

Independent Review of Tasmania's Education System

Response to the Consultation Paper
Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

11 October 2024



AITSL acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, sea countries and waterways from across Australia.

We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and living cultures; and to Elders past and present.

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Introduction

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL) is pleased to respond to the Consultation Paper published as part of the *Independent Review of Tasmania's Education System*.

AITSL is a Commonwealth company that provides national leadership for the Commonwealth, state, and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. Our vision is that Australia has a high-quality education system in which teachers and leaders have the greatest impact on the educational growth and achievement of every learner.

The Independent Review of Tasmania's Education System (the Independent Education Review) represents a significant opportunity to assess and strengthen Tasmania's education system to ensure it provides the best possible opportunities for Tasmanian students to gain the skills they need to lead successful, fulfilling lives.

Context of AITSL's response

AITSL is well placed to comment on important aspects of the Independent Education Review as a Commonwealth company responsible for developing national frameworks for teaching and school leadership that are implemented by state and territory governments. For reference, a full list and copies of the national frameworks can be found on the [AITSL website](#).

AITSL's work spans four main areas of focus:

- **Initial teacher education:** We provide support, resources, and tools to help ensure that every pre-service teacher is classroom ready upon graduation.
- **Quality teaching:** We help teachers be the best they can be and provide tools and resources to maximise their impact on student learning.
- **Educational leadership:** We help leaders become highly effective by giving them the tools, resources, policies, and practices needed to succeed in their important role.
- **Data and evidence:** We use evidence to develop policies, tools and resources that will have maximum impact in improving the quality of teaching and leadership. AITSL has also been trusted to develop the first national, longitudinal dataset on the Australian teaching workforce.

Focus of this submission

Teaching and school leadership are the two primary in-school factors that influence student outcomes, and support for these underpins all ministerially-agreed national frameworks developed by AITSL, including the [Australian Professional Standards for Teachers](#) (Teacher Standards) and the [Australian Professional Standard for Principals](#) (Principal Standard).

AITSL's response to the Consultation Paper focuses on these interconnected frameworks, and how they can be used to further develop and embed high-quality teaching and leadership in Tasmanian schools. As such, this submission focuses primarily on *Theme 4 – Support for our teaching workforce* and its associated guiding questions as set out in the Consultation Paper, as well as addressing several guiding questions associated with *Theme 2 – Strengthening supports and engagement for all*

learners at all stages of their education, Theme 3 – Outcomes at the conclusion of the formal years of schooling and Theme 5 – Accountability for improved outcomes.

This submission outlines considerations related to the following:

- The changing roles of teachers and school leaders, which reflect the evolving demands of education and student needs.
- Updating the Teacher Standards to ensure they remain relevant and effective in supporting high-quality teaching.
- Enhancing the initial teacher education (ITE) to teacher workforce pipeline, including exploring employment-based pathways to address workforce challenges.
- Strengthening induction programs to ensure new teachers and leaders are well-supported as they transition into the profession.
- Prioritising professional development opportunities to continuously build the capacity of teachers and leaders.
- Establishing clear career pathways, including Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) certification, to support teacher retention and growth.
- Supporting the development of middle leadership roles to ensure strong leadership at all levels of the school.

Response to Consultation Paper

The changing role of teachers and school leaders

Over the past few decades, the roles of teachers and school leaders have evolved significantly, as has the broader purpose of schools. With increasing demands on the education system and more professionals involved, it is essential to clarify responsibilities within schools and clearly define the roles of teachers and school leaders.

Education systems in Australia and across the world are experiencing teacher shortages. High teacher turnover incurs significant costs to education systems and negatively affects teacher quality, staff morale, and, ultimately, student engagement and outcomes.

Significant changes in the roles of teachers and school leaders create an opportunity for innovation in redefining the roles of teachers and school leaders, as well as teaching assistants and other support staff in schools.

Any work in this space should focus not only on understanding and delineating the various roles within schools but also consider how emerging technologies, including artificial intelligence, can support teachers and enhance school efficiency. The outcome of this work will empower teachers and school leaders to dedicate their time and expertise to activities that have the greatest impact on student learning.

Ideally, this exercise would underpin all other work undertaken to address Theme 4 of the Review, *Support for our teaching workforce*, as a clear vision for the future of the profession will transform how Tasmania attracts, supports and develops teachers and school leaders to be effective and successful practitioners and amplify the impact of future projects and reforms.

Updating the Teacher Standards

The Teacher Standards are foundational to shaping the teaching profession, providing a shared understanding of effective teaching practices that underpin teacher education, professional development, and career progression. To ensure the Teacher Standards continue to align with current educational needs and evidence-based teaching practices, it would be timely for the Independent Education Review to advocate for a national review of the Teacher Standards.

A review of the Teacher Standards would ensure they remain aligned with the latest research and evidence-based practices. It could also take into account other trends impacting the teaching profession, such as:

- Professionalisation of the early childhood teaching workforce, with several reviews finding that it is difficult for early childhood teachers to see themselves and their practice reflected in the current Standards.
- Increasing expectations for support of students with a disability, with the *Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with a Disability* recommending changes to the Teacher Standards.

- Rapid technological change, including the recent introduction of generative artificial intelligence (AI) into classrooms.
- Recent inclusion of mandatory core content on the Brain and Learning, Effective Pedagogical Practices, Classroom Management and Responsive Teaching in initial teacher education programs.

By aligning the Teacher Standards with contemporary teaching challenges and evidence-based approaches, school systems across Australia can continue to enhance the quality of teaching, ultimately benefiting students and ensuring that the education system supports their success. The Independent Education Review should support and advocate for a national review of the Teacher Standards as a key mechanism to reinforce Tasmania's commitment to high-quality education.

Strengthening the initial teacher education to school pipeline

The final report of the Teacher Education Expert Panel, [Strong Beginnings](#), and subsequent decisions by Education Ministers provide a foundation for further improvement to initial teacher education (ITE) in Australia, including a focus on mid-career pathways to attract more people to the teaching profession. Recommendation 12 of that report calls for Education Ministers and higher education providers to develop and scale employment-based and accelerated pathways, utilising flexibility within existing jurisdictional regulatory arrangements (i.e. Limited Authority to Teach in Tasmania). This recommendation acknowledges the specific barriers (time and financial disincentives) faced by mid-career changers in undertaking traditional ITE programs through traditional study modes, as well as the unique value they bring to the profession.

In support of this recommendation, and as part of a current review of the *Accreditation of initial teacher education programs in Australia: Standards and Procedures* (Accreditation Standards and Procedures), AITSL will propose amendments to remove barriers to high-quality, employment-based, and fast-tracked ITE pathways. The updated Accreditation Standards and Procedures are due to be considered by Education Ministers in early 2025.

The Teacher Intern Placement Program (TIPP) and Teach for Australia, which are currently utilised in Tasmanian government schools, are good examples of employment-based pathways. Tasmania should consider scaling implementation of these and similar programs, as well as investigating condensed programs and utilisation of recognition of prior learning.

Quality induction for beginning teachers

Induction of beginning teachers is primarily the responsibility of schools, systems and sectors, and teacher regulatory authorities such as the Teachers Registration Board Tasmania.

Induction should build on the high-quality preparation of beginning teachers through their ITE program and include a strong focus on professional practices, among other areas. AITSL has recently published ministerially-approved [Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia](#), developed under Action 14 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan.

These Guidelines are written for early career teachers, mentors and supervising teachers, principals and school leaders, systems and sectors, and the broader profession. The Guidelines are based on research and provide practical advice to support high-quality induction. They can be used to underpin the development of programs and practices to support early career teachers.

In supporting implementation of these Guidelines, AITSL advises that Tasmanian education systems and sectors:

- engage with their schools to implement a whole of school/system approach to early career teacher induction by developing or amending policies to ensure that all schools can implement the Guidelines
- communicate support that is offered to schools including financial support, available time release and professional learning opportunities
- support the differentiation and customisation of the Guidelines allowing for school size, demographics and location

Other initiatives by AITSL, such as the [My Induction app](#) and [My Teaching Advice](#) assist beginning teachers to access the support and resources they need to thrive in their first years in the profession. These resources can supplement and enhance the work already being done by schools, systems and sectors to ensure beginning teachers' needs are being met.

Effective induction practices, including practice-focused mentoring support for beginning teachers, with relevant professional learning opportunities for mentors, would have a positive impact on outcomes.

Supporting high-quality professional learning

The [Australian Teacher Performance and Development Framework](#), developed by AITSL and agreed by Education Ministers in 2012, highlights the factors that need to be in place for a performance and development culture to flourish. Variation exists in teacher performance and development processes across systems and sectors, however these should include four essential elements:

- all teachers have a set of documented and regularly reviewed goals related to performance and development
- all teachers are supported in working towards their goals, including through access to high-quality professional learning
- evidence used to reflect on and evaluate teacher performance should come from multiple sources and include data showing impact on student outcomes, as well as observations of teaching and collaboration with colleagues
- all teachers receive formal and informal feedback on their performance.

All teachers should be supported in working toward their goals, including through access to high-quality professional learning (HQPL) that is relevant, future focused and collaborative. AITSL has developed a range of materials to help improve the effectiveness of professional learning that could be used at a systemic, school and/or individual level. They include:

- guidance on moving through the [HQPL cycle](#), including identification of the professional learning need, selecting and undertaking learning, evaluating overall impact and application of the learning
- the [HQPL Toolkit](#), an interactive online platform that guides the creation of a professional learning plan
- guides on accessing professional learning for particular cohorts of teachers, including [casual relief teachers](#) and those in [rural, regional and remote settings](#).

Creating career pathways for teachers

Tasmania is in the early stages of implementing Highly Accomplished and Lead teacher (HALT) certification, following a pilot which saw nine teachers certified in the state. As Australia moves toward the target of having 10,000 teachers certified as HALTs or equivalent under the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, AITSL supports any efforts made by Tasmania to increase HALT numbers.

There are many more teachers currently working in schools who demonstrate practice at the Highly Accomplished and Lead career stages of the Teacher Standards than the number who have been certified as HALTs. While increasing the number of HALTs is an important endeavour in its own right to increase the esteem of the teaching profession and support teachers to reflect on and elevate their practice, it is appropriately leveraging the expertise of HALTs, which will translate most effectively into improved student outcomes. To do this, the development of specific roles for HALTs (and other expert teachers) should be considered.

AITSL is leading work to streamline HALT certification and remove barriers in the application process. Following an extensive consultation and development period, a new [Framework for the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers](#) (the HALT Framework) was approved for implementation by Education Ministers in July 2023, and is now the national governing document for HALT certification. The HALT Framework provides an opportunity for Tasmania to consider and create a process for HALT certification that suits the state's needs.

AITSL's direct engagement with HALTs has revealed frustration that certification as a HALT does not necessarily lead to roles that optimise utilisation of their expertise to support other teachers' practice. AITSL recommends creating specialised roles for expert teachers, akin to the [teaching tracks in Singapore](#) which include roles for 'Master Teachers', with HALTs playing a central role in supporting and coaching other teachers. Further to AITSL's recommendation, the Grattan Institute's recent report, [Top teachers: Sharing expertise to improve teaching](#) (February 2020) outlines a potential model for the introduction of esteemed, well-paid roles designed to support other teachers.

The success of specialist roles in the vein of Singapore's model and the Grattan Institute proposals depends in large part on the level of expertise that teachers selected for these roles have. Achieving HALT certification should be a prerequisite for these or similar roles, as it will ensure quality and rigour in the selection process and ensure teachers in these roles have the appropriate expertise and capability to support other teachers in improving their teaching practice.

Innovative deployment models could also help Tasmanian schools to better harness the expertise of these teachers to address areas of need, including in rural and remote schools. A clear career pathway for teachers that allows for continual progression and rewards teaching expertise should bolster teacher retention and present teaching as a more attractive career option for ambitious high school graduates and mid-career changers, as well as improving student outcomes.

Recognising middle leaders

Middle leaders typically hold management and leadership responsibilities in addition to their classroom teaching responsibilities. Indeed, AITSL research suggests that at least 90% of middle leaders hold teaching roles. Their closeness to classrooms means that they are well positioned to address the core school business of leading improvement in teaching and learning.

As found in AITSL's recent [Middle Leadership Literature Review and Document Analysis](#), middle leaders are well positioned to encourage innovation, lead improvement, provide mentoring support, and improve collective practice. They ensure their school makes the most of new technologies, best practices, and other resources to support student success. Middle leaders are essential in reviewing

student data, using it to inform instruction and make choices about student support, which ultimately improves student outcomes. Effective middle leaders undertake systematic use of student data to inform instructional improvements and improve consistency across student cohorts.

AITSL, in conjunction with the Queensland Department of Education, and with the endorsement of Education Ministers, has developed [*Professional Standards for Middle Leaders*](#) (Middle Leader Standards). The Middle Leader Standards have been validated, and are based on evidence and wide consultation with the profession. They can then be used as a developmental tool to improve the expertise and practice of middle leaders in leading whole-school approaches to improved instruction. Clearly articulating the roles of middle leaders should also assist in defining the role of classroom teachers, and may reduce workload by having each role focus on the things that are most efficiently done at that level.

While not yet nationally endorsed, the Middle Leader Standards have been published and are freely available to use. AITSL recommends consideration be given to trialling implementation of the Middle Leader Standards across Tasmanian schools, as part of an effort to mobilise middle leaders to focus on improvements in student outcomes.

The logo for the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) features the lowercase letters 'aitsl' in a sans-serif font. The letters are filled with a vertical gradient that transitions from a light yellow-green at the top to a darker teal at the bottom.

Australian Institute
for Teaching and
School Leadership
Limited

A decorative graphic at the bottom of the page consists of two overlapping triangles. The left triangle is a solid teal color, and the right triangle is a solid yellow-green color. They meet at a diagonal line that slopes upwards from left to right.

aitsl.edu.au

Telephone: +61 3 9944 1200
Email: info@aitsl.edu.au

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