



Network of Education Associations of Tasmania, Inc.

NEAT submission and response to the Independent Education Review of the Tasmanian education system and its public consultation paper

The Network of Education Associations of Tasmania (NEAT) welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission to Ms Vicki Baylis, Independent Reviewer and Education Specialist, responding to the Terms of Reference, as set by the Minister for Education.

The NEAT joint council is an incorporated association in Tasmania [www.neat.edu.au] advocating for the subject associations and professional associations' committees of management that serve the interests of educators throughout Tasmania. Membership of NEAT is open to all education associations. As a common voice, NEAT has had this representative role in Tasmanian Education for over 25 years, providing both in-person and online contact with the broader educational community as well as communication with government in periods of regulatory and organisational review.

The Australian Professional Teachers Association (APTA) [www.apta.edu.au] is the peak 'parent' body for NEAT and the other state and territory-based joint councils that represent the needs of teaching associations operating in their jurisdictions. The joint councils advocate on jurisdictional matters, such as policy developments, resources and funding, governance matters, and create a national community of associations that can share advice, support and collaborate in meaningful ways. Our voice is diverse, inclusive, representative of subject pedagogy, experienced leadership, and often, at the forefront of education.

Teachers established the associations to improve the quality, efficiency and effectiveness of school education in their respective disciplines, subject specialities or cross-disciplinary learning areas. They focus on:

- Professional development providing opportunities for teachers to participate in ongoing professional learning and development. This may include attending conferences, workshops and other events, participating in online learning, industry visits, and masterclasses with leading thinkers and practitioners. They curate and disseminate resources and information about best practices and new developments in their field or knowledge area. Very frequently, these associations are the *only* source of professional learning that focuses on how to teach a specific discipline or subject well.
- Networking in associations provide opportunities for teachers to connect with colleagues and peers in their field, both within their own local jurisdiction and across the nation. This helps to foster collaboration, share ideas and experiences, all of which reduce workload and accelerate capacity or system improvements. The support networks help to reduce stress and professional isolation.
- Advocacy for quality teaching in subject areas can include advocating for policy changes, better approaches to teaching and learning, improved educational outcomes for students, teachers' access to resources and support, promoting the value of teaching and the significant role of teachers in society.

APTA member professional associations provide both evidence on the potential impacts of policies on classroom practice, and the latest developments in Australia and overseas in the teaching

disciplines. They reflect the 'teacher voice' even though they are advocating from the variety of perspectives.

The associations are supported in two ways. For example, the Science Teachers' Association of Tasmania (STAT) or the Tasmanian Association of Teachers of English (TATE) will be supported by NEAT and parent body, APTA. Their umbrella and national associations, the Australian Science Teachers' Association (ASTA) and the Australian Association of Teachers of English (AATE) will be supported also by the Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) [www.aaae.edu.au].

APTA and AAAE work together in their national, formal and collaborative consultations with federal government agencies, such as the Teacher Expert Panel, established by the Australian Government to improve Initial Teacher Education (ITE) to boost graduation rates and ensure the graduates are better prepared for the classroom.

This submission has been prepared by members of the NEAT Committee of Management with the knowledge, work and support of the national APTA Board of Directors.

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Terms of Reference

This response from NEAT will focus on its work on behalf of the professional associations, spanning government and non-government school sectors in Tasmania from Kindergarten to Year 12.

It will explore each of the Review's Objectives, through the opportunity to focus on three of the five Review Themes of the [Consultation Paper](#) addressed in the Terms of Reference.

Objectives:

- Implements **evidence-based whole of school practices and pedagogy** that leads to improved student educational outcomes and behaviour.
- Delivers **high quality teaching** that is evidence based and meets the needs of students at all levels.
- Effectively utilises resources to improve student outcomes and attract and **retain a high-quality workforce**.
- Contributes to the State's productivity by **supporting a highly skilled local workforce** to assist local businesses and industry to grow and compete; and
- **Is accountable** for improved student outcomes, including **in remote and rural areas**.

Theme 2. Strengthening supports and engagement for all learners at all stages of their education.

How can we collectively support Tasmanian learners to get the most out of their entire education experience and ensure all students reach their potential?

Home schooling in Tasmania: learning, literacy and Libraries Tasmania

The DECYP (2023, p. 190) Annual Report documents that on 30 June 2023, there were 1441 registrations for children in home schooling from 844 families across Tasmania. It represents a 35% increase on 2019. For the 1 July 2022 – 30 June 2023 period, the following registration, retention and attainment activities occurred: thirty-three received Year 10 Completion certificates in accordance with Section 91 of the Act. A further twenty-nine received Year 12 Completion certificates in accordance with Section 93 of the Act.

There is ongoing evidence reported that the number of students registered for Home Education has been growing in the last 10 years but grew dramatically during the Covid-19 period and is continuing to grow Australia-wide, as well as in the Western world. The evidence is a compelling alternative to traditional or mainstream schooling, particularly in relation to learners with learning-support requirements or seeking alternative schooling frameworks. (Queensland, 2022; English 2023; Cordes 2024).

In documenting the match of public library programs in Queensland to the expressed needs of home-schooled students, Cordes (2024) found similarities and differences between home and school-based learners. Home educating parents were not so concerned with programs that encouraged their children to read but would like access to greater resources. First, they wished to participate in library programs not as holiday, or extra-curricular or leisure activities, but as an important part of the learning program during traditional school hours, particularly for the older children. It was also noted that several participants had found that library programs currently being offered did not cater for the special needs of their children with disabilities. Recommendations for the future included a Queensland research project exploring the needs of traditionally schooled

families with regards to library programs, and a pilot project offering a library program for homeschooled children during school hours. Developing programs that cater for the needs of homeschooling families would be beneficial for the families as it would enhance the student outcomes for their children, and it would also be beneficial for libraries as homeschooling parents as strong advocates for library programs would be valuable library volunteers.

Libraries Tasmania is working strategically, in the Together with Families initiative with families to deepen the culture of family engagement, support lifelong learning and connecting all Tasmanians with knowledge, ideas and family-community engagements. Through these and other strategic initiatives, and within the state library's system of available capacity improvements, there is an opportunity for Libraries Tasmania to support virtual learning, high-quality e-resourcing and physical resourcing through a similar lens and needs of home-schooling families, as in the Queensland studies, supporting learners to improve their outcomes from Kinder to Year 12 completion.

Beyond exploring reading or public library branch events, as in the current websites for children and families, and young people, there is an opportunity to extend the impact of Libraries Tasmania's resources and programs, respecting the equity, access, enablers, barriers and unique needs of parents and carers as home educators. This may include through better alignment of both government's strategic intent and the Libraries' organisational outreach. Examples could include:

- Review the Libraries Tasmania's State Library and Lending Collection Development Guideline <https://libraries.tas.gov.au/about-us/policies-and-governance/policies/lending-collection-development-guideline/purpose/> and the 'formal learning' program of the Australian Curriculum, Kinder and Prep-12, so that the guideline is inclusive, providing information on the key national standards to support diversity for the home learner, families' homework learning support, student agency and children's wellbeing, distance learning, technical, academic and professional teaching support and transition education or career pathways.
- Align the DECYP's Approach to Digital Inclusion for 21st Century Learners and Action Plan – the Action 2 “for school and at home” and the Action 7 “digital capability of families to confidently support their child to navigate online environments” with the Libraries Tasmania commitment to the Lifting Literacy Implementation Plan 2024-2026 plan for evidence-based literacy instruction and mobile library support for communities that struggle to maintain adequate library collection due to location, funding, or size.
- Create and curate a distinctive curriculum-support website project, similar to the State Library of NSW; with consulting advice of the public library branch professional and community coordinating staff in those rural areas with strong representation by home educators, as well as review by curriculum education consultants and registration officers working with the statutory bodies of TASC and OER to respond to home-schooled student voice.
- Request the assistance of the Tasmanian Home Education Advisory Council (THEAC) and the Home Education Association of Australia to ensure that all registered learners register for Libraries Tasmania membership in order to access the differentiated and high quality instructional materials (HQIM) of the licensed e-resources, as well as the culturally inclusive and diverse physical / print resources of public library branches.

Libraries have always been social innovators. Tasmania does not have a local incorporated, not-for-profit and professional education association to support Home Educators to enable and encourage the professional networking, collaboration and mentoring that the subject or specialist teaching and professional associations afford their member educators. Libraries Tasmania's strategic intents for families fills this critical gap for student retention, **lifelong learning** and **digital inclusion** in an emerging current community of approximately 1500 students.

Theme 4. Support for our teaching workforce.

How do we attract, support and develop teachers and school leaders to be effective and successful practitioners who can confidently deliver high quality, evidence-based teaching that meets the needs of students at all levels?

Recognising the work and value of professional teaching associations (PTAs)

The current and projected shortfall of teachers by 2025, combined with the clear evidence of excessive work hours for current classroom teachers, as provided by the analyses in the [Australian Teacher Workforce Data](#) is a significant concern for all Tasmanian educators. It is an obvious imperative to the Tasmanian professional teaching associations to assist in attracting suitably qualified people to training in the teaching profession, but also to encourage greater retention of early and mid-career teachers. Fortunately, attracting, retaining and supporting quality classroom teachers is being addressed through a key objective in the collaborative State and Territory approaches of the [National Teacher Workforce Action Plan \(NTWAP\)](#).

Professional teacher associations have members who span Early Childhood Education, Primary, Secondary, Higher Education and TAFE, and know that the teaching workforce must have leaders with high-level skills, professional qualifications and experience to not only focus on student learning outcomes, but also productivity and regional growth, minimising staff attrition, raising innovation and entrepreneurial levels, increasing community understanding, school culture, engagement and teacher wellbeing.

The teacher unions represent teacher members' interests, such as improving award wages. However, the teaching associations have experienced teacher members with expertise in their subjects or disciplines to sustain support for ITE, the new and the current generations of educators. The teacher members of the PTAs representing their eight ACARA learning areas, cross-curriculum priorities and general capabilities, or their tertiary undergraduate and ITE disciplines will always speak of the benefit of being a member of the PTAs in supporting their development as an educator.

The teaching associations have operated across Australia for many decades, being incorporated, often during the advent of online communities of practice in the late nineties, being funded by national education grants, such as those from Education.au (EdNA) or the Australian Quality Teaching Project (AQTP) to provide nationally consistent professional development for classroom teachers. They are managed by practising classroom teachers and middle leaders to advocate for their discipline, to improve their practice and thereby, improve student engagement and outcomes. Yet, the changing priorities, with the legislative and regulatory priorities has resulted in limited funding or actual teacher remuneration to mean that schools cannot or will not release or provide relief for teachers to participate in their professional learning programs. The traditional membership-based funding models for PTAs has become insufficient to sustain free programs and access to curriculum leadership for all classroom teachers. Whilst the State education budgets are focused on public funding priorities and the formal TRB registration framework, PTA advocacy for AITSL's Standards 6 & 7 meets hosts of barriers for teachers' participation and formal recognition of current competence beyond ad hoc or *informal* online professional networking in free social media.

Most schools do not have a trained subject specialist for each subject, leaving many teachers lacking support or mentoring when it comes to making decisions in curriculum planning, finding supportive and quality resources and professional reading. The practical and nourishing support from expert teachers, facilitated by teachers' associations, accelerates the learning of new teachers, saves them time and reduces their feelings of professional isolation, keeping them in the schools that need them most. The teacher associations subject/specialty-specific support to early career teachers and teachers teaching out-of-field, via networking opportunities that are so important for new teachers in regional or remote settings.

Whilst NEAT, as the Joint Council, advocating for the teaching associations in Tasmania acknowledges the work of the Department, the non-government systems, the Professional Learning Institute, the UTAS Faculty of Education and the Peter Underwood Centre in providing professional support to teachers, the teaching associations are often preferred by subject teachers to support their immediate classroom practice in specific ways:

- Targeted professional learning in subject areas
Providing highly targeted professional learning in specific subjects/disciplines as professional learning is increasingly replaced by staff training of a general nature. Whilst support in areas such as child safeguarding, classroom management, student wellbeing and general instructional design is important, the PTAs are the main source of subject-specific learning. New teachers embarking on teaching experiences in their disciplines or their new appointments which are 'out-of-field' of their discipline require access urgently to learning specific to those subjects, in addition to their schools' generalised support and induction.
- Supporting out-of-field teachers
Many teachers, both newly appointed and experienced practitioners are teaching subjects for which they have received no tertiary training. This is an issue that has been exacerbated during the teacher shortage. As subject experts, PTAs are uniquely placed to support teacher members working out-of-field and could be more frequently consulted to consult with the Department's, UTAS and non-government sector organisations in developing funded programs. These organisations do need to encourage and connect both ITE and early career teachers with the associations that support the subjects in which they are teaching or may be requested to teach. School systems should guarantee access to subject/specialty professional learning that enables these teachers to accelerate their out-of-field or early career development.
- Early career teachers require support of experienced colleagues
Providing a network of collaboration, mentoring and coaching for early career teachers by experienced colleagues working in subject areas and disciplines is often regarded as a greater support strategy for retaining teachers in the profession and workforce, or attracting professionals who are preparing to switch to a teaching career pathway. Several teachers' associations offer free membership for pre-service teachers and reduced membership fees for graduate teachers. Some offer mentoring programs, and professional learning and networks that specifically target new and out-of-field teachers. This provision could be expanded and more consistently offered with greater financial support for teacher associations.
- Maximising the time to teach.
Making time to free up teachers to focus on their teaching in collaboration with colleagues is regularly reported as the most significant factor in poor teacher retention. NEAT, and its parent body, APTA believe that the Grattan Institute's reported issue of "making time" is not about improving teacher quality or teachers' curriculum and professional standards (Grattan Institute, 2023). Teachers are dedicated to their roles. Membership of professional teacher associations and voluntary work in professional and subject-discipline associations is testament to this. The teachers' time-poor issue and work overload is about shifting the balance to increase the dedicated focus on teaching, learning and assessment and reducing the burden of the compliance – the repetitive and overlapping red tape through the regulatory frameworks, such as safety risk assessments in business continuity plans. Teachers require greater human resource support in terms of administrative aide time and reduction of duplicative efforts of record-keeping across multiple student information management and asset management systems, or smarter strategies and standards compliance with competing Commonwealth and State governance. As the report documented by [AITSL \(2020\) *Shifting*](#)

the balance provided, a positive, constructive and consistent focus on how red tape reduction is still urgently needed.

Reducing teacher workload

Reducing teacher workload is an outstanding goal for the NTWAP Action Plan to pursue. As APTA documented in its response to the DRAFT NTWAP Action Plan, new approaches to teacher workload reduction anywhere in Australia would be a welcome initiative (APTA, 2022). APTA and the joint councils do not support the premise inspired by unrepresentative and small population sample surveys on social media for Australia's 307,000+ teachers, as in the Grattan Institute survey reports from 2,243 teachers and principals released recently, declaring that a central bank of teaching resources would save teachers' time. Only 158 Tasmanian teachers had responded to this social media survey in 2021 within the sample size of 4,999 teachers. (Hunter, 2022, Grattan Institute 2022, 2023).

The 'banks' of commercially produced and licensed teaching resources are costly, and take away from teachers an intrinsic part of their role – to develop unit and lesson plans nuanced to the needs of their students in particular contexts, in a particular year, term or unit, differentiated to meet the full span of abilities within their classroom. This is not the part of a problematic workload or accountability from which most teachers are asking to be relieved.

The question to ask teachers is what do they spend time on that others could do instead? or, what are the jobs which prevent teachers from doing the core work of a teacher (planning, creating or curating high quality resources) to deliver interesting and engaging lessons?

To save teachers' time, to provide high quality instructional materials that are customised for Tasmanian contexts, 'banks' would need to have their 'sample lessons' and resources for the curriculum have complete instructions for differentiation and recommendations for customisation to suit different cohorts, such as gifted learners, learners with support needs, disability, neurodiversity, First Nations and cultural differences, or learners experiencing anxiety or trauma. Teachers would inevitably (and publicly) apply nervous or critical lenses to the cost, quality and suitability of the resources for their unique class contexts. As soon as the resources were completed, they would need to be curated, re-purposed, revised, culled or replaced to reflect curriculum changes and economy measures. In many subject and course areas, such as HASS and STEM, exposure to a wide range of perspectives enables teachers to use their initiative and professional judgement in choosing how to implement the Australian Curriculum that is fundamental to developing informed, aspirational and engaging pathways to lifelong learning, training skills, jobs and community participation.

Many professional teachers' associations produce highly regarded journals, newsletters and online resources containing sample teaching plans and resources, updating teachers' subject/specialist and pedagogical knowledge to customise and use, and to reflect required teaching content, new thinking and approaches. The networks provide induction, training and support for timesaving to new teachers but also challenge expert teachers to keep thinking about ways to improve and innovate. Teaching resources produced by teacher associations in Tasmania are expertly tailored to the State's curriculum needs.

NEAT Joint Council recommends that a state policy initiative and pilot program could be to invite professional teachers' associations to apply for funding to scale up or introduce initiatives and evaluation data to build a greater and cost-effective pool of quality curriculum resourcing and customisation to support its next round of Tasmanian curriculum initiatives or adoption of exemplary interstate initiatives. For example, as in the Lifting Literacy or the Years 9-12 Project communities of practice, initiatives to focus on deeper subject and sustainable pedagogical practice.

Professional teacher associations play a valuable role in providing subject-specific support while also building communities of practice. Bringing together like-minded subject practitioners across the

nation, in collaborative communities enhances wellbeing, deepens subject knowledge and effective pedagogy and reduces the sense of isolation that many subject-specific teachers can experience, particularly in rural and remote locations. The professional support and encouragement provided by professional teacher associations is essential for the wellbeing and quality of the teaching workforce and for retaining teachers beyond the first five years in the profession.

Initiatives to address teacher workload issues should focus on long-term, sustained improvements that enable teachers to focus on teaching. These are most likely to be achieved by:

- increased staffing in schools in administration aide-time, centralised library asset acquisition and management, and technical resourcing, personal guidance and career counselling, social work and compliance with community organisations.
- cross sectoral commitments to reduce red tape and remove duplicative reporting or administration requirements.
- revisiting the interoperability of school IT systems, the incorporation of approved generative AI systems, and the sheer quantity of enterprise or local application software requiring data harvesting, storage, retrieval, archiving, and simply time online (such as virtual learning environments, learning managements systems, student information management systems, induction packages, resource acquisition and requisitions, attendance and reporting software, risk management and assessment systems, critical incident reporting systems, behaviour management registers to ensure that the use of digital technologies reduces rather than increases the time teachers spend on administration, risk mitigations and compliance.

Supporting the professional teachers' associations

At present there is a mixed approach by states/territories to support professional teaching associations. Associations in populated cities interstate in key learning areas can generate some revenue from membership dues, sale of resource publications or corporate sponsorship; but localised subject associations in Tasmania and those operating in smaller jurisdictions struggle to generate the revenue they need to best meet the needs of their volunteering members and committees of management. Funding would encourage associations to merge or fund administrative support to assist them in their organisation of teacher support activities.

Other State and Territory initiatives

In its response submissions to national reports as documented publicly its website, APTA recommends that all state and territory governments explore opportunities to fund the work of professional teaching associations. APTA believes the Northern Territory model is an effective way to achieve high returns from existing networks. Human resources and funding are provided to its Joint Council - the Professional Teachers Association of Northern Territory (PTANT) to support the member associations. Case studies follow where government funding is provided, responsive professional learning can be delivered at scale.

HALT accreditation.

NEAT supports the notion of streamlining the process of achieving HALT accreditation, but there are many teachers for whom alternative avenues other than HALT accreditation are more desirable, e.g. post-graduate degrees, micro-credentialling or other certification processes in subject specific or specialty areas.

The Victorian teachers' associations, in the 21/22 year, offered around 450 professional learning activities ranging from one-hour webinars to three-day conferences, and more than 22,000 teachers chose to participate in them. (Noting, individual teachers may appear multiple times in this figure if they registered for multiple events.) These events and programs also provided many teachers with the opportunity to provide peer-led, subject-specific professional learning to others. Over the course of a teachers' career, the expertise gained from this continuing professional development contributes to a proven status as a subject expert within a school or system when appointments to

Middle Leader roles such as Head of Department/Learning Area Leader, Head of Curriculum, and Head of Teaching and Learning.

The professional teacher associations operate around Tasmania in all schooling sectors are well-placed to support the development of respected, experienced, expert teachers with proven skills in pedagogy and a strong understanding of curriculum implementation. Consulting with professional teacher associations when developing policies and strategies relating to the teaching workforce can provide a practitioner perspective that is directly connected to classroom practice.

Case Studies

Case Study 1: the Northern Territory Model

The Northern Territory is an incredibly complex education jurisdiction, with a small population spread out over a large geographical area with a high proportion of schools in remote or very remote locations. A low population means a smaller cohort of teachers, but an extraordinarily complex education environment creates significant support needs. The Northern Territory Government has recognised the significant role that PTAs can play in supporting teachers but acknowledges the difficulties of PTAs to generate income from a small membership base.

The Northern Territory has implemented an effective policy approach. The Professional Teachers Association of Northern Territory (PTANT) has signed a five-year funding agreement with the Northern Territory Department of Education which provides financial support and an administrative officer position to support the work of NT-based professional teacher associations. The agreement allows NT-based associations to apply for up to \$20,000 in grants to be used for professional development of teachers. In the 2021-22 fiscal year, 23 grants were provided to teaching associations which directly benefited over 800 teachers. In addition, NT coordinates a biennial Festival of Teaching - a one-day professional learning event which supports discipline-based and cross-curricular professional learning. In 2021, over fifty-eight workshops were delivered to over 250 attendees. The agreement also provides an Administrative Officer to support the work of PTANT in administering the grants and in providing administration and strategic support to PTANT and its member associations.

Professional Teachers Association of the Northern Territory (PTANT) has established an early career teacher working group and is currently working with the Department of Education on how professional teacher associations can work with the department's Wellbeing Strategy, which sees a significant role for professional teacher associations.

Each year, PTANT member associations can apply for two of four grants:

- Get Going Grant (\$5000) for new associations.
- Professional Learning grant (\$10000) for associations to provide professional learning to its members.
- National Conference Grant (\$15000) to support an NT association in hosting a national association conference.
- Governance Grant (\$2000) to support governance needs, such as an audit or insurance.

Associations can apply for a Governance grant and up to two other grants per year.

Some of the funding is retained by PTANT to provide professional learning to all associations, primarily through the spectacularly successful biennial Festival of Teaching where all associations come together to provide professional learning to teachers from across the NT.

Due to direct funding, in 2022 PTANT was able to provide twenty-five grants to its eighteen member associations which directly supported the professional learning of 754 teachers and 193 non-teachers, including pre-service teachers.

Case Study 1: the SA/NSW Model

South Australia's Joint Council and APTA member, Educators SA, has established an Early Career Educator Hub providing resources of interest to teachers new to the profession, including those related to teaching, learning and classroom management, as well as support in establishing professional networks and securing permanent employment. In some cases, associations have been incorporated to specifically support early career teachers, such as the Beginning and Establishing Teachers Association in Queensland.

Having larger workforces, the teaching associations operating in South Australia and New South Wales have higher membership bases to support their core work. They obtain higher revenue from their association membership and event registration fees.

Funding in these jurisdictions is not used to implement a competitive grants program for the PTAs but used instead to enhance the capacity of the Joint Councils to provide governance and administrative support to all their teaching associations, and to provide learning opportunities at the statewide level.

Like PTANT, EducatorsSA and the PTCNSW can employ a fulltime executive officer to drive the work of the Joint Council. EducatorsSA and PTCNSW also employ additional staff to assist teachers' associations with event management, financial support, training, research, advocacy, communications, marketing, sponsorship and public relations. These are important governance and administrative matters which association volunteers, who are mostly full-time teachers may lack both time and expertise to optimise these factors for their associations.

EducatorsSA received a grant of \$212,331 in the financial year ending June 30,2022. PTCNSW received a grant of \$348,000 in the financial year ending June 30, 2021.

Case study – Geography

Geography teaching associations operate in all states and territories, three of which are:

- The Geography Teachers Association of Victoria (GTAV) has 905 active members.
- The Geography Teachers Association of NSW/ACT (GTANSW) has 333 members (though with 225 school memberships they reach over 1000 individual teachers)
- The Tasmanian Geography Teachers Association (TGTA) has 20 active members.
- The Geography and History Teachers Association of the Northern Territory (GHTANT) has 35 members, most of whom are history teachers.

With high membership, GTAV and GTANSW are well-placed to generate income to support their work. Forty-five times smaller than GTAV, TGTA has limited revenue to support their work. GHTANT is similarly much smaller than GTAV and GTANSW and is unable to generate sufficient membership income.

However, unlike TGTA, GHTANT can access direct government funding. Each year, GHTANT accesses up to \$22000 it can use to support its members, which includes providing funding for teachers in remote locations to access professional learning and for NT teachers to travel to interstate conferences. GHTANT has provided face-to-face events in Darwin and Alice Springs, as well as in Tennant Creek and Katherine. GHTANT can also access administrative support and has done so to support the planning of conferences and events.

TGTA does not have access to grant funding, nor is the Joint Council NEAT, provided with funding to provide the strategic and administrative support to Tasmanian PTAs as it would like. As an APTA member, NEAT is struggling to obtain financial subscriptions from its members as is in danger of folding.

While it may seem that PTAs in Victoria and NSW do not require direct funding support due to higher population sizes, differences in support between GTAV and GTANSW demonstrates how direct funding enhances the work of associations in these states. While both associations can generate significant membership income, GTANSW can access administrative and strategic support in graphic design, website management, event management, financial support and venue hire from its joint council, PTC NSW, all of which must be managed “in house” by GTAV as CPTAV receives no direct government funding.

International evidence

OECD’s report (2018) on [Teachers and School Leaders as Valued Professionals](#) from the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) Results (Volume II) discusses how professional collaboration among teachers can improve professionalism, job satisfaction, and student outcomes. The study highlights that teachers who frequently engage in collaborative activities tend to have better job satisfaction and are more likely to improve their teaching practices. The Report highlights:

- Teachers collaborate with their colleagues in several ways. On average across OECD countries and economies participating in the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS), the two most reported types of collaboration are “discussing the learning development of specific students” (61% of teachers) and “exchanging teaching materials with colleagues” (47%).
- Professional collaboration that involves more interdependence between teachers, such as observing other teachers and providing feedback, participating in collaborative professional learning and team teaching is less frequent. For example, only 9% of teachers in OECD countries and economies in TALIS report providing observation-based feedback to colleagues at least once a month.
- Teachers who take part in the more interdependent forms of collaboration also tend to report using cognitive activation practices more frequently for teaching. They also report higher levels of job satisfaction and self-efficacy.
- Positive views on collegiality (i.e. having good interpersonal relationships with colleagues) are widespread across OECD countries and economies in TALIS. An average of 81% of teachers report that they work in a collaborative school culture characterised by mutual support, and 87% of teachers agree that teachers in their school can rely on each other. Teachers who report that their school involves staff in school decision making also tend to engage in professional collaboration more frequently in most countries and economies participating in TALIS.
- Teachers across the OECD receive feedback in different ways; about half of teachers (52%) report having received feedback through at least four different methods. The most cited forms of feedback are based on classroom observations and students’ school-based and classroom-based results. However, 9% of teachers report that they have never received feedback in their school.
- On average across OECD countries and economies in TALIS, 71% of teachers who have received feedback found it useful for their teaching practice. Compared to older and more experienced teachers, a significantly higher share (9 percentage points) of novice teachers and younger teachers report that the feedback they received had a positive impact on their teaching practice.
- Of the teachers who say that they received feedback, an average of 55% across OECD countries and economies in TALIS report that such feedback was particularly useful for improving their pedagogical competencies in teaching their subject.

Value for money

Unlike other professionals who generate income because they adopt a profit-driven business model or they directly charge their clients, educators are professionals who directly seek to serve their clients, the students. Most of what PTAs do is performed by experts who volunteer their time, energy and expertise outside, and in, addition to their work.

Significantly, PTAs value-add to the profession, and in turn, to the educational outcomes sought by the stakeholders in each state and territory. Any government funding will return abundant dividends. Supporting PTAs is a wise investment into the education of Tasmanian students.

Australia values contributions of volunteers and understands that when an individual provides support voluntarily, they are not providing a lower standard of support or care than if they are being paid. Educators across Australia volunteer their time to share their professional experience with colleagues. PTA members volunteer because they are enthusiastic educators committed to their discipline and determined to see new teachers achieve success. Professional learning provided by volunteers spans the curriculum and crosses sectors and stages of schooling in ways that are both expensive and difficult if provided by salaried staff.

In the Northern Territory in 2022, professional learning across twelve specific subjects and disciplines was provided to teachers at a cost to government equivalent to 1.5 full-time curriculum officers. No two individuals have the expertise or the time to provide that level of support to teachers.

Theme 5. Accountability for improved outcomes

How do we ensure that policy initiatives are implemented, and resources are used to improve learning outcomes? This review will take into account relevant past and current reviews and policy initiatives.

Limited recognition of the impact of the professional teaching associations in national and state policy initiatives and policy frameworks

Learning First's Dr Ben Jensen (2022a and 2020) finds that evidence-based policy in education is often driven by academic, institute or organisational research, and rarely through evidence of what happens in large systematic reviews or studies in classrooms or changing teacher practices. Framework standards are then developed for quality teaching, teacher professional development and highly accomplished or lead teaching practice. He describes the uncomfortable truth that evidence-based policy focussed on general teaching practice has had a poor record of improving student learning outcomes when it does not address the specific learning issues. He summarises that focussing on what happens in classrooms allows three factors to be critical:

- What we teach – the decisions made about the curriculum taught in classrooms, the instructional materials used, the texts students read, the learning tasks they undertake, and so on.
- How we teach - The teaching methods and practices we use to teach the curriculum; and
- How we assess - Assessing students' learning of the curriculum through tasks and tests that students undertake.

Jensen (2022b) makes additional observations in his open media coverage of the changes in Australian education. Australia provides less curriculum guidance and advice than high performing

systems and what used to be provided in the Australian states and territories. The shift to general pedagogy and school improvement, including school and teacher effectiveness research, or teacher and leadership standards is dislocated from the teaching of the curriculum – the content knowledge and the pedagogical content knowledge. He argues that to lift the standards, we must reclaim the curriculum, as it is vital for equity, ensuring that all students, regardless of their background have access to a quality curriculum. He believes, that getting quality curriculum into classrooms has a greater impact than all the money spent on teacher development and training has ever achieved. He says curriculum determines the effectiveness of other policies – it is a driver of improved teacher practice. Curriculum reform is needed to ensure quality knowledge-rich curriculum in all classrooms is fundamental to the system improvement. High performing and high equity education systems have more explicit and detailed curriculum, providing comprehensive guidance, resources and supports to teachers.

Jensen (2022c) argues that four reforms would anchor a new approach to fighting inequality for our learners:

1. First, restore a narrative of a moral purpose...that places equality above autonomy and flexibility...being clear on every student having the right to learn the necessary knowledge and skills to participate effectively and productively in life.
2. Second, make it clear what knowledge and skills students have the right to learn to participate productively in life.
3. Third, monitor what is taught to Australian students. Understand the inequalities and what is taught in disadvantaged communities.
4. Fourth, help teachers and school leaders provide an education that equips all students with the knowledge and skills that they need. High quality support and instructional materials. High performing, high equity systems around the world offer that.

He finds that some leading policy makers in Australia are now making the shift with a fundamental change in policy development that focuses on the critical challenges and obstacles teachers face in schools and classrooms to improve the impact of “What they teach, how they teach it and how they assess it?”

Data is then able to be analysed to enable policy to evaluate progress and target improvements. Good policy still refers to academic research, but its focus is on the classroom in current time and improving the curriculum and the instructional design to improve student engagement and outcomes. Given Tasmania’s positive experience and data collected to date, with the current work on explicit instruction and the science of reading, Tasmanian teachers are affirming this needed focus on classrooms for the next national policy initiatives.

Education policy in Tasmania has focussed on the nationally consistent and standardised teacher registration process and national teaching and leadership standards, thereby not cognisant of the specific contributions of professional teachers’ associations to what happens in classrooms in the State. A history of policy initiatives has lacked robust support systems, which then exacerbated the capacity of the volunteer professional and subject teaching associations to contribute to system renewal or structural change.

Further, the diversity in the systems, the suite of pedagogies and resourcing of PTA objectives will hinder collective voice and visibility. It will remain difficult and challenging to measure the direct impact of teacher professionalism upon teacher expertise for policy makers across government, Catholic, other faith-based and independent sectors.

Other barriers are:

- the traditional membership-based funding of PTA activities is not always sufficient to sustain robust programs, online publishing, or advocacy, limiting potential impact for regional and remote members.

- the multiple stakeholders and funding sources make it challenging for the professional teaching associations to attract or secure realistic funding arrangements given the streams of regulatory and accreditation or accounting processes.
- policymakers might view associations as private entities with limited accountability, making them less likely to allocate public funds to their activities.

Building strategic partnerships and collaborations

Recent encouragement of APTA by the federal Department of Education's School and Teacher Branch, regular consultations with AITSL, ACARA and AERO, and APTA's ongoing contribution or responses on national policy initiatives, Senate inquiries or Education agreements, and with representation on the AITSL's School Leader Teaching Expert Standing Committee, APTA has participated actively in policy consultations, ensuring that its evidence-based advocacy can be utilised in national school reform agreements and future initiatives.

Tasmania's [Bilateral Agreement with the Commonwealth on Quality Schools Reform](#), (4 December 2023) Appendix 5, Part I School/System Improvement Approach, the improvement activities identify school community partnerships as one of four areas for system improvement (#26.d.)

Concluding recommendations

NEAT Joint Council recommends that Libraries Tasmania, through current and other strategic initiatives, and within the state library's system of available capacity improvements, explore the opportunities to support virtual learning, high-quality e-resourcing and physical resourcing through a similar lens and needs of home-schooling families, as in the Queensland studies, supporting all learners in Tasmania's urban, regional and remote communities improve their learning, wellbeing and social outcomes from Kinder to Year 12 completion.

NEAT Joint Council recommends that a state policy initiative and pilot program could be to invite professional teachers' associations to apply for funding to introduce project and evidence-based evaluation data to participate in building a greater reviewed pool of quality curriculum resourcing with differentiations and customisations to support its next round of Tasmanian curriculum initiatives. For example, the tracking of sustainable, accountable and evaluated activities beyond the Lifting Literacy or the Years 9-12 Project communities of practice to focus on deeper subject pedagogical practice.

NEAT Joint Council concludes that to be part of the solution in urban, regional and rural Tasmania for increasing student achievement and engagement in education, as well as a developing and retaining a highly skilled teacher workforce, a variety of partnerships and representations be negotiated for the professional and subject teaching associations of Tasmania, with departmental agencies, such as Libraries Tasmania, the Professional Learning Institute, the UTAS Faculty of Education and the Peter Underwood Centre, as well as other non-government sector stakeholders and philanthropic organisations. Such action will assist in a collaborative building of time, trust, mentoring, coaching, networking and capacity for school and systems improvements.

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