457/1474/TAFE_Manifesto_A4.pdf)

<sup>71</sup> Productivity Commission (2019) *Report on Government Services*, retrieved from [www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services](http://www.pc.gov.au/research/ongoing/report-on-government-services)

<sup>72</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2018), *'Government Funding of VET 2017: data tables'*, retrieved from <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/all-data/government-funding-of-vet-2017-data-tables>

<sup>73</sup> Wheelahan, L., (2018) *'New figures quantify the extent of the TAFE disaster'*, retrieved from: [http://stoptafecuts.com.au/blog/new-figures-quantify-extent-tafe-disaster?ccm\\_paging\\_p=3](http://stoptafecuts.com.au/blog/new-figures-quantify-extent-tafe-disaster?ccm_paging_p=3)

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There are now over 4,600 active registered training providers, but only 96 of these providers have more than 100 full time students. Although there may be a space for niche provision in some industries, it is evident that equity of access and quality cannot be maintained at a system level when that system is populated by thousands of tiny individual for-profit providers, some of whom have participated in recruitment and enrolment practices that can best be described as skirting the edge of legality.<sup>74</sup>

In 2009, TAFE institutions taught 81% of all publicly funded full-time equivalent students in Australia. Five years later, in 2014, this figure had reduced to 56%. Over the same five year period private, for-profit providers increased their share of publicly funded full time equivalent students from just under 15% to 40%, and increased their total student numbers by almost 286%.<sup>75</sup> Similarly, the most recent National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) shows that private providers continue to dominate - of the total 3.8 million students included in the NCVER's 2017 dataset, over 2.5 million (66.6%) were enrolled with private providers. By contrast, students enrolled at publicly funded institutions accounted for only 17.8% of all vocational education students in Australia.<sup>76</sup>

This current crisis of vocational education in Australia is a direct result of the deliberate push over many years towards the complete marketisation of the sector. The introduction of income contingent loan-based funding in vocational education caused huge reputational damage to the sector and has undermined the confidence of students and their parents in all types of vocational education providers. The rampant rent-seeking behaviour of private operators, allowed by the inability of regulators to stay abreast of private providers' complex arrangements designed to extract maximum public subsidy for minimum output, has meant that the vocational education sector now needs a complete structural overhaul and a significant injection of public funds to repair the damage caused over the last decade.

In order to rectify this failure in public policy, a new National Partnership Agreement is required. The Agreement would, at a minimum return government funding to pre-market reform levels. TAFE needs to be empowered with the capacity to work with its industries and communities to understand what

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<sup>74</sup> Bachelard, M., Cook, H., & Knott, M., (2015) '*Vocational Education, the biggest get-rich quick scheme in Australia*, Sydney Morning Herald'. Retrieved from: <https://www.smh.com.au/national/vocational-education-the-biggest-getrich-quick-scheme-in-australia-20150916-ginqwe.html>

<sup>75</sup> Wheelahan, L. (2016). '*Patching bits won't fix vocational education in Australia - a new model is needed*', International Journal of Training Research, p.10.

<sup>76</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education Research (2018), '*Total VET Students and Courses 2017: data slicer*', retrieved from <https://www.ncver.edu.au/research-and-statistics/data/all-data/total-vet-students-and-courses-2017-data-slicer>

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will best suit their needs. This includes working with the ACE sector as well as with industry and local employers. TAFE should be empowered with the capacity to work with its industries and communities to understand what will best suit their needs. This includes working with the ACE sector as well as with industry and local employers.

The failed experiment in establishing a student loans scheme should be acknowledged, the scheme should be closed, and any resources set aside to fund and administer it should be diverted directly to courses at publicly funded institutions.

Current federal funding is in the main delivered through the National Partnership Agreement of the Skilling Australians Fund, \$1.2 billion from 2018-2022. This funding is prioritised towards apprenticeships and traineeships across a range of industry areas including tourism, hospitality, health, ageing and community services, engineering, manufacturing, construction, digital technologies and agriculture. Whilst a number of these areas include many female workers, such as the health, ageing, and community and social services, there appears to be no recognition by the Federal Government of the need for funding for specific strategies to support women and girls in either many of the current male dominated trades or those industry areas where the need for more highly skilled workers, such as aged care, has been recently identified.

VET and adult education plays a key role in providing opportunities for many women and girls to train and retrain, often commencing with access courses that develop confidence and foundation skills. When faced with tight funding restrictions, these Courses, such as those available through TAFE South Australia, are often the first to disappear. VET has an important social inclusion role that needs to be specifically funded and recognised. VET and adult education courses need to be accessible in terms of fees and locations, to ensure women and girls are able to attain initial skills and continuing education.

Research<sup>77</sup> has identified the need for a range of support mechanisms to ensure successful take-up of careers through apprenticeships for women and girls. This support includes career advice and development whilst at school, and mentoring, role models and network organisations in relevant industry areas. The specific needs of women and girls in undertaking apprenticeships and other training in rural and remote communities should also be taken into account through appropriate curriculum, funding and support mechanisms. However, as mentioned, there is a lack of targeted programs to ensure this. It is the responsibility of governments to make these opportunities available and sustainable.

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<sup>77</sup> Simon and Clarke (2016) *‘Apprenticeships should work for women, too!’*, Education + Training Vol. 58 Iss 6 pp. 578 - 596

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Vocational education and training plays an important role in building the skills and capabilities of the workforce and in driving economic productivity. A comprehensive and coherent workforce framework is required underpinned by a full assessment of Australia's long term labour market needs, to assist VET in meeting industry and community requirements. The importance of VET educational qualifications and opportunities needs to be better understood by school leavers in assessing career progression. This includes investigations as to why girls' and women's involvement in VET does not always lead to better employment, and thus enhanced potential for their economic security.



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## Capacity Building and Quality

The 2015 Incheon Declaration emphasizes the value of quality education, and recognizes that it

*‘...fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED).’*

With this understanding in mind, the declaration states a commitment to ensure

*‘...that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.’*

Good quality education depends on quality teachers. And while this report has outlined the need for targeted funding to bridge the gap in education outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students, it is also true that policies to encourage a high standard of teacher training and development need to be in place, as do policies facilitating retention of existing quality teachers and educators. The discussion in this section focus on teachers in the school sector in Australia but the general points made apply across the lifelong learning spectrum, with early childhood educators, vocational trainers, university staff and those teaching within informal adult learning equally in need of recognition, training and development, satisfying secure careers, and professional autonomy. Appendix 2 is a more detailed statement by the Australian Education Union on the state of the school teaching profession in Australia.

### **Attracting and Retaining High Quality Teachers to the Profession**

A primary driver of the status of any profession is its attractiveness to high performing secondary graduates. The attractiveness of teaching to high performing secondary school graduates has been in decline for at least three decades, and teacher shortages in STEM subjects have now reached crisis point. Data from the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that only 5.7% of 15-year-old students in Australia expected to be working as teachers when they are aged 30, and the proportion of these who do actually become teachers and continue working in the profession



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for approximately 10 years, is of course, significantly lower.<sup>78</sup> Furthermore, the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) showed that the proportion of Australian teachers aged below thirty decreased sharply from 18.2% in 2008 to 15.7% in 2013, which demonstrates that young teaching graduates are not being retained in the profession and creating an aging workforce and significant succession problems.<sup>79</sup>

Among the 19 countries and economies listed as high performing by the OECD. As a result, Australia has the highest share of low achievers entering teacher training, at 11.1% of trainee teachers. Australia also has the fourth lowest share of top performers in at least one subject entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE).<sup>80</sup> The Australian Education Union's (AEU's) annual State of Our Schools survey paints a bleak picture of current teacher shortages in Australia's public schools. In the 2018 survey, 61% of principals stated that their school had experienced teacher shortages in the last year<sup>81</sup>, with particularly acute shortages at remote schools<sup>82</sup>.

According to the survey, the curriculum areas where principals had the most difficulty filling vacancies were Maths, Technology and Science, so that many Maths and Science classes are taught by teachers who are teaching "out of field" and who are not fully qualified in the subject area.<sup>83</sup>

A program of incentives needs to be developed to encourage high performing graduates – particularly in STEM – to become teachers. This could include bursaries for students undertaking double degrees including ITE or discounted student loan (HELP) contributions for STEM graduates who reach the proficient teacher career stage. Increases in salary would also assist.

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<sup>78</sup> PISA (2018) *'Effective teaching policies, additional tables'*, P.163. Retrieved from:

<http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933740972>

<sup>79</sup> ACER *'Australian Teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013 Final Report'*, ACER p. xiii.

<sup>80</sup> PISA (2018) *'Effective Teacher policies'*, p. 47. Retrieved From: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Effective-Teacher-Policies-Insights-from-PISA-Overview.pdf>

<sup>81</sup> AEU (2018) *'State of our schools report'*, p20.

<sup>82</sup> AEU (2018) *'State of our schools report'*, p20.

<sup>83</sup> AEU (2018) *'State of our schools report'*, p20.

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### ***The Need for Improved Teacher Pay***

To attract and retain high quality candidates in teaching it is necessary to invest in appropriate salary and reward structures. Although pay is not the sole determining factor in the attractiveness or otherwise of any profession, it nonetheless is a significant consideration, and is an area where Australia teaching has failed to keep pace with other professional occupations requiring similar levels of qualification and skill. One example of this is the artificial wage ‘cap’ imposed on teachers’ salaries by numerous state governments, which has had a substantial and ongoing impact on the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession.

Evidence from a study of teachers’ salaries in 30 countries that shows that the salaries of experienced teachers relative to other comparable professions distinguishes countries with high levels of student achievement from others. In Australia, by contrast, teachers’ salaries have stagnated, particularly at the ‘flat’ top end of the scale in existing salary structures, which research has shown discourages potential teachers from entering the profession.<sup>84</sup> Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2018 shows that whilst the OECD average ratio at the top of the scale has increased to 1.8 times starting salary, in Australia nothing has changed, with the average salary for Australian Teachers stuck at 1.4 times starting salary. This ranks Australia as 26th of the 34 OECD countries in terms of the ratio. Figure 6 shows initial and maximum salaries for teachers in various countries.

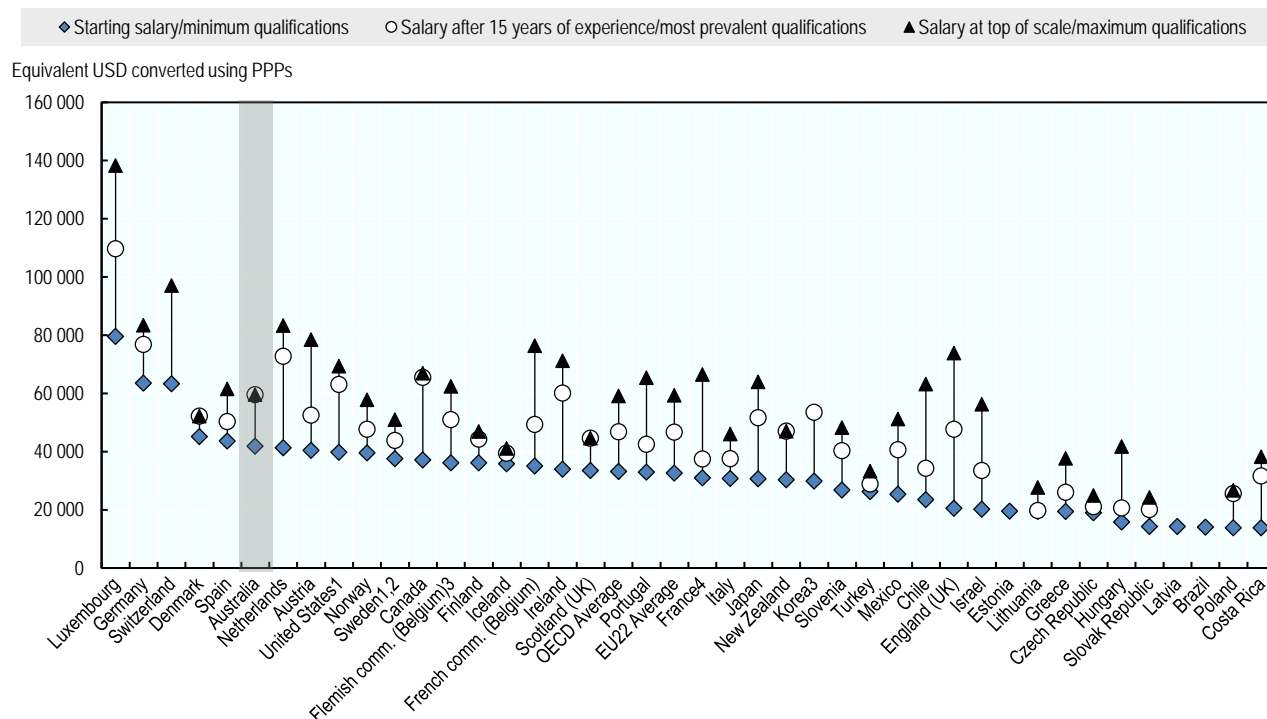
The flat and capped salary scales for teachers in most jurisdictions in Australia create a disincentive for the most experienced teachers to remain in the profession. A system of standards-based salary progression with increased opportunities for continual incremental salary progression throughout the entire career course is required if high quality teachers are to be retained in Australia’s schools.

### ***The Need for Greater Professional Autonomy***

Items other than salary and financial incentives contribute to a profession’s attractiveness. The degree of professional autonomy afforded to individual teachers is an important factor in decisions to leave or remain within teaching. A key finding of a recent study by the NSW Teachers Federation of the work

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<sup>84</sup> Akiba, M., Ciu, Y., Shimizu, K., & Lang, G. (2012). *Teacher salary and student achievement: A cross national analysis of 30 countries*. International Journal of Educational Research, 53, 171-181.cited in Ingvarson TEMAG 47



**FIGURE 6: Initial and Maximum Teacher Salaries<sup>85</sup>**

composition of over 18,000 teachers in NSW found that “teachers require more professional respect, time and support for their teaching and the facilitation of student learning” <sup>86</sup>. It reported “an expansion of the range of duties performed, particularly in relation to administrative tasks. Similarly, the AEU’s 2018 State of Our Schools survey found that 81% of teachers considered that they spent too much time on administrative tasks, 58% said they spent too much time on preparing students for standardised tests and 57% said they spent too much time administering these tests.

In order to enhance the status of the teaching profession it is necessary to allow teachers a greater level of control over assessment and curriculum, and to reverse the drive towards direct instruction and one size fits all national assessment. Support for teacher autonomy in curriculum development and teaching must be increased and then maintained. To this end, the administrative and managerial

<sup>85</sup> OECD (2018) ‘Education at a Glance 2018’, p.364. Retrieved from: [http://www.cnedu.pt/content/noticias/internacional/Education\\_at\\_a\\_glance\\_2018.pdf](http://www.cnedu.pt/content/noticias/internacional/Education_at_a_glance_2018.pdf)

<sup>86</sup> McGrath-Champ, S., Wilson, R., Fitzgerald, S., Stacey, M., Gavin, M., Parding, K. (2018). ‘Submission 30 (teachers’ work research group submission) - Parliamentary Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession’, p.1-2. Retrieved from: <https://www.aph.gov.au/DocumentStore.ashx?id=fc8eb202-904e-4a31-8392-0ceb27eaa5a1&subId=665293>

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function of the public education system is retained centrally and separately from assessment and curriculum development.

### ***Initial Teacher Education (ITE)***

In Australia, teaching in schools is an all-graduate profession and all teachers complete undergraduate or Masters degrees. The demand driven nature of modern higher education in Australia has meant that the academic standards required to enter many tertiary courses, including initial teachers' education courses, are significantly lower than they were in previous decades. A consequence of this decline in standards is a massive increase in the numbers of people undertaking ITE - in 2001 there were 54,000 people training to be teachers, in 2016 there were over 87,000.<sup>87</sup> In order to bolster the capabilities and status of the teaching profession it is imperative that this long term but recently accelerated decline in ITE entry standards is reversed.

There is an aspiration to recruit only the top 30% of students into the profession – which equates to an Australian Tertiary Admission Rank (ATAR) of 70 – with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than completion of schooling. According to data from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the number of students entering ITE via a secondary education pathway with an ATAR lower than 70 grew from 25% in 2006 to 42% in 2015.<sup>88</sup> However, some states have legislated to reverse this trend, e.g. Victoria required an ATAR of at least 65 for ITE admissions in 2018 and of 70+ from 2019 onwards.

There has also been a trend towards greater regulation of ITE course standards, with state accreditation bodies closely inspecting curricula and graduate performance standards. As Ingvarson et al point out, the proliferation of ITE providers in Australia places state and national accrediting bodies under severe pressure:

*The large number of small programs places a heavy burden on Australia's accreditation system. Countries such as Finland and Chinese Taipei concentrated teacher education in a smaller number of well-resourced universities some years ago, as part of a long-term strategy to lift the quality of teacher education and the status of teaching. Consideration should be*

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<sup>87</sup> Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2016) 'Workforce Profile of the NSW Teaching profession', p.24.  
Retrieved from: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/workforce-profile-of-the-nsw-teaching-profession-2016>

<sup>88</sup> Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2016) 'Workforce Profile of the NSW Teaching profession', p.21.  
Retrieved from: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/workforce-profile-of-the-nsw-teaching-profession-2016>

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*given to the possible benefits of a similar policy for Australia. Consideration might be given to the model in England and Wales where funding has only been available for programs that are attracting students who meet a designated entry standard.<sup>89</sup>*

They go on to point out that many of the systems described above engage in coordinated workforce planning of a type that would be incompatible with Australia's current deregulated tertiary system. Further, many of the smaller ITE providers serve students in regional, rural and remote Australian locations. As around 7 out of 10 graduates from regional universities go on to work in a regional area<sup>90</sup>, continuing to offer opportunities for ITE in these locations will address, in part, the exacerbated shortages of teachers in rural and remote schools.

Consideration should be given to a more regulated and coordinated approach to ITE funding and accreditation in Australia.

### ***Career development and teacher satisfaction***

The following three elements are identified by the OECD as common characteristics among the highest performing countries: a mandatory and extended period of classroom practice as part of pre-service teacher education or of the induction period; the presence of a variety of bespoke opportunities for in-service teachers' professional development, such as workshops organised by the school; and teacher-appraisal mechanisms with a strong focus on teachers' continuous development.<sup>91</sup> It is clear from the evidence collected by the AEU from teachers and principals that they are not receiving the necessary support from state governments to acquit this requirement. Career long learning and professional development opportunities are essential to keep teachers engaged and to increase the attractiveness of the teaching to the most able school leavers, and essential to enhance the status of the profession.

Workload and excessive out-of-hours work is a key cause of low morale, and ultimately of attrition among both principals and teachers. In a survey conducted for the AEU's submission to the *Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools* (2017) nearly half of 478 principals reported that

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<sup>89</sup> Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation (2016) *'Workforce Profile of the NSW Teaching profession'*, p15. Retrieved from: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/workforce-profile-of-the-nsw-teaching-profession-2016>

<sup>90</sup> Regional Universities Network (2018). *'The economic impact of the Regional Universities Network'*. Retrieved from: <http://www.run.edu.au/resources/RUN%20Economic%20impact%20report%20final.pdf>

<sup>91</sup> PISA (2018) *'Effective Teacher policies'*, p. 17. Retrieved From: <https://www.oecd.org/pisa/Effective-Teacher-Policies-Insights-from-PISA-Overview.pdf>

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they worked for 56 hours or more per week. Principals reported that they spent the largest proportion of their time on complying with departmental requirements (21%) but only 14% of their time leading teaching and learning.

It is becoming increasingly common that teachers commence their employment with a period of contract or temporary employment (sometimes of many years), rather than moving directly into permanent or ongoing employment. The State of Our Schools survey demonstrates in stark terms the relationship between insecure employment and a willingness to consider leaving teaching. The percentage of teachers employed on a non-permanent basis who said that they were more likely to leave teaching because of their insecure employment was particularly high among teachers whose current contracts are for three years or less (70%). Overall, two thirds of teachers not employed permanently said that their insecure status made it more likely that they would leave teaching prior to retirement age. To encourage and attract the highly skilled and diverse workforce that will provide students with quality learning experiences, teachers must be offered secure and ongoing employment.

### ***Shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers***

There is an acknowledged lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australia. The More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSI) was a national project funded by the then Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by the University of South Australia through the office of Professor Peter Buckskin, Dean, Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research. The project commenced in 2011, and despite recommendations to support its continuation, based on robust research and evidence of positive outcomes, the project was finalised in 2016, with opportunities for its extension lost in changes to the machinery of government in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, following the election of the Abbott government in 2014<sup>92</sup>.

The overarching objectives of the MATSI project were to increase:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in teaching positions in schools;
- the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers; and
- the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in teaching positions in schools.

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<sup>92</sup> Rose (2018) 'Close the Gap: More Indigenous Graduates'. Retrieved from: [La Trobe University  
https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/close-the-gap-more-indigenous-graduates](https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/close-the-gap-more-indigenous-graduates)

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An independent evaluation of the initiative<sup>93</sup> found that project partners intensified their commitment to achieving MATSITI's aims through their formal participation in the project and further, that partners and stakeholders raised their awareness of the 'direct relationship between the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in schools and improvements in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.' Finally, the project resulted in a 16.5% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers between 2012 and 2015, 'due to recruitment and improved levels of identification.'<sup>94</sup> Recommendations from the MATSITI Project's Final Report: Evaluation Report<sup>95</sup>, the Tarndanya Declaration<sup>96</sup> and the MATSITI teacher workforce scoping plan should therefore be implemented.<sup>97</sup>

### ***Supporting Education Capacity Building and Quality in Partner Countries***

The quality of education is a stated priority and focus area for Australia's aid program, with the sector accounting for approximately 18 percent of total development assistance in 2016–17<sup>98</sup>. While improvements to the quality of education are highlighted, initiatives at national level in ministries of education do not always "trickle down," particularly in decentralized education systems, to improve quality or learning at classroom level. We must, therefore, move beyond national level policy and technical advisory engagement to the sub national or provincial level, and ensure that aid investment will change the practices of students and teachers. This is also in light of the recent World Bank report<sup>99</sup> that identified this as an important need and a gap in existing ways of working.

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<sup>93</sup> Johnson, Cherednichenko, Rose (2016) 'Evaluation of the MATSITI Project Final Report'. Retrieved from: <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>94</sup> Johnson, Cherednichenko, Rose (2016) 'Evaluation of the MATSITI Project Final Report'. Retrieved from: <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf> p.6)

<sup>96</sup> MATSITI (2015) 'Tarndanya Declaration'. Retrieved from: <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MATSITI-OurMobTeach-Declaration-V4.pdf>

<sup>97</sup> MATSITI (2013) 'National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teacher Workforce Scoping Plan'. Retrieved from: <http://matsiti.edu.au/plans/MATSITI-Scoping-Plan-June-2013.pdf>

<sup>98</sup> DFAT (2018). 'Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals', p.40. Retrieved from: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Documents/sdg-voluntary-national-review.pdf>

<sup>99</sup> World Bank (2018) 'Learning to Realize Education's Promise'. Retrieved from: <http://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2018>

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ACED members who are active in Australia's partner countries acknowledge the policy to practice challenges i.e. recognising the existence of many good national level policies for Early Childhood Development, inclusive education, teacher quality, etc., but there is often a lack of capacity, resources and willingness to operationalise these at a community / school / classroom level. More emphasis within the aid program for building local capacity and bottom up approaches, including the increasing focus on school-based interventions to create change at the school level, would enhance the effectiveness of Australia's education aid. Further, a ripple effect from school to school using informal networks of teachers and head teachers can be a very powerful pathway for change.

Australia seeks to build capacity in partner countries by promoting global knowledge exchange. It claims to be:

*"the third-largest provider of education to international students and the Government provides opportunities to the next generation of global leaders to undertake study, research and professional development in Australia and enables Australians to do the same overseas. ... The New Colombo Plan, Australia Awards and the Endeavour Awards are significant investments in a global knowledge exchange that advances SDG 4 and other SDGs in Australia, our region and globally."<sup>100</sup>*

Fifty per cent of the education aid spend is directed at scholarships that may favour elites and returns the investment to Australia rather than the partner government. The relatively small number of Australian educated individuals who have benefited from these scholarships are likely to face major challenges in influencing education at community / school / student level, especially in decentralized policy environments with no support for "trickle down" mechanisms. The large spend on scholarships also downplays concerns in the sector over the commodification of Australian tertiary education, where international (and domestic) students are seen as a revenue stream for the university. It is recommended that education aid spending be re-balanced with some of this funding allocated to smaller scale projects that are proven to build capacity across a broad spectrum of learning environments, resulting in quality improvements that will directly benefit more students and teachers in the region.

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<sup>100</sup> DFAT (2018). 'Report on the Implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals', p.41. Retrieved from: <https://dfat.gov.au/aid/topics/development-issues/2030-agenda/Documents/sdg-voluntary-national-review.pdf>



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# Conclusion and Recommendations

In order to make further progress in the implementation of SDG 4, the Australian Coalition for Education and Development calls on the Australian Government to:

- Develop a National Strategy for implementing the Sustainable Development Goals (including funding commitments and targets).
- Create a multi-sectoral reference committee, which includes representatives from Civil Society and academia.
- Provide support for Civil Society to engage with the government's delivery of the SDGs.

In regards to Australia's reporting responsibilities regarding the Sustainable Development Goals, the Australian Government must:

- Ensure that Civil Society has sufficient time and resources to participate in the Voluntary National Review process, with particular focus on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians, and Australians with a disability.
- Demonstrate greater adherence to the common reporting guidelines to ensure that the Voluntary National Reviews contribute to Australia's and other countries progress by providing examples of challenges, progress, and gaps. Future Voluntary National Reviews should explicitly list Australia's progress against targets and goals of Sustainable Development Goal 4.

In order to achieve the goals set out in Sustainable Development Goal 4, the Australian government must:

- Extend funding of free Early Childhood Education to 3-year-old children and commit to providing ongoing funding of 15 hours of preschool education to all 4 year olds.
- Re-instate the level of needs-based, sector blind funding with a greater contribution from the Commonwealth as originally undertaken in response to in the 2011 Gonski Review to ensure all public schools are funded to 100% of their School Resourcing Standard.
- Remove the 20% cap on Commonwealth funding for public schools.

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- Develop a new National Partnership Agreement for Vocational Education and Training. The Agreement would, at a minimum return government funding to pre-market reform levels and ensure that 70% of government funding flows to TAFE.
  - TAFE needs to be empowered with the capacity to work with its industries and communities to understand what will best suit their needs. This includes working with the adult and community education sector as well as with industry and local employers.
  - The failed experiment in establishing a student loans scheme should be acknowledged, the scheme should be closed, and any resources set aside to fund and administer it should be diverted directly to courses at publicly funded institutions.
  - Vocational Education and Training has an important social inclusion role that needs to be specifically funded and recognised. Vocational Education and Training and adult education courses need to be accessible in terms of fees and locations, to ensure women and girls are able to attain initial skills and continuing education.

Lifelong Learning is a central component of Sustainable Development Goal 4. The Australian Government is responsible for ensuring lifelong learning opportunities for all. ACED, therefore calls on the government to:

- Develop a National Lifelong Learning Policy that highlights the need for all Australians to learn and continue learning throughout life in order to face the challenges of the twenty-first century.
- Ensure that the formal policy clearly outlines economic and social goals; integrates efficiency and equity; and sets out roles and responsibilities for community, business and all levels of government. It must emphasise the life-skills required and the inter-connected pathways between learning opportunities.
- Renew the Ministerial Declaration on Adult and Community Education, and outline strategies to support Adult and Community Education organisations as they continue to deliver opportunities to many Australians, including disadvantaged learners.

To ensure that Australians enjoy quality education, ACED calls on the Australian Government to:

- Reverse the decline in Initial Teacher Education standards.

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- Widen and make widely available a system of salary progression, to bring Australia in line with the OECD average ratio between teachers' graduate salaries and those of the most experienced teachers. This should include increased opportunities for continual incremental salary progression throughout the entire career course.
  - Support teacher autonomy in curriculum development and teaching.
  - Adopt minimum entry requirements for selection into Initial Teacher Education to recruit the top 30% of students into the profession.
  - Develop a program of incentives to encourage high performing graduates to become teachers. This could include bursaries for students undertaking double degrees including ITE or discounted Higher Education Loan Program contributions for graduates who reach the proficient teacher career stage.
  - Give consideration to a more regulated and coordinated approach to Initial Teacher Education funding and accreditation in Australia.
  - Improve access to induction, mentoring and continuing professional development for teachers.
  - Reduce teachers' burden of out of hours work by Increased support from either central or regional offices or from extra staff within schools.
  - Implement recommendations from the More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative Project's Final Report Evaluation Report<sup>101</sup>. The Tarndanya Declaration and the MATSITI teacher workforce scoping plan should therefore be implemented.

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<sup>101</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

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# Appendix 1 – Adult and Community Education Case Studies

By Adult Learning Australia

## Life after Holden

A digital skills certification program is offering former Holden workers and others affected by the Adelaide plant's closure a digital edge when it comes to finding work.



When the gates shut on the Holden site in Elizabeth South Australia in October 2017, workers and businesses supplying parts and services to the company also felt the impact.

'Our community was hit hard too,' says Jo Cooper, Manager Community Capacity & Learning at the City of Salisbury, in the neighbouring suburb in Adelaide's north.

'Many of those exiting the automotive sector were men aged 40 plus who had low levels of digital literacy. We knew we needed a strategy to create learning pathways to support these workers to go on to further education and/or employment.'

But a training program that aimed to help people along the path to a new career or further study had to tackle the issue of digital literacy head on, as South Australia has the lowest digital literacy rate in Australia after Tasmania, recent data from Telstra's Digital Inclusion Index shows.

'We realised it was vital to link our community to the new employment opportunities arising within Defence and other growth industries and one of the critical skills required is digital literacy,' Jo says. The City of Salisbury library service was well placed to offer training. As part of a statewide effort to improve digital literacy, the City's library service has qualified trainers on staff and has invested in computers, laptops and the latest software for its community.

'Our research found that digital literacy was a big issue in our community. We're talking about people who have no wifi at home, and little access to desktop computers. Because of a combination of their age and the kind of work they had been doing, many people we engaged with did not know the basics of how to upload documents, use databases, and in some cases were not confident to work a mouse.'

A partnership between Microsoft Australia, the Department of State Development, Prodigy Learning and the City of Salisbury delivered a solution – a pilot program offering a

suite of Microsoft Office-certified courses usually worth hundreds of dollars for free through the local library to give automotive workers a digital edge in applying for jobs.

The first pilot began in February with training, certifications and a two-day career path workshop delivered by Prodigy Learning, a global training partner of Microsoft who worked closely with the City of Salisbury to tailor the pilot for local needs and train local staff to deliver ongoing training and manage the IT required.

'Prodigy Learning was great to work with,' Jo says. 'They have done quite a bit of work in places where there's been a downturn in industry including with blue collar workers in Ireland. They worked hard with us to understand the particular content and make sure the context was right so that it provided participants with the knowledge and skills required for future employment pathways.' The result is a model that incorporates multiple levels of training in a mixed mode format.

The first step for people interested in the program is to undertake their own skills analysis – at the library or at home using GMetrix testing to establish what their skill levels are. The entry-level qualification is a Digital Literacy Certificate, which teaches people computer basics.

Local adult and community education (ACE) programs play an important role in the learning continuum. If participants are struggling with the basic level certificate they are referred back to ACE to get one-on-one support to build their knowledge and confidence and then re-enter the pilot. Once they have finished they can also enter into ACE employment pathway programs to build their skills for finding work.

After they have completed the Certificate, the participants can proceed to the next rung of the certification ladder, the Microsoft Office Specialist program which teaches people how to use core products that employers expect people in admin to be able to use in day to day work. As a result of this training, participants are able to feel more confident doing





basic and intermediate tasks including using Word, Excel spreadsheets and PowerPoint.

'We start most people at the entry level, however, we are flexible with entry points depending on the skill level of the learner. We help them become familiar with the software until it feels natural for them and we build it from there. We interpret digital literacy as also including the use of social media so we show them how to use LinkedIn, which fits neatly into the job hunting process,' Jo says.

'A lot of people already experienced in Office want to do the Specialist training.

'It's a modular system where they complete it onsite and at home including homework. If they don't have a computer at home, they can come to the library to use the computers there and there's staff on hand to help.'

Interest in the free training has been strong and the City of Salisbury have opened it up not just to automotive workers and their partners but when space allows, to the broader community as well. Feedback has been very positive and over 215 people have signed up for training so far. The training runs at the Len Beadell Library with groups of 20 participants at a time.

'One unexpected but great benefit from our point of view is that it brings people into libraries who wouldn't normally use libraries. More and more employment based programs happen in our libraries and this is all part of the South Australia's Public Library Services' plan to transition libraries from being more than 'just books' to innovative learning hubs for the whole community. We are currently working

with them to discuss the possible rollout of this program across identified libraries right across the State.'

Holden Worker **Brian Weste** was one of the course's early participants. 'I signed up for the program as a result of going to the transformation centre at Holden. I saw a bit of the spiel done by them and I thought, you know what, it's something I hadn't considered. But I thought digital literacy for me is very basic, and it would be a good way of expanding on that. It's the way of the future for me I hope.' Brian has since found a new job as a mechanical maintenance fitter.

**Lailoma Shahdoost**, 38, took time out from work when she had her daughter six years ago. Since then she's applied for a number of jobs with no success. 'I felt discouraged. Having kids you feel like it kills your brain. When I heard about this course I wanted to go back and test my ability.'

With no Internet at home and no computer Lailoma's digital literacy skills were very out of date. 'For six years I hadn't touched a computer. When I told them in class I trained in XP everyone laughed because no one even knows what that is anymore.

'When it came to the first exam I was very very worried. You have to achieve a minimum of 75/100 in 50 minutes and do 7 projects in that time. But I did well.

'What I loved about it was getting out of the house. I treated it like a job and it's the best opportunity I've had so far. I am really grateful for that. I love learning. I say even if you don't use it for work, you can use what you learn to help your children and your community. Everything is computerised these days, you can use it for banking, for paying bills and registration, for filling in forms. I really encourage them because it's such a valuable opportunity.'

What's next? 'I would love to finish the whole thing, the Expert level and then the Masters. I'm really excited at the idea of doing that.'

'The course was very flexible so I could practice on the library's computers and get help and support from the staff when I needed it.'

Lailoma Shahdoost

# Women at the wheel

Graduates from Australia's first women-only trucking course are hitting the highway on their way to new careers in transport and logistics.



**Katie Annetta is one of eight newly licenced truck drivers to graduate from Australia's first women-only driver training program.**

Katie and her fellow drivers-in-training completed the Superior Heavy Licensing Program for Women – an intensive four-week course that aims to attract more women into the driver's seat and to improve truck safety. The program is an initiative between Wodonga TAFE's Driver Education Centre of Australia (DECA), Transport Women Australia (TWA), LinFox, Australia Post and Volvo, who supplied a prime mover for the students to gain experience behind the wheel.

It was a chance conversation with a friend that first got Katie thinking about truck driving. 'A mate who is a garbo said having a heavy truck licence is great because you do deliveries or drive a forklift, you can do heaps of different things with it and go to a whole bunch of different places.'

After six years as a postie with Australia Post, the job was starting to pall. 'I wanted a change. I wasn't getting any job satisfaction and I was really unhappy about it.'

'I'm the sort of person who's always looking to better myself. After I finished high school, I trained and worked as a chef. After a while of working I decided to do the Certificate IV in Training and Assessment because I thought that I'd like to get involved in training.'

After applying for the course and being interviewed, Katie was thrilled to be offered a place.

**'I really recommend it, it's a really good experience to challenge yourself and get out of your comfort zone and do something different with your life.'** Katie Annetta

'I was rapt, really excited.' Like the rest of her classmates, Katie had never driven a truck before she enrolled in the course.

But excitement turned to dismay once it was her turn to go for her first drive.

'It was really daunting at the start. You're in a massive truck and it's overwhelming. The first time I got behind the wheel I was like "Let me out, this is just too much." The fact that it was manual didn't help either.'

'But then I just said to myself, "I have a mortgage to pay and I have just got to do this".'

The intensive course covered theory, practical training, mechanical appreciation and assessment and was run at Linfox in Melbourne's Laverton.

'The trainers were great, really amazing. They were there to answer all our questions and give us encouragement. They acknowledged our feelings about driving such a big vehicle. One trainer shared how his brother had died out driving a truck. They were like big daddies to us.'

Representatives from Transport Women Australia offered mentoring in topics as diverse as dealing with sexism in a male dominated industry, to tips for mapping female friendly facilities on transport routes.

'The training was very practical and we got great experience behind the wheel. We'd go out in a truck as a passenger with a more experienced driver, it could be male or female so you could watch and learn from what they were doing as well as having a chance to practise yourself. It was great having the chance to do that.'

Then came the test – a 90 minute drive in and around Shepparton. 'It was challenging because you have to watch out for the way you take corners, make sure you've got enough room at roundabouts, and enough leeway not to hit the gutter.'





Back at Australia Post, Katie has found her transition to her new role has been smooth and as a female truck driver she got a warm welcome. 'I just can't fault them, everyone's been really positive and encouraging.'

'The first time you get behind the wheel after you get your licence is daunting. You hear of a lot of accidents. So you have to be aware without letting it undermine your confidence.'

'I've been driving on my own for 5-6 weeks and it's good now. I drive from Sunshine along a route that takes me to Somerton, Derrimut, Tullamarine and beyond, loading and unloading and doing deliveries on busy roads and in heavy traffic in an 8 ton truck. It doesn't quite feel like second nature yet but I'm getting there. It was just the change I needed and I'm really enjoying it.'

'I've got big plans. My partner and I are building another house so we might even need a second mortgage. Not that I'm earning more than before, I'm earning less. But I'm much happier. It's not all about the money.'

'My future plans are to become a trainer and assessor at Australia Post. I feel my career prospects are good as a driver and I've put my hand up to assist with the next training course that's offered.'

Currently 98% of Australian truck drivers are men with the average age of 47. This ageing workforce, combined with growing demand is contributing to the shortage of eligible drivers and putting pressure on companies like Linfox, Australia Post and Volvo to look at ways to attract more women into the heavy transport sector.

James Dixon, General Manager Transport & Aviation at Australia Post says, 'It's important to make sure that we remove the roadblocks that prevent talented people from joining the industry. We value diversity and appreciate the benefits an inclusive workplace brings to our customers, our business, and most importantly, our people.'

Simon Macaulay, National Manager Transport at Wodonga TAFE's DECA says, 'All eight women graduated with their licences and word has gotten round about the success of the program. We've had a huge response from industry with 5 or 6 companies wanting the courses to run in February next year.'



**'There's a serious driver shortage so it's all hands on deck with a whole lot of people in the industry collaborating to find ways to get more women onboard.'** Simon Macaulay, DECA, Wodonga TAFE





# QUEST

ISSUE 1 2019

## IN THIS ISSUE

- ◆ A taste for work
- ◆ Playing with English
- ◆ Prison radio makes waves
- ◆ Leading by example
- ◆ ACE news

## TIPS AND TRENDS

- ◆ Tips for building learner confidence

## A taste for work

When 58-year-old mill hand Rongo Taura lost her job after 29 years at a Latrobe Valley sawmill she wasn't hopeful about finding another one. She worried about her age and her English. 'I'm not good with spelling and reading. So I didn't have a lot of confidence.'

Fast forward two years and Rongo has just won an award as outstanding performer at her new workplace, Flavorite Hydroponic Tomatoes.

Rongo's success is due to a four-week pre-employment course developed by non-profit RTO Gippsland Employment Skills Training (GEST) and Flavorite Hydroponic Tomatoes. The course gives unemployed people an insight into the kinds of skills and attitudes required to get and keep a job with one of the biggest employers in the area.

Trainer Jen McCafferty never tires of the guided tour that she takes participants on at the start of each course. 'I'm always

excited. It's such a beautiful place to walk into with all these enormous tomatoes growing everywhere. We always tell the students it's hot, hard and repetitious work. But it's not like working in a dirty factory. It's clean and it's a really pretty place.'

The guided tour is one of a number of steps that gives participants a realistic view of the work involved. For people who have never worked; are long-term unemployed or who have never known anyone who has worked, the course teaches the skills to find and keep a job.

Jen says participants are encouraged to treat the course like a job, contributing in class and phoning to explain if they can't make it. Participants who meet GEST's criteria for successful participation and attendance are put forward for a work trial and interview at Flavorite.

'We teach them that it's our reputation and theirs that matters.'

At the same time, creating an unpressured learning environment is important. 'We emphasise from the start that there are no tests or exams. I tell them, "We don't care if you can't spell, we can support you with developing your resume with our one-on-one service." We aim for a very relaxed atmosphere where we can all have a joke. That's really important to establishing trust and making sure people enjoy themselves while they are here.'

(Story continues on p. 3)

**'I was learning a lot not just from the teacher but from the other ladies in the group because we talked a lot together during the course. It's like we were family.'** Rongo Taura

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# Appendix 2 – The State of the Teaching Profession in Australia

By the Australian Education Union (AEU)

The 2015 Incheon Declaration emphasizes the value of quality education, and recognizes that it

*‘...fosters creativity and knowledge, and ensures the acquisition of the foundational skills of literacy and numeracy as well as analytical, problem-solving and other high-level cognitive, interpersonal and social skills. It also develops the skills, values and attitudes that enable citizens to lead healthy and fulfilled lives, make informed decisions, and respond to local and global challenges through education for sustainable development (ESD) and global citizenship education (GCED).’*

With this understanding in mind, the declaration states a commitment to ensure

*‘...that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.’*

Good quality education depends on quality teachers. And while this report has outlined the need for targeted funding to bridge the gap in education outcomes between advantaged and disadvantaged students, it is also true that policies to encourage a high standard of teacher training and development need to be in place. As do policies facilitating retention of existing quality teachers.

## **Attracting and Retaining High Quality Teachers to the Profession**

A primary driver of the status of any profession is its attractiveness to high performing secondary graduates. The attractiveness of teaching to high performing secondary school graduates has been in decline for at least three decades, and teacher shortages in STEM subjects have now reached crisis point. Data from the 2015 Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) shows that only 5.7% of 15-year-old students in Australia expected to be working as teachers when they are aged 30, and the proportion of these who do actually become teachers and continue working in the profession for approximately 10 years, is of course, significantly lower.<sup>102</sup> Furthermore, the 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) showed that the proportion of Australian teachers aged below

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<sup>102</sup> PISA p 163 teaching policies, additional tables <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/888933740972>

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thirty decreased sharply from 18.2% in 2008 to 15.7% in 2013, which demonstrates that young teaching graduates are not being retained in the profession and creating an aging workforce and significant succession problems.<sup>103</sup>

The Australian Education Union's (AEU's) annual State of Our Schools survey paints a bleak picture of current teacher shortages in Australia's public schools. In the 2018 survey, 697 principals were surveyed, and of those, 424 (61%) stated that their school has experienced teacher shortages in the last year<sup>104</sup>. There has been a continued and consistent increase in the percentage of principals reporting teacher shortages in each of the last four years, to the point where schools affected by shortages have more than doubled from 28% in 2015 to 61% in 2018.<sup>105</sup> Shortages were particularly acute at remote schools, where more than four fifths (82%) of principals reported shortages in 2018.

According to the survey, the curriculum areas where principals had the most difficulty in filling vacancies were Maths (49%), Technology (42%) and Science (31%) and 45% of Principals said that Maths and Science classes are taught by teachers who teaching "out of field" and who are not fully qualified in the subject area.<sup>106</sup>

A program of incentives needs to be developed to encourage high performing STEM graduates to become teachers. This could include bursaries for students undertaking double degrees including ITE or discounted HELP contributions for STEM graduates who reach the proficient teacher career stage.

It is apparent that in Australia teaching is not currently considered as an attractive career to the majority of high achieving young people. The most recently available Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data, from 2015, shows that Australia is 27th of 34 OECD countries in the gap between the percentages of high achieving 15 year-olds who expect to be working as a teacher at age 30 and those who expect to pursue a different career, with a 28 percentage point gap between the two.<sup>107</sup> Among the 19 countries and economies listed as high performing by the OECD. As a result, Australia has the highest share of low achievers entering teacher training, at 11.1% of trainee teachers. Australia also has the fourth lowest share of top performers in at least one subject entering Initial Teacher Education (ITE).<sup>108</sup>

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<sup>103</sup> Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013

Final Report, ACER p. xiii

<sup>104</sup> State of our schools report pXX

<sup>105</sup> State of our schools report pXX

<sup>106</sup> AEU State of our schools report pXX

<sup>107</sup> PISA Teaching policies p28.

<sup>108</sup> PISA Teaching policies p47



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### ***The Need for Improving Teacher Pay***

To attract high quality candidates into teaching it is necessary to invest in appropriate salary and reward structures. Although pay is not the sole determining factor in the attractiveness or otherwise of any profession, it nonetheless is a significant consideration, and is an area where Australia teaching has failed to keep pace with other professional occupations requiring similar levels of qualification and skill. One example of this is the artificial wage ‘cap’ imposed on teachers’ salaries by numerous state governments, which has had a substantial and ongoing impact on the status and attractiveness of the teaching profession. There are also significant structural limitations to teachers’ pay that limit the attractiveness of the profession to high performing secondary students and university graduates from in demand disciplines.

The career and salary progression structure for teachers in most states and territories creates a disincentive for experienced teachers to remain in the profession. The relatively narrow interval between graduate salaries and those of the most experienced teachers has the effect of forcing a decline in salary, relative to other professions, as experience and expertise increases.<sup>109</sup> This is in stark contrast to evidence from a study of teachers’ salaries in 30 countries that shows that the salaries of experienced teachers relative to other comparable professions distinguishes countries with high levels of student achievement from others. In Australia, by contrast, teachers’ salaries have stagnated, particularly at the ‘flat’ top end of the scale in existing salary structures, which research has shown discourages potential teachers from entering the profession.<sup>110</sup>

In 2012 the Productivity Commission report on the schools workforce recognised this as a major issue for the attractiveness of teaching as a profession, noting that in most states and territories teachers will reach the top of the pay scale in around a decade, and (citing the ABS and the OECD) concluded that “average weekly ordinary time earnings in the broader education sector are now only about 7 per cent above the average for all surveyed industries, compared with 14 per cent in 1994. Moreover, there is evidence that salaries at the top of teacher pay scales did not increase in real terms between 1995 and 2009.”<sup>111</sup> At that time the ratio between the top of the salary scale and teachers’ starting salaries in Australia was approximately 1.4, significantly lower than the OECD average of just over a 1.6.<sup>112</sup> More recently the gap has further widened and Education at a Glance: OECD Indicators 2018 shows that whilst the OECD average ratio at the top of the scale has increased to 1.8 times starting

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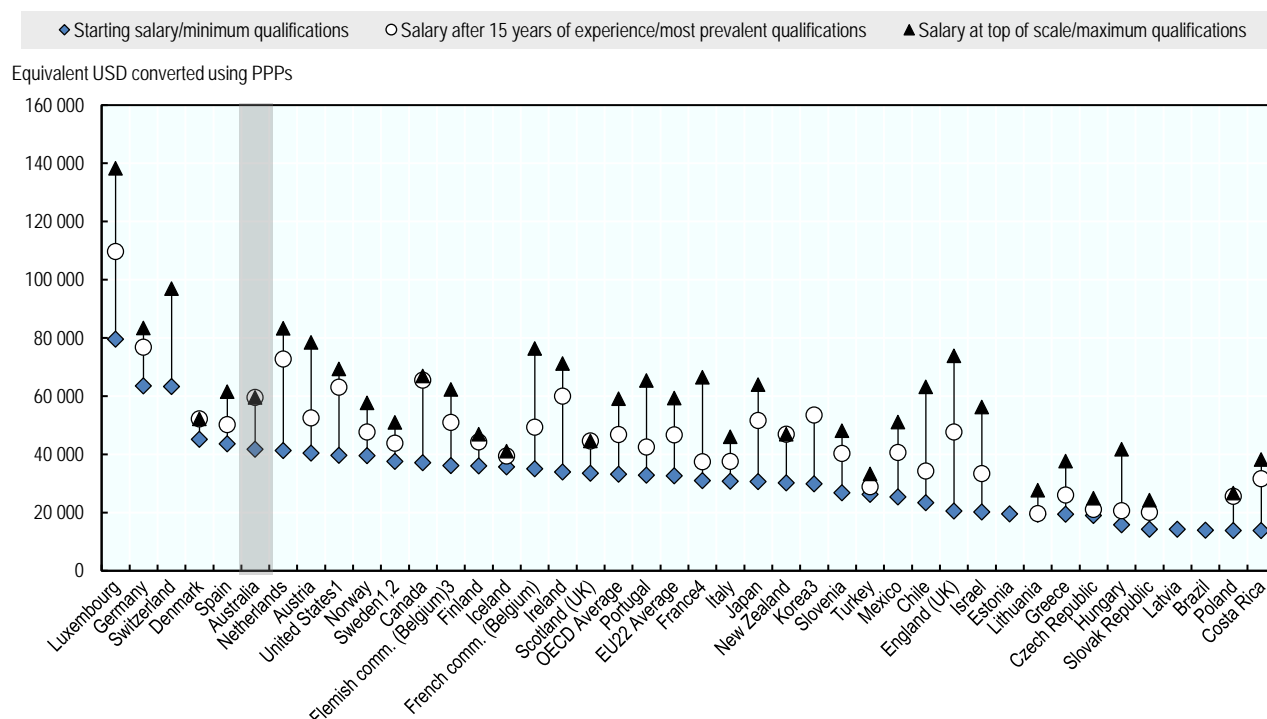
<sup>109</sup> Ingvarson TEMAG submission

<sup>110</sup> Akiba, M., Ciu, Y., Shimizu, K., & Lang, G. (2012). Teacher salary and student achievement: A crossnational analysis of 30 countries. International Journal of Educational Research, 53, 171-181.cited in Ingvarson TEMAG 47

<sup>111</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/education-workforce-schools/report/schools-workforce.pdf> p5

<sup>112</sup> <https://www.pc.gov.au/inquiries/completed/education-workforce-schools/report/schools-workforce.pdf> p111

salary, in Australia nothing has changed, with the average salary for Australian Teachers stuck at 1.4 times starting salary. This ranks Australia as 26th of the 34 OECD countries in terms of the ratio.



**Source/FIGURE A-1:** OECD (2018) *Education at a Glance 2018*, p.364, Retrieved from:  
[http://www.cnedu.pt/content/noticias/internacional/Education\\_at\\_a\\_glance\\_2018.pdf](http://www.cnedu.pt/content/noticias/internacional/Education_at_a_glance_2018.pdf)

The flat and capped salary scales for teachers in most jurisdictions in Australia create a disincentive for the most experienced teachers to remain in the profession. Teachers in Australia usually reach the top of the scale (1.4 times graduate wage) in around ten years and this is reflected in the OECD figures, which show that the graduate ratios for 15 years' experience and the top of the scale in Australia are identical. This contrasts with the OECD average, where the ratio for teachers with 15 years experience is 1.4 graduate salary but the average ratio for teachers at the top of the scale is 1.8 graduate salary. The increase in the average salary ratio for those with greater than 15 years' experience shows that in most OECD countries experienced teachers continue to be rewarded through pay progression well into their careers, unlike in Australia, where a teacher can spend most (and potentially up to three quarters) of their career without access to pay progression.

A primary driver of the status of any profession is its attractiveness to high performing secondary graduates. The attractiveness of teaching to high performing secondary school graduates has been in decline for at least three decades, and teacher shortages in STEM subjects have now reached crisis point. The 2013 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) showed that the proportion of Australian teachers aged below thirty decreased sharply from 18.2% in 2008 to 15.7% in 2013, which



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demonstrates that young teaching graduates are not being retained in the profession and creating an aging workforce and significant succession problems.<sup>113</sup>

### ***The Need for Greater Professional Autonomy***

A system of standards-based salary progression needs to be widened and made available to all teachers nationally, to bring Australia in line with the OECD average ratio between teachers' graduate salaries and those of the most experienced teachers. This should include increased opportunities for continual incremental salary progression throughout the entire career course.

A key finding of a recent study by the NSW Teachers Federation of the work composition of over 18,000 teachers in NSW found that "teachers require more professional respect, time and support for their teaching and the facilitation of student learning". It reported "an expansion of the range of duties performed, particularly in relation to administrative tasks. Over 97% of teachers reported an increase in administrative requirements, while over 96% report an increase in the collection, analysis and reporting of data."<sup>114</sup> Similarly, the AEU's 2018 State of Our Schools survey found that 81% of teachers considered that they spent too much time on administrative tasks, 58% said they spent too much time on preparing students for standardised tests and 57% said they spent too much time administering these tests.

In order to enhance the status of the teaching profession it is necessary to allow teachers a greater level of control over assessment and curriculum, and to reverse the drive towards direct instruction and one size fits all national assessment. Support for teacher autonomy in curriculum development and teaching must be increased and then maintained. To this end, the administrative and managerial function of the public education system is retained centrally and separately from assessment and curriculum development.

### ***The Need for Higher Initial Teacher Education Admission Standards***

The demand driven nature of modern higher education in Australia has meant that the academic standards required to enter many tertiary courses, including initial teachers' education courses, are significantly lower than they should be, and lower than standards were in previous decades. A consequence of this decline in standards is a massive increase in the numbers of people undertaking

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<sup>113</sup> Australian teachers and the learning environment: An analysis of teacher response to TALIS 2013 Final Report, ACER p. xiii

<sup>114</sup> Rachel Wilson workload study p 1-2

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ITE - in 2001 there were 54,000 people training to be teachers, in 2016 there were over 87,000.<sup>115</sup> In order to bolster the capabilities and status of the teaching profession it is imperative that this long term but recently accelerated decline in ITE entry standards is urgently reversed.

The worst-case scenario in Australia's deregulated and under-funded higher education system would be one where ITE applicants are treated by cash cows by tertiary institutions, and an ever increasing number of ITE students are admitted with lower (or undisclosed) grades and their fees are used by universities to cross subsidise the more in demand and more expensive courses on offer. This scenario would have dire implications for the status of the teaching profession and for Australian school students in the future. Unfortunately, the current low and declining average scores for ITE courses are consistent with just such a situation.<sup>116</sup>

Minimum entry requirements should be adopted for selection into ITE to recruit the top 30% of students into the profession, with equivalent measures for those seeking entrance to ITE from points/pathways other than completion of schooling. This standard is not currently maintained in recruitment to ITE, and is actually declining.

According to the most recent data from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), the number of students entering ITE via a secondary education pathway with an ATAR lower than 70 has grown from 25% in 2006 to 42% in 2015.<sup>117</sup>

A program of incentives should be developed to encourage high performing graduates to become teachers. This could include bursaries for students undertaking double degrees including ITE or discounted HELP contributions for graduates who reach the proficient teacher career stage

### ***The need for increased regulation of ITE course providers and content***

It is vital that ITE course standards are properly regulated. Unfortunately, as Ingvarson et al point out, the proliferation of ITE providers in Australia places state and national accrediting bodies under severe pressure:

*The large number of small programs places a heavy burden on Australia's accreditation system. Countries such as Finland and Chinese Taipei concentrated teacher education in a smaller number of*

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<sup>115</sup> Workforce profile of NSW teaching profession p 24

<sup>116</sup> AITSL (2017), *Insights. Initial teacher education: data report 2017*, Retrieved from [https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ite-data-report/2017/ite-data-report-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=a33fe93c\\_2](https://www.aitsl.edu.au/docs/default-source/research-evidence/ite-data-report/2017/ite-data-report-2017.pdf?sfvrsn=a33fe93c_2)

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, p.21

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*well-resourced universities some years ago, as part of a long-term strategy to lift the quality of teacher education and the status of teaching. Consideration should be given to the possible benefits of a similar policy for Australia. Consideration might be given to the model in England and Wales where funding has only been available for programs that are attracting students who meet a designated entry standard.*<sup>118</sup>

They go on to point out that many of the systems described above engage in coordinated workforce planning of a type that would be incompatible with Australia's current uncapped and deregulated tertiary system. ITE places in these systems are allocated on the basis of projected demand.

Consideration should be given to a more regulated and coordinated approach to ITE funding and accreditation in Australia.

### ***Improved access to induction, mentoring and continuing professional development for teachers***

The need for more and better professional development throughout the course of teachers' entire careers was highlighted in the 2017 International Summit on the Teaching Profession Report:

*Preparing our students to thrive in this fast-changing and highly connected world will place even greater demands on teachers. The knowledge base of the profession is becoming ever more complex. The rapid changes in content knowledge in many fields and educators' broadening responsibilities for inculcating new competencies suggest that teacher policies now urgently need to take a career-long perspective on the development of teacher professionalism.*<sup>119</sup>

TALIS data shows that teacher self-efficacy increases with access to mentoring and professional development and that teacher self-efficacy is also positively related to student outcomes.<sup>120</sup> TALIS also found that for new teachers, access to mentors was beneficial for their self-efficacy and other outcomes:

*When mentoring is considered, however, it seems that for new teachers specifically, time spent with a mentor, participation in mentor-facilitated professional development activities and the quality of*

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<sup>118</sup> Ibid, p.xv

<sup>119</sup> Asia Society (2017). *2017 International Summit on the Teaching Profession*. Retrieved from <http://asiasociety.org/global-cities-education-network/empowering-and-enabling-teachers-improve-equity-and-outcomes-all>

<sup>120</sup> OECD (2014). op cit

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*mentors' interactions are significantly related to the teachers' self-efficacy and their development of effective collaborative relationships.*<sup>121</sup>

Meaningful access to mentors for new teachers, however, can only be facilitated by time-release that is supported by appropriate staff/student ratios. In October 2017, the AEU surveyed 1405 teachers who had been mentors to early career teachers in the last three years. Only 15% of these teachers had been provided with time release to support their roles as mentors whilst only 18% had the opportunity to share experiences and work with other mentors at their own or other schools. As one of the teachers surveyed by the AEU explains:

*Mentor teachers need release time in order to properly coach their early career teachers. The two teachers need release time together specifically for discussing and acting upon mentoring related issues and topics. Mentors need to either receive training of some kind or have prior recognition. Mentors should not be chosen simply due to seniority within a school.*

The AEU's 2018 State of Our Schools survey paints a bleak picture of the amount and quality of induction, professional development and mentoring support facilitated by state Departments of Education. 28% of principals surveyed said that their education department does not provide them with a training or professional development program for mentors, 38% are not provided with funding to release mentors and 27% said they are not provided with a useful induction program for early career teachers. Additionally, half of principals stated that their access to professional development including the provision of programs and relief teachers was not effective and only 4.0% described it as very effective.

The following three elements are identified by the OECD as common characteristics among the highest performing countries; a mandatory and extended period of clinical practice as part of pre-service teacher education or of the induction period; the presence of a variety of bespoke opportunities for in-service teachers' professional development, such as workshops organised by the school; and teacher-appraisal mechanisms with a strong focus on teachers' continuous development.<sup>122</sup> It is clear from the evidence collected by the AEU from teachers and principals that they are not receiving the necessary support from state governments to acquit this requirement. Career long learning and professional development opportunities are essential to keep teachers engaged and to increase the attractiveness of the teaching to the most able school leavers, and essential to enhance the status of the profession.

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<sup>121</sup> Ibid, p.194

<sup>122</sup> P17 PISA - Effective Teacher Policies

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### ***Addressing inequity in teacher resourcing in disadvantaged and rural and remote schools***

It stands to reason that under resourced schools have lower levels of teacher satisfaction and higher levels of attrition and turnover than well-resourced schools. Australia is the only high performing OECD country where schools in disadvantaged areas are resourced to a lower level than schools in the most advantaged areas. Australia continually stands out among OECD countries because of its failure to allocate resources where they are most needed and the impact of this failure is felt most heavily in public schools. Data derived from PISA 2015, summarised in table 2 below, shows that in Australia disadvantaged schools have more students per teacher, more teacher shortages, more teacher absenteeism, more poorly qualified teachers, more teachers teaching out-of-field, less experienced teachers, more teacher turnover, more novice teachers, and more teachers on short-term contracts than advantaged schools.<sup>123</sup>

To encourage and attract this highly skilled and diverse workforce, teachers must be offered secure and ongoing employment.

### ***Reducing the burden of out-of-hours and at-home work***

Workload and excessive out-of-hours work is a key cause of low morale, and ultimately of attrition among both principals and teachers. In a survey conducted for the AEU's submission to the Review to Achieve Educational Excellence in Australian Schools (2017) nearly half of 478 principals reported that they worked for 56 hours or more per week. Principals reported that they spent the largest proportion of their time on complying with departmental requirements (21%) but only 14% of their time leading teaching and learning (see Table 3 below).

Similarly, OECD data also show that teacher's job satisfaction and self-efficacy are negatively related to the time they spend on administrative tasks, particularly in Australia.<sup>124</sup> Nearly three quarters of the 3,591 teachers surveyed by the AEU (73%) felt that they spent too much time on administrative tasks. Increased support from either central or regional offices or from extra staff within schools could free up teachers' time to increase their focus on teaching and learning. Nearly 92% of teachers reported they had insufficient time outside of classes for lesson planning, marking, report writing and administration work within their paid working hours. There needs to be a system wide reduction in

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<sup>123</sup> Trevor Cobbold, [Massive Gaps in Teacher Resources Between Disadvantaged and Advantaged Schools In Australia.pdf](#), Save Our Schools, Oct. 2018

<sup>124</sup> OECD (2014). *Talis 2013 Results: An International Perspective on Teaching and Learning*, TALIS, OECD Publishing. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1787/9789264196261-en>

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contact time with students and/or class sizes to reduce the impact of increased workload on teaching and learning.

### ***Improving retention through secure employment***

It is becoming increasingly common that teachers commence their employment with a period of contract or temporary employment (sometimes of many years), rather than moving directly into permanent or ongoing employment. The State of Our Schools survey demonstrates in stark terms the relationship between insecure employment and a willingness to consider leaving teaching. The percentage of teachers employed on a non-permanent basis who said that they were more likely to leave teaching because of their insecure employment was particularly high among teachers whose current contracts are for three years or less (70%) and for those who have worked as teachers for between four and ten years (76.), noticeably higher than for teachers with less than three years' experience (69%). Overall, two thirds of teachers not employed permanently said that their insecure status made it more likely that they would leave teaching prior to retirement age.

This substantial increase in the percentage of experienced teachers who say they are more likely to leave the profession early due to a lack of ongoing permanent employment is likely to be indicative of increasing frustration at not being able to get a foothold within the profession and achieve permanency, even after accruing significant experience. The incidence of those who say they are more likely to leave teaching prior to retirement due to a lack of permanency reduces with length of experience from 10 years onwards, to 64% for teachers with 11 – 20 years' experience and 44% for teachers with more than 20 years' experience. Although this may seem counterintuitive, it is likely related to the characteristics of those who are retained within the teaching profession on insecure contracts for extended time periods, in that those who have remained within the profession for a decade or more without permanency are more likely to tolerate ongoing insecurity.

Every child has the right to be taught by a fully qualified teacher, yet there is a critical shortage of trained maths teachers. The scale of the difficulty in recruiting Maths teachers was laid bare in a recent report by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI). AMSI found that there is a 76% chance of early secondary school (years 7-10) students being taught by at least one out of field maths teacher through years 7-10, a 35% chance of at least two years of a maths teacher teaching outside their field and an 8% chance of at least three years of out of field teaching during the first

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four years of secondary school, and that less than one quarter of year 7 -10 students have a maths teacher teaching within their field every year.<sup>125</sup>

AMSI found that to rectify this intractable problem maths teachers would need to be recruited at 160% of the current retirement rate to reduce out of field teaching to 10% within five years.<sup>126</sup> Former AMSI Director, Professor Geoff Prince describes:

Out-of-field teaching in mathematics not only affects the learning outcomes of students, it limits our schools' ability to mount the intermediate and advanced subjects at Years 10 through 12 which lead to degrees in science, engineering, medicine and so on. It is worst in regional, remote and mid to low SES communities and is therefore an equity issue, not only limiting educational access but also driving down adult numeracy. From an economic viewpoint it chokes the supply of mathematically and statistically capable professionals in an era of increasing demand.<sup>127</sup>

### ***Shortage of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers***

There is an acknowledged lack of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in Australia. The More Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers Initiative (MATSI) was a national project funded by the then Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and managed by the University of South Australia through the office of Professor Peter Buckskin, Dean, Indigenous Scholarship, Engagement and Research. The project commenced in 2011, and despite recommendations to support its continuation, based on robust research and evidence of positive outcomes, the project was finalised in 2016, with opportunities for its extension lost in changes to the machinery of government in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander affairs, following the election of the Abbott government in 2014<sup>128</sup>.

The overarching objectives of the MATSI project were to increase:

- the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in teaching positions in schools;
- the capacity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers; and
- the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in teaching positions in schools.

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<sup>125</sup> AMSI <https://amsi.org.au/media/AMSI-Occasional-Paper-Out-of-Field-Maths-Teaching.pdf> p3

<sup>126</sup> AMSI <https://amsi.org.au/media/AMSI-Occasional-Paper-Out-of-Field-Maths-Teaching.pdf> p3

<sup>127</sup> AMSI <https://amsi.org.au/media/AMSI-Occasional-Paper-Out-of-Field-Maths-Teaching.pdf> p2

<sup>128</sup> Mark Rose, Vice President Victorian Aboriginal Education Association Inc. & Executive Director Indigenous Strategy and Education, *La Trobe University* <https://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2018/opinion/close-the-gap-more-indigenous-graduates>

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An independent evaluation of the initiative <sup>129</sup> found that project partners intensified their commitment to achieving MATSITI's aims through their formal participation in the project and further, that partners and stakeholders raised their awareness of the 'direct relationship between the presence of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in schools and improvements in educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.'<sup>130</sup> Finally, the project resulted in a 16.5% increase in the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers between 2012 and 2015, 'due to recruitment and improved levels of identification.'<sup>131</sup>

Recommendations from the MATSITI Project's Final Report<sup>132</sup>, Evaluation Report<sup>133</sup>, the Tarndanya Declaration<sup>134</sup> and the MATSITI teacher workforce scoping plan should therefore be implemented.<sup>135</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>130</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>131</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MATSITI-Final-Report-1.0.pdf> (p.6)

<sup>132</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/MATSITI-Final-Report-1.0.pdf>

<sup>133</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2016/05/MATSITI-2016-Project-Evaluation-Final-Report.pdf>

<sup>134</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/MATSITI-OurMobTeach-Declaration-V4.pdf>

<sup>135</sup> <http://matsiti.edu.au/plans/MATSITI-Scoping-Plan-June-2013.pdf>



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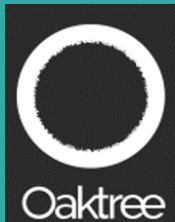
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