



Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan – draft University response

The consultation framework for the [Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan](#) involves:

- A yes or no question on whether the respondent wants to comment on each priority area
- A five point rating scale for each priority
- A text box for further input (300 word/2200 character limit)

A draft response on each priority is set out below.

1. Elevating the profession

This action aims to recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.

The actions proposed recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.

Rating scale: Strongly disagree ⇒ Strongly agree

Response: Somewhat agree

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University notes that the draft plan is silent on pay and working conditions. While these are set by the states and territories the Commonwealth can play an important role in setting principles and encouraging a common approach to remuneration and employment conditions – if only to reduce unhelpful poaching of staff. Immediate action on these issues is crucial in the face of a highly competitive jobs market.

Some of the actions are focused on individual excellence and recognition, an approach that may not sit well with the collegial culture of the profession. The emphasis needs to be on elevating the teaching profession as a whole, reinforcing the point that pay and conditions need to be part of the conversation.

The goal to increase the number of HALT certified teachers is too modest. To have real impact, the target needs to be higher, and will need significant investment from states, territories and the Commonwealth.

Some of the actions (e.g. teaching awards, nominations for OA) have no targets and it is not clear what impact they will have.

2. Improving teacher supply

The actions proposed will be effective in increasing the number of students entering ITE, number of students completing ITE and the number of teachers staying in and/or returning to the profession.

Rating scale: Strongly disagree ⇒ Strongly agree

Response: Somewhat agree

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University broadly supports these actions. The Commonwealth will need to take steps to ensure that the allocation of CSPs supports greater diversity in ITE students and teaching graduates, with the caveat that many students from NES, regional and remote or first-in-family backgrounds require more support to progress through and successfully complete a teaching qualification. Funding for ITE must do more than reward students for turning up: it must provide them with the support they need.

Teacher education programs at Charles Sturt University already have a very diverse student intake, and the University has extensive experience and expertise in providing them with the support they need. Student bursaries would help overcome the significant financial barriers (travel, accommodation, living expenses) faced by many regional and remote students and ensure they can make use of the support services offered by the University.

Performance-linked funding for ITE courses presents a real risk of reduced funding for some providers, requiring them to 'do more with less' or cease offering ITE altogether. Over time this will lead to a narrower range of ITE providers and a high degree of uniformity in their courses and methods, and potentially close the door to the teaching profession to students from diverse backgrounds.

Prioritising visas for qualified teachers is at best a short-term solution to teacher workforce shortages, and one subject to intense international competition. That said, one option for Australia is to increase recruitment from the Asia-Pacific region, with the proviso that this should not be done in a way that adversely affects the teaching workforce in neighbouring countries.

3. Strengthening initial teacher education

The actions proposed will ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and quality.

Rating scale: Strongly disagree ⇒ Strongly agree

Response: Somewhat agree

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University generally supports these actions.

Improving recognition of ITE students' prior skills would be useful. At present some professional and other expertise is being discounted or undervalued by both universities and schools, deterring some people from switching careers. That said, steps to recognise prior skills/experience must not jeopardise the quality of graduates and should not be seen as providing a fast-track to completing an ITE qualification.

The actions to attract more First Nations students/teachers are most welcome. ITE program models often do not match the needs and life circumstances of First Nations students, deterring participation. Co-design of ITE programs in partnership with First Nations students, communities, organisations, and teachers is the obvious solution.

Charles Sturt University also suggests that all the actions in the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan should include greater First Nations engagement as a goal.

The LANTITE test has proven to be problematic. It can deter potential students from enrolling in or completing ITE programs. The University supports the two actions proposed. We also recommend that ITE providers ensure they have appropriate support and networks in place, especially for school students who may be considering a teaching degree, and that there should be alternative ways for ITE students to demonstrate they have the required skills (to accommodate students who may struggle in test environments).



4. Maximising the time to teach

Do we have feedback – Yes

The actions proposed will improve retention and free up teachers to focus on teaching and collaboration.

Rating scale: Strongly disagree ⇒ Strongly agree

Response: Strongly agree

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University strongly supports actions to maximise teaching time. We note, however, that there is little detail on some of the proposed actions.

The University does not support measures that would deprofessionalise teaching, for example by encouraging the use of teaching 'scripts' or more structured curricula, as these do not meet the diverse needs of school students.

We support actions to make more effective use of ITE students during their practical placements. This is already happening in many placements for Charles Sturt University ITE students, and we note that it can have many positive outcomes for the student and the school. Done well it instils in ITE students a strong sense of the collegiality of the profession.

Key considerations for this action are ensuring that classroom responsibilities do not impact ITE students' studies, do not lead to exploitation of ITE students, and that an enhanced role for ITE students in the classroom does not displace Student Learning Support Officers and other support staff from their roles. This is a key concern in regional schools: support staff generally come from the local community and are not in a position to find a similar role elsewhere.

5. Better understanding future teacher workforce needs

Do we have feedback – Yes

How effective are the proposed actions in better understanding future teacher workforce needs, including the number of teachers required?

Rating scale: Not effective at all ⇒ Extremely effective

Response: Somewhat effective

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University suggests that a key step towards understanding and planning for future workforce needs would be better tracking of and communication with ITE graduates. This would help improve understanding of how the profession is changing, what challenges are emerging in schools, what new skills teachers may need, and why people leave the teaching profession.

The University also suggests that:

- the proposed actions must take into account there is a long lead time in developing new programs and changing ITE provision to match emerging needs,
- the framework for nationally consistent ITE graduate supply data should be developed by an independent body rather than a major stakeholder,
- a National Quality Framework for teacher accreditation is essential and prioritise input from the teaching profession, and



- better coordination of planned and existing measures to prioritise conditional or provisional registration would help support teacher mobility between jurisdictions.

6. Better career pathways to support and retain teachers in the profession

The proposed actions will improve career pathways, including through streamlining the process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation, and providing better professional support for teachers to retain them in the profession.

Rating scale: Strongly disagree ⇒ Strongly agree

Response: Somewhat agree

Feedback:

Charles Sturt University has a variety of ITE and related initiatives in place that draw on our relationships with public, Catholic and independent schools across our footprint. These enable the University to tailor ITE programs to suit regional needs and to develop solutions for local challenges. For example, our Collaborative Teacher's Aide Pathway program, which helps teacher's aides and other support staff qualify as teachers in as little as two years, was developed in consultation with regional schools and now involves participants from around Australia.

The University's reputation for high-quality, flexible delivery means that we are able to attract students from around the country, especially for our postgraduate programs. This has raised some challenges in securing placements for ITE students in urban areas, where many schools have arrangements in place with other universities. Better state and national coordination of student placements would provide ITE students with a broader range of options, make urban students more aware of the opportunities available in regional schools, support a more consistent approach to teachers' mentoring of ITE students (and the proposed national guidelines for early career teachers), and generally encourage a higher quality of student placement.

We also suggest that:

- professional learning/development for practicing teachers must be high-quality, delivered flexibly and integrated with HALT and other accreditation/recognition frameworks,
- while national guidelines to support early career teachers could be very useful there is less value in a homogenous approach that does not accommodate different school environments, resourcing, teacher experience and so on, and
- while we support measures to improve the quality of First Nations cultural competency resources, the Plan must recognise that cultural safety is a broad challenge, and that teachers will need resources suitable to a wide range of culturally and linguistically diverse students.

