



Teach For Australia

**SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW TO INFORM A
BETTER AND FAIRER EDUCATION SYSTEM**

August 2023

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Acknowledgement of Country

Teach For Australia is headquartered on the land of the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

Our community of teachers, leaders, supporters and partners live and work across a great many more lands.

We pay our respects to the elders past and present of this wide land of Australia, their custodianship, their courage and their resilience.

ABOUT TEACH FOR AUSTRALIA

Teach For Australia (TFA) is a not-for-profit organisation that confronts educational disadvantage. Our vision is an Australia where education gives all children greater choice for their future. Our mission is to grow a community of leaders committed to educational equity.

TFA was founded in 2009 and continues to grow purposefully and strategically, working with more and more schools across Australia. TFA's flagship initiative, the Leadership Development Program (LDP or 'the program'), is Australia's original and leading employment-based postgraduate pathway into teaching. Through the program, TFA recruits, challenges and energises high-calibre people from all walks of life to become 'Associates' – exceptional teachers and inspiring leaders for students at schools serving low socioeconomic communities (ICSEA <1000) in high demand subject areas and hard to staff locations.

The approach is simple yet profound: get great talent to choose to teach, and cultivate their moral purpose to create a collective force of teachers and leaders working to make sure Australia's education opportunities and outcomes are more equitable for children across our nation.

Over 15 years, TFA has navigated barriers to expand nationally with short term government funding and has built a program recognised for quality teaching and leadership. With bipartisan support from Commonwealth, State and Territory governments between 2010-2023, TFA has placed 1450+ Associates across 14 cohorts in 276 partner schools in seven states and territories.

We have proven our model and our mettle:

- **We're attracting great talent in high demand areas, most of whom would not have chosen to teach but for the TFA program.** TFA's 2022 Impact Report confirms almost 50% of TFA teachers are qualified to teach STEM, and more than 60% are either young professionals or mature career changers - pharmacists, lawyers, maths and science academics, engineers, accountants and more.

- **We're exclusively serving harder to staff schools and communities.** 75% of current partner schools are in regional, rural or remote communities. Almost all schools are classified disadvantaged, with an ICSEA <1000.
- **We're demonstrating that employment based pathways can scale beyond the boutique.** Even as we limit ourselves to low income, rural, regional and remote contexts, the program continues to grow. As at March 2023, TFA has our largest numbers ever in the program – over 300 in either first or second year - drawn from nearly 2700 applications. Given the immediate and long-term need for teachers nationally, TFA is ready and committed to further growth of our flagship program.
- **We're delivering high throughput and satisfaction.** While the design of the program is an intense yet productive combination of study and applied practice, we see two year average completion rates of 90% and Alumni satisfaction rates of 88%. In our 2023 Principal survey, 92% said TFA Associates were effective at improving student academic and social outcomes, and 96% would hire another Associate in the future.
- **We're delivering high retention in teaching and contributing significantly to educational leadership overall.** Our 2023 Alumni Survey shows that 88% of Alumni are working in the education sector, contributing to TFA's vision through teaching, school leadership, social enterprise, policy, government and non-profit roles. Additionally, since 2016, TFA has designed and delivered innovative professional development programs for early career teachers already in the system, working in outer regional, rural and remote schools. These programs help to build personal leadership skills and capabilities for those schools to thrive, and have contributed to significant role promotion rates amongst those cohorts.

- **We're uniquely positioned to offer insights on the systemic ways Initial Teacher Education (ITE) and early career teacher support and development could improve.** TFA delivers value in a complex web of stakeholders with varying interests and incentives. We work at the nexus of attraction, ITE delivery, practicum support and early career development, across a federated and regulated system. We are always willing to share our observations and ideas for further system improvement.

Working for educational equity in Australia is complex and collective work. We recognise teaching and school leadership as two vital levers to improve student outcomes and opportunities later in life. Our most impactful contribution has been the expansion of pathways into the classroom, allowing more aspiring teachers to have an impact. We are committed to working with governments, education stakeholders, schools and communities across the nation to lift the status and quality of teaching.

Teach For Australia works in service of students, and our vision for an Australia where education gives every child greater choice for their future. While proud of our efforts and impact to date, we know there is so much more to do.



SUBMISSION INTRODUCTION

Teach For Australia (TFA) welcomes the opportunity to make a submission in response to the Consultation Paper issued for the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review).

Our submission follows TFA's recent contributions to the Commonwealth Teacher Education Expert Panel's (TEEP) consultation and the 2022 National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. TFA is encouraged to see continuing focus by Federal, State and Territory Governments with respect to building and sustaining skilled teacher workforces that can meet the education needs of every student, regardless of where they live or go to school.

We note the Review's expert panel has been tasked to deliver recommendations on reforms for five key areas. In line with TFA's operational expertise, our recommendations focus primarily on the area of **Attraction and Retention of Teachers** (Section 1).

Our submission contains multiple recommendations, one of which we want to highlight as most critical to addressing the urgent and dire need for more teachers in areas of highest need.

This chief recommendation is that governments, at all levels, introduce or further scale proven employment-based teacher education pathways that meet clear criteria for quality whilst delivering supply quickly. These pathways must be:

- **Already evaluated to be robust and high quality, with high completion rates;**
- **Truly additive to the teacher supply;**
- **Quickly able to deliver teachers into classrooms; and**
- **Targeted to disadvantaged locations in highest need.**

It is important that governments ensure all of these criteria are met, to avoid a shortage-driven proliferation of untested, low quality pathways which could have dire outcomes for years to come.

Further to this recommendation, TFA's submission offers insights and recommendations borne from our 15 years as a partner to education systems, teachers and schools in disadvantaged communities across Australia, and from our participation in a global network of similar organisations across 61 countries.

Specifically, TFA's submission is organised as follows:

Section 1 outlines possible measures governments could support to attract and retain Australia's teaching workforces.

- Australian school systems need an urgent injection of additional, high-quality teachers in order to deliver the education our children and our nation need. **Responses must be truly additive, fast to deliver, evidence-based and targeted to areas of highest need.**
- TFA's unique program conditions require continuous navigation of complex and, at times, contradictory webs of regulation and rules - eligibility rules for ITE entry and secondary learning area specialisations, teacher registration and more. We see too many examples where these regulations have created **unintended barriers to entry**, making it hard for aspiring and desirable individuals to enter the profession.
- More can be done to ensure people who make it through ITE courses and into the classroom are supported to continue to grow and develop in their first years of teaching. The early years challenge every teacher. TFA knows from our work how vital **quality coaching and mentoring** are to early teacher development. And in this coaching, we work with our teachers against **a clear developmental framework** for what knowledge, skills and mindsets they should be developing over their first few years.
- This also includes ensuring teachers (and students) have a **high-quality, knowledge-rich, and clearly sequenced curriculum** from the very beginning of their teaching careers. Explicit clarity on curriculum frees teachers' time and cognitive load to help focus on what they must also do well, namely teaching students effectively, and on building connection and engagement with students and families. TFA knows from our work how few schools and systems have a curriculum clearly defined for their teachers.
- There is also greater scope for **schools to be more flexible workplaces**, as schools and systems must now face fundamental shifts in knowledge-worker preferences for greater flexibility in work patterns. One of the added benefits to this is that teaching career progression opportunities could also arise from evolved workforce models.

Section 2 explores the barriers faced by education innovators in Australia.

- TFA itself is an example of innovation, and we know our Associates and Alumni also help drive new ideas and opportunities for schools to think differently about how they teach students and support workforces. We strongly encourage governments to play a greater role **supporting innovation, assessing results and embedding what works.**

Section 3 proposes that Australia should harness momentum and create a widely supported, targeted set of clear goals for educational excellence and equity.

- Similar to the Closing The Gap measures for Indigenous outcomes, governments should consider **defined goals for Educational Excellence and Equity outcomes.** TFA believes there is an opportunity to harness cross-sector consensus for a small but powerful set of national indicators to track equity gaps and hold ourselves accountable for closing them.

TFA's submission to the TEEP in April detailed a number of issues and recommendations specific to quality ITE provisions. Some of those are referenced briefly within this submission, so a summary table of TFA's recommendations to the TEEP is included at **Appendix A.**

We greatly appreciate the opportunity to participate in this latest consultation. TFA is available to provide further data and insights from our experiences, should this be of assistance to the Review's Expert Panel.

Melodie Potts Rosevear
Founder and CEO – Teach For Australia



SECTION 1: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS BY ADDRESSING ATTRACTION AND RETENTION

The next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) offers a unique and timely opportunity to strengthen Federal and State/Territory systems to improve the supply pipeline into Initial Teacher Education (ITE) courses and to better support teachers - both in the early career years and beyond.

In response to the Review's Consultation Paper and informed by TFA's extensive program delivery experience, this section explores opportunities to attract and retrain more teachers by implementing:

- 1. Measures that urgently address teaching workforce shortages**
- 2. A national registration system that can benefit the teaching profession by providing:**
 - **Nationally consistent ITE course eligibility requirements**
 - **Nationally consistent registration requirements for ITE graduates**
- 3. A National Early Career Framework to provide a high quality support-focused value proposition for aspiring and beginning teachers**
- 4. Better links between ITE and high-quality curriculum**
- 5. More flexible workplace options and career paths**

1. MEASURES THAT URGENTLY ADDRESS TEACHING WORKFORCE SHORTAGES

Australia continues to navigate an unprecedented teacher supply and retention challenge. As forecast by the Commonwealth's Teacher Workforce Shortages Issues Paper (2022) "demand for secondary teachers will exceed the supply of new graduate teachers by around 4,100 between 2021 to 2025" ^[1]. Growing student enrolments, declining ITE enrolments and an ageing teacher workforce are noted among the key drivers.

Of additional concern are completion rates for traditional ITE courses. Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) workforce data shows only 51% of undergraduates complete mainstream Bachelor courses, while 78% complete traditional postgraduate courses ^[2]. This leakage also contributes to shortages. As identified by the TEEP Report, 'A one percentage point uplift in ITE retention rates would result in nearly three hundred more teaching graduates a year, while a 10 percentage point uplift would result in nearly three thousand additional graduates.' ^[3] Governments would be well served to look for measures that ensure the right candidates are being recruited, and that the range of ITE courses offered are meeting the needs and expectations of participants, helping to drive up successful graduation rates and get teachers into classrooms.

Retention is similarly concerning. Already under pressure, Australia's teachers experienced immeasurable additional stress through 2020-2022 as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic. Earlier this year, a new report from Black Dog Institute found almost half of 4000 teachers surveyed were considering leaving the profession within the next 12 months, an increase of 14% from a similar survey in 2021. Concerningly, 76% said they had teacher shortages in their schools presently and 70% reported unmanageable workloads. ^[4]

With respect to actioning teacher attraction and retention, TFA urges governments to commit to measures that can urgently inject additional, high-quality teachers to schools where they are most needed.

Responses must be truly additive, fast to deliver, evidence-based and targeted to areas of highest need.

As TFA's own program has already proven:

- Teaching is an attractive career option for high-performing university graduates, despite claims to the contrary.
- Employment-based ITE pathways are well-suited to career changers.
- Candidates can be effectively supported to lead classes from their first year when given quality coaching, mentoring and school support.
- Intentional recruitment can bring more high-calibre people willing and motivated to serve disadvantaged communities and hard-to-staff schools across the country.
- Employment-based ITE pathways are cost-effective, able to produce high-quality teachers and scalable.

As noted in the Expert Panel's Consultation Paper, 'Teachers are the most influential in-school factor in student outcomes'^[5]. **TFA strongly agrees and urges governments to include tangible, evidence-based measures that bring more people into the profession and support teachers already working in schools as a core priority in the next NSRA.**

2. MOVE TO A NATIONAL REGISTRATION SYSTEM

TFA occupies a unique place in the Australian ITE landscape. Operating across 6 states and territories, TFA provides the only national end-to-end recruitment, training and employment Master of Teaching pathway. Working across multiple school jurisdictions and with program applicants from a variety of tertiary and professional backgrounds, TFA navigates numerous regulatory systems in order to match a national pool of aspiring teaching talent to real vacancies across the country.

This program delivery experience has exposed TFA to the impact of different and inconsistent understanding and application of Australian

Institute of Teaching and School Leadership's (AITSL) accreditation standards.

TFA believes supply and retention of ITE candidates could improve if there was greater consistency in the application of the AITSL accreditation standards, both by universal eligibility and by a national registration system.

• Universal eligibility

The current AITSL accreditation standards addressing eligibility of ITE candidates are limited in scope and application, by the broad wording and the fact that they are implemented by eight different Teacher Registration Authorities.

The wording in Standard 3^[6] does not provide clear definitions for the eligibility requirements for ITE candidates. This includes not providing specific information about how ITE providers should interpret and apply the definition of a 'major' or an 'equivalent qualification' for candidates to demonstrate their subject specific knowledge. As a result, each ITE provider has their own rules and definitions, which vary in scope.

For example, TFA has worked with multiple tertiary partners over the last 15 years and has seen how conservative application of Standard 3.7 has, in some cases, limited the eligibility of otherwise high potential and motivated candidates who were both keen and suitable for accelerated ITE pathways. In TFA's experience, this has most affected the learning areas that are in most demand, such as English and Mathematics. For example, people who:

- studied a highly technical or clinical degree (and so do not have a major in a recognised learning area), or
- have worked in other areas since completing their undergraduate degree (and so cannot demonstrate currency)

Strengthening the AITSL eligibility standards to ensure these are clear and consistent for universal eligibility may increase supply of high quality candidates for accelerated and employment-based Master's ITE pathways.

The introduction of a competency-based framework to complement existing entry requirements could also help address eligibility barriers. TFA recommended such a framework in our submission to the TEEP. (See Appendix A)

In a further example of jurisdiction-based eligibility barriers, the current English language requirements are based on the requirements at the state/territory Teacher Regulatory Authority (TRA). That is, in order to meet AITSL's English language requirements in Standard 3.6, potential candidates must meet the English language requirement of the TRA of the jurisdiction where they intend to teach.

For TFA, which works across the majority of Australian jurisdictions, this poses a small but not insurmountable eligibility hurdle. When TFA receives an application from a candidate who is required to demonstrate their English language proficiency, we have the capacity to work with the individual and their placement preferences to ensure they go to a jurisdiction where the TRA's English language requirements can be met. However, this is not the case for the vast majority of individuals and ITE providers, who do not work across multiple jurisdictions and who do not provide TFA's level of case management and employment brokerage.

A single national registration body, with clear and consistent standards, would eliminate the disparities of working across eight TRAs and provide common eligibility requirements for all aspiring teachings.



Example case:

In 2022, TFA received an application from a candidate who had completed her undergraduate degree at an American university's Kenyan campus. She went on to complete postgraduate study (including a Masters degree) in Australia. She was qualified to teach a wide variety of high demand subjects, but was required to demonstrate English language proficiency to teach in Victoria because her undergraduate degree was completed overseas and the TRA's regulations prevented the board from considering her Masters degree.

TFA was able to place this Associate in Western Australia instead, where the English language eligibility requirements are broader, allowing the TRA to consider the fact that she had completed her Master's degree in Australia, which was sufficient to demonstrate her English language proficiency.

While challenging, TFA is uniquely placed to broker solutions for some of these cases. A clear national standard would better serve all ITE providers and ITE students.

• Establish a national registration system

A national registration system may also facilitate greater retention of ITE graduates upon entry to the classroom and in the first five years of the profession.

Similar to the eligibility examples above, a national TRA could provide consistency and clarity regarding the registration requirements for ITE graduates. This would expand the opportunities available to graduates immediately after completing their ITE, or early in their career, by removing the barrier of seeking mutual recognition when moving across jurisdictions.

For example, upon completion of TFA's two-year program, Alumni who wish to move between jurisdictions must secure mutual recognition of their teaching registration. For some, this has been a barrier to continuing in the classroom, particularly when the destination jurisdiction has more stringent requirements than the jurisdiction where they completed a two-year work placement and sought registration.

Beyond the different requirements and despite the mutual recognition legislation, the process of obtaining the appropriate paperwork and making the application is long and arduous, creating a disincentive for the individual. Complexity is compounded by differing TRA processes for recognising experience gained in another jurisdiction. Australia's teaching workforces are in dire need of additional people, and ITE graduates should not be deterred from starting or continuing careers in the classroom because of recognition variations between states and territories.

The recent TEEP Report^[7] has also canvassed significant benefits that could be provided by a national Teaching Regulatory Authority that is able to apply the AITSL accreditation standards consistently and rigorously. TFA supports reform in this space.

3. CREATE AN EARLY CAREER FRAMEWORK

With targeted talent recruitment and tailored coaching and mentoring, TFA's Leadership Development Program is recognised for a 92% course completion rate, which is significantly higher than traditional Bachelor and Master's pathways.

In contrast, the attrition rate of ITE graduates via traditional pathways continues to raise concern^{[8] [9]}. While a number of reasons have been put forward for this attrition, a key area for improvement is mentoring and coaching for early career teachers to ensure they enter the profession in a supported way, and that they are set up for success.

Unlike the legal profession or in medicine, where graduates are required to complete a professional practice component (Practical Legal Training in the law and internships in medicine) in which they learn how to succeed in that profession as separate from the theory learned at university, teaching graduates are not guaranteed a high quality mentoring experience. In fact, because there is no nationally consistent framework governing mentoring, an early career teacher's experience - and thus their likelihood of staying in the profession - is highly dependent on the context of their first teaching job. This is too precarious a position for ITE graduates to be in if the system wants to ensure high retention and high teaching quality.

In England, an Early Career Framework^[10] was established in 2019, with the intention of ensuring that ITE graduates are well-supported in their first few years in the profession, to minimise the loss of talent at that early career stage. The framework is nationally consistent and engages stakeholders across the sector, including universities and other ITT (Initial Teacher Training) providers including TFA's network partner, Teach First. Not only does this program ensure that graduates are supported upon entry into the classroom, it provides a clear value proposition for those considering ITE programs at the start of their journey. There is currently no such value proposition or assurance for ITE candidates in Australia.

Such a clear value proposition would align with the recommendations of the Grattan Institute's recommendations for attracting high achievers into the profession^[11]. In that report, the Grattan Institute recommended the stratification of career pathways in teaching, with the creation of Instructional Specialist and Master Teacher specialisations to recognise high quality teaching practice with financial and other incentives. Those with these specialisations can then be called upon to share their expertise, through mentoring early career teachers or writing curriculum, aligning with the TEEP report's recommendation for mentors to be recognised.^[12] Clearer, diversified, and more attractive career opportunities will go a long way in retaining the profession's most effective teachers, who may otherwise be limited in their career progression and choose to leave the profession.

TFA's experience shows that the high quality mentoring and coaching our program Associates receive plays a significant role in them becoming highly effective teachers from the beginning of their careers. Teach First's program has also had similar findings in recent reports^[13].

TFA encourages development of a National Early Career Framework, recognising this can set a value proposition for aspiring teachers and ensure high-quality support is provided to all beginning teachers in the first years of their careers.

4. HIGH-QUALITY CURRICULUM

TFA also believes there is scope to support teacher development by ensuring access to high-quality curriculum materials, and by incorporating understanding of how to teach these curriculum materials into ITE courses.

Research shows that, when teachers use high-quality curriculum materials – coherent, evidence-based curriculum materials aligned with curriculum standards - in their classrooms, they can boost student achievement by one to two months each year, and possibly by more ^[14].

Over the course of students' school careers, the cumulative impact of high-quality curriculum on their learning could be significant, especially for children from disadvantaged backgrounds. Indeed, a recent, large study by Grissmer et al. (2023) 'found that children who got a content-rich, knowledge-building curriculum for at least four years, beginning in kindergarten, significantly outperformed their peers on standardised reading comprehension tests'. Importantly, Grissmer et al. (2023) also found that students 'from low-income families made such dramatic gains that their performance on state tests equaled that of children from higher-income families' ^{[15] [16]}.

However, the research is also clear that high-quality curriculum materials alone will not move the needle on student learning, and that teachers need access to curriculum-aligned training to enact the kind of classroom instruction that the materials have been designed to promote (see, for example, Kane & Steiner 2019) ^[17].

Investment in high-quality curriculum materials incorporating best-practice pedagogy and the science of learning is an important first step, which should be followed by these materials being incorporated into teacher training.

Building on the TEEP recommendations to mandate core content for ITE curricula, **TFA supports teachers having access to high-quality curriculum materials and aligned instructional support from the beginning of their initial teacher education**, like teachers from historically high performing systems including Finland ^[18].

5. CREATE WORKPLACE AND CAREER FLEXIBILITY

TFA shares the panel's concern that too many teachers are leaving the profession early. Like all teachers, our Associates and Alumni have experienced challenges balancing their work commitments with their wellbeing in the context of increasingly complex workloads and in the wake of the global pandemic. The relationship between factors including teacher working hours, teacher perceptions of workload, and intentions to leave the profession are complex. TFA strongly supports the further investigation of these under the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, drawing on the Australian Teacher Workforce Data ^[19].

TFA's own community of teachers, school leaders and Alumni is in constant conversation about ways to support teaching workforces. Flexible timetables and flexible career paths are common themes.

TFA strongly agrees with the Consultation Paper's observation that teacher supply challenges 'exist within a context of broader workforce supply challenges across the Australian economy' ^[20]. In particular, we note the Grattan Institute describes 'the big social and cultural shift towards remote and flexible work', which has seen an increasing number of professionals split their working time between the office and home while reporting 'improved productivity, engagement, and achievement' ^[21]. Teachers, too, demonstrated flexibility and adaptiveness to work from home during the pandemic, but, unlike other professions, few have retained that flexibility and are now required to be at schools full-time.

Within TFA's Leadership Development Program, we have worked with Principals and Departments of Education to ensure TFA Associates receive a 0.2 time release for study. Our experience shows that those Associates who are assured this release time in a continuous block (ie. one whole day or two half days) are much better able to balance their workload. Many principals actively encourage Associates not to be at school during their study release time, which Associates appreciate as they can fully focus on study.

Supporting schools to develop more flexible timetabling models could help retain some teachers.

While it may not be appealing for some schools to allow teachers to work from home regularly, it may

be possible some of the time, with support from Departments of Education. Schools could also be supported to develop more attractive part-time work models that allow, for example, teachers on a 0.6 load to be on site only three days per week – rather than four or five. TFA alumna Kathryn Sobey, principal of Melton Secondary College, is demonstrating that even more innovative approaches to offering teachers more flexible and attractive working conditions may be possible, by trialling full-time employment contracts with 9 days per fortnight face-to-face teaching time.

There is also scope for supporting more flexible career pathways that allow qualified teachers to balance other education roles while also working in classrooms.

The Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (2021) identified that perceived lack of career progression was a contributing factor for people choosing a career other than teaching^[22] While the majority (70%) of TFA Alumni continue to teach beyond our program, we know career progression is also a reason why some move out of teaching when they are not necessarily interested in becoming a school leader: instead they pursue other senior roles in education, including roles in policy and research, for example.

Some Alumni have moved between policy, research, and teaching roles; others are in policy and research roles and intend to return to the classroom in a full-time capacity in the future; and some would be interested in pursuing a hybrid model: working part-time in a school and part-time in a policy or research role in a relevant government department or statutory authority.

Hybrid roles are not common, especially in the public sector, and so schools (and other workplaces) do not have models for registered teachers splitting their work time between a teaching role and another kind of role in a separate organisation. However, some TFA Alumni working in policy roles for the Northern Territory Department of Education had the opportunity, alongside colleagues who had similarly maintained their teacher registration, to step back into the classroom to support workforce supply during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of those Alumni, Ben Duggan, who was Director – Teach NT, recently shared that he valued the opportunity to teach while working in a policy role. Ben’s experience enabled him to reflect on the operational challenges facing educators and school leaders and improved his capacity as a public servant.

TFA supports the Consultation Paper’s proposition that ‘there may be opportunities to attract those who have left teaching back to the profession’^[23]. Supporting schools and systems to consider more flexible career pathways and innovative hybrid work models could play a role.

TFA encourages governments to consider ways to re-engage registered teachers working in other education roles; to utilise and recognise their specific expertise and provide a range of fulfilling career opportunities for our valued teaching workforces.



SECTION 2: SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND SCHOOLS BY CREATING SPACE FOR INNOVATION IN AUSTRALIA'S EDUCATION ECOSYSTEM

The Australian education sector, reflecting the Australian economy more broadly ^[24], presents an uncongenial landscape for innovation. Like Productivity Commissioner deputy chair, Dr Alex Robson, TFA believes Australian education is 'ripe for disruption' ^[25] in key areas, including initial teacher education. We also concur with the Expert Panel's assertion that an 'innovative and aspirational spirit' ^[26] among stakeholders is essential to realising our national vision for young Australians set out in the Mparntwe Education Declaration. TFA believes governments have a role to play in encouraging this innovative spirit to flourish in the education sector.

Targeted government investment will help innovators to prove their impact and grow their influence on the education ecosystem. Importantly, it can also provide policymakers with the proof points needed to move towards the most effective policies and practices. As canvassed in Section 1, there are innovative moves that can help create sector clarity, drive efficiency and remove unintended barriers that have developed over time.

This section of TFA's submission canvasses:

- 1. TFA's experience as an education innovator, highlighting the impact of our core program and the ripple effect of our Alumni**
- 2. The role governments can play to welcome innovation and embed what works**

1. TFA IS A CASE STUDY IN EDUCATION INNOVATION SUCCESS

The first mover and standard-bearer for employment-based pathways to teaching, TFA has been an innovative force in Australian education since its inception more than a decade ago.

TFA has demonstrated that teaching is an attractive career option for high-performing candidates, particularly when targeted recruitment is brought together with a strong sense of motivation and purpose, despite claims to the contrary. We have demonstrated that, with high quality support, teachers can lead their classes from their first year in

the Leadership Development Program. Further, we are meeting workforce needs by bringing in people with in-demand subject areas (50% STEM across all Cohorts) and providing a supported pathway for mid-career changers (60% in Cohort 2023).

Critically, independent evaluations have consistently found that jurisdictions and schools report that TFA Associates are highly effective and outperform graduates of other teacher education programs ^[27]. Partner school principals continue to advocate for our program's effectiveness - 92% said TFA teachers were effective at improving student academic and social outcomes, and 96% would hire another TFA teacher in the future.

As well as contractual evaluations required by the Commonwealth, TFA closely monitors our program data and has commissioned our own research, such as a 2020-21 project undertaken independently by Lirata. The aim was to learn more about how four TFA partner schools are achieving their improvement aspirations, and the role played by the schools' partnerships with TFA. Among five key findings, the project's report noted student engagement and wellbeing, pedagogy and school culture are among the areas where TFA Associates and Alumni are contributing to school-level improvements. ^[28] See *Lirata Key Findings* over page.

While a number of tertiary institutions have now developed accelerated and employment-based ITE pathways with some similarity to TFA's, our program remains the largest and the only nationally-operating pathway that is matching aspiring teaching talent exclusively to the schools with highest workforce needs (ICSEA <1000).

LIRATA 5 KEY FINDINGS:

Finding 1

TFA Associates and Alumni make considerable contributions to school level improvements, including improvements in pedagogy, student pathways and retention, student outcomes, student engagement and wellbeing, community engagement and school culture and professionalism. TFA teachers have had a significant impact on strengthening STEM programs in particular, as a learning area and as an approach that influences other curricula.

Finding 2

TFA's contributions to change are enabled through the vision, leadership and planning of senior school leaders and the wrap-around support of Associates from schools and TFA. This research found TFA teachers positively contribute to a culture of improvement, but also have greater impact when it is in place.

Finding 3

All schools spoke of progress in meeting the need for high quality teaching capacity and capability, and improvements in pedagogy and the quality of teaching and learning in their schools since partnering with TFA.

Finding 4

The research found clear evidence that TFA Associates and Alumni were strong contributors to school level improvements and achievements. Examples include:

Being the drivers of and/or strong contributors to the introduction of new pedagogical approaches, tools and evidence-informed practice (e.g. introducing Google Classroom at Mill Park Secondary College, Explicit Instruction and Stanford Design Model implementation at Southern River College)

Enabling STEM and specialist subjects to be introduced (e.g. specialist maths, chemistry, permaculture, mechatronics)

Enabling the introduction of new programs or projects in the school (e.g. the ISAAC Club at Southern River College and the Sink Hole project at St Joseph's Christian College)

Strengthening student engagement, behaviours and wellbeing (e.g. the development and implementation of the Student Education Model at Mill Park Secondary College, Expected Behaviours policy and guidelines at Horsham College).

Finding 5

The research found specific evidence that TFA Associates and Alumni are 'drivers for change' and this can have flow-on effects in energising others to engage in change. A school can amplify the benefits of its partnership with TFA when there are multiple TFA Associates/Alumni at the school. Causal factors that contribute to TFA Associates'/Alumni's ability to enable change include:

TFA's recruitment and selection processes, which play an important role in ensuring that TFA Associates have the requisite qualities of leadership, drive, passion, energy and commitment, as well as their life and industry experience.

The social justice framing of the Master's course that ensures the teaching and learning knowledge and skills that Associates develop can be appropriately applied to engage students facing systemic or social disadvantage in effective learning experiences.

Associates having the ability to contribute and/or lead the broader implementation and evaluation of new models and frameworks for teaching and learning school-wide.

The movement of TFA Associates/Alumni into school leadership roles, enhancing their ability to influence the culture, practice and systems within schools.

Beyond our flagship employment-based ITE pathway, TFA has also amplified original investment benefits by applying learnings about the context of rural and remote school teaching to create further innovative supports, such as the Future Leaders Program (FLP).

This program works with regional and remote educators already teaching to equip them with the skills, knowledge and confidence to move into school leadership roles within their school or community. While only in its third year, the FLP is generating impact, with nearly 40 per cent of the first cohort promoted to a position of leadership or higher responsibility since the program.

Development of FLP would not have been possible without TFA's existing program delivery knowledge, leadership and coaching frameworks, and our school partnerships network. To date 100 teachers from Northern Territory, Western Australia, New South Wales and Queensland have completed the program, and another 76 are currently enrolled for 2023.

Amplified impact

TFA brings immediate additionality to school workforces, but our programs also deliver lasting impact. We can demonstrate TFA Alumni are committed to educational improvement and are having broad influence on the sector.

Around 85% of TFA's 1116 Alumni continue to work in the education sector: 70% are teachers and leaders in schools and the remainder work in a variety of roles focused on improving educational outcomes and equity in other important ways. That such a high proportion of TFA Alumni remain committed to combating educational disadvantage, and continue to work in the education sector, demonstrates the significant societal value of government investment in our innovative approach to initial teacher education.

Of the ~15% of Alumni who work in the education sector in roles besides teaching and school leadership, many have moved into senior research and policy roles and are responsible for shaping and supporting effective policy and practice in systems and schools across the country. Others have created innovative responses to student and school needs identified during their time in the classroom.

For example, TFA Alumni Richard Wilson and Justin Matthys co-founded Maths Pathway, a learning and teaching model now embedded in more than 300 schools and designed to support teachers to meet students' diverse learning needs in mathematics ^[29].

Another alumnus, Benji Gersh, co-founded Greater Space, an innovative counselling initiative staffed by mental health practitioners with classroom and school leadership experience. Greater Space offers mental and professional health support to educators as they navigate an increasingly complex and demanding work environment to help their students thrive ^[30].

2. GOVERNMENTS SHOULD SUPPORT INNOVATION, ASSESS THE RESULTS, AND EMBED WHAT WORKS

Targeted government investment is vital for encouraging further education innovation – and proven approaches should be rewarded and embedded with funding certainty for enduring gains.

TFA believes government investments in education innovation should be tied to measurable goals and encourage experimentation. Analysis of the London Challenge, for example, a government initiative thought to contribute to 'dramatic improvements' against key measures in London schools between 2000 and 2014, found that creating space for ongoing learning from experimentation was key to its success ^[31]. Other examples of successful innovation in the UK include a range of free schools that have paired high aspirations with evidence-based practice to support students from even the most disadvantaged backgrounds to achieve the highest possible academic outcomes.

TFA's Leadership Development Program has been supported by a variety of short-term government funding initiatives since 2009. As stated above, it continues to demonstrate impact and receive favourable independent evaluations, including for quality, completion and cost. TFA's program is currently funded up to and including 2025 via the Commonwealth Government's High Achieving Teachers Program. Further funding will need to be secured to recruit and place Associates for Cohort 2026 and beyond.

Initial investments in our innovative model allowed TFA to place our first cohorts of Associates in disadvantaged schools across the country and support them as they proved their impact. It has also allowed TFA the ability to expand and continuously improve a sector-leading program, providing a bespoke ITE experience that has integrated best-practice coaching and mentoring and responds directly to school workforce needs.

The value of growing and embedding TFA's model was recognised in the 2021 report Next Steps: Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review, which recommended securing long-term funding for TFA ^[32]. However this is yet to be secured, curbing TFA's ability to plan and expand with operational certainty despite

no end in sight to current teacher shortages and clear demand from partner schools and jurisdictions keen to continue working with TFA.

University-led teacher education is primarily funded through Commonwealth Supported Places through the recurring Commonwealth Grants Scheme. Noting overlap with the University Accord process concurrently underway, the TEEP report stopped short of recommending ITE funding be subject to either performance or competition. Instead, it recommended that an 'Excellence Fund' be established to support ITE providers identified as 'high performers' take a leadership role in 'fostering improved performance across the sector' ^[33]. It is TFA's view that this risks providing further benefit to university incumbents at the expense of non-university, innovative providers.

There is currently no mechanism for a non-university provider, such as TFA, to receive recurrent or even long-term funding, despite ranking at the top on performance measures such as true additionality of supply, immediacy of supply to the workforce, retention through the degree, quality of support provided, and other measures the TEEP report recommended.

When innovative initiatives that aim to improve educational outcomes have been evaluated and revealed as highly effective, as TFA has been repeatedly, overcoming institutional barriers to provide funding certainty will ensure continued and scalable impact. This is especially true for those initiatives not housed within higher education institutions or large corporations that do not have the benefit of spreading overheads or substituting existing customers (in this case ITE students) as they pursue additional funding pools.

Governments have a role to play not just in seed funding innovation, but also in assessing results and embedding and scaling what has been proven to work.

In the case of TFA, funding certainty over a longer period would drive the next phase of scale and help embed the employment-based ITE model, ensuring a continued pipeline of high-achieving teachers to schools in disadvantaged areas, as well as the growth of an impactful and motivated Alumni network.



SECTION 3: HARNESSING THE NSRA MOMENTUM TO SET NATIONAL EDUCATIONAL EXCELLENCE AND EQUITY GOALS

The next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) presents an exciting opportunity to focus on a small number of measures to track the progress of our education system towards commonly understood key priorities. Our education system and the students it serves would benefit from a clear and common understanding of what excellence and equity in education means, shaped by a broad alliance of stakeholders working towards this goal, and agreement on the key metrics to elevate onto a national scorecard that better holds Australia to account.

Few in Australia would disagree that equity in education is important, but more work is needed to develop a shared national understanding of what it means in practice. That is, what does it mean to have an equitable education system, and how will we know when we get there?

The Closing the Gap National Agreement^[34] provides a possible model for Australian education, clearly setting out 17 outcomes that would together constitute “closing the gap” between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and other Australians, alongside measurable targets set out on a dashboard^[35]. It paints a clear picture of what “closing the gap” means, and what it will take to achieve it.

We believe it is important to ensure that these excellence and equity outcome measures reflect consensus of students, teachers, education experts and governments. TFA commends the Minister for Education for convening a broad reference group of stakeholders to advise the Expert Panel for this Review. The inclusion of students, teachers, and parents, alongside education unions and experts is critical for community trust in, and ownership of, the next NSRA. Building on this, TFA believes there is an opportunity to harness the expertise of this diverse reference group and invite others in, to shape a common understanding of excellence and equity in education and the work required to realise a national vision.

In Australia, the Education Equity Alliance, founded by TFA alumnus Tim Warwick, has been piloting a grassroots approach to developing a collective understanding of educational inequity, alongside clear priorities and supporting actions to redress the problem^[36]. Other charities, such as The Smith Family, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, and Ardoch, and many others, also have a long history of working towards educational equity in Australia.

The United Kingdom’s Fair Education Alliance has, for more than a decade, brought together education stakeholders to collaborate on and track progress towards a suite of ‘Impact Goals’ aimed at measuring progress in closing the education disadvantage gap^[37]. The Alliance’s 250 members include Save the Children, Youth Endowment Fund, Ark and English Football League Trust.

Both the United Kingdom’s Fair Education Alliance and Australia’s Education Equity Alliance demonstrate precedent and provide models for harnessing the combined expertise of the education sector, including and especially students and teachers, to define what we mean by education equity, and what it would look like to realise this vision.

TFA believes the current work to develop Australia’s next NSRA, including the wide reference group, provides a powerful foundation for setting a national vision for educational excellence and equity, along with a set of specific set of goals and outcomes to measure if we are achieving it.

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APPENDIX A - TFA'S RECOMMENDATIONS TO THE TEACHER EDUCATION EXPERT PANEL

TFA policy and regulatory priorities	TFA policy shift recommendations	Expert Panel reform area alignment
<p>1. Access to postgraduate ITE pathways</p> <p>Broaden eligibility for post-graduate ITE courses, especially for mid-career entrants, and add additional means for high-calibre and skilled individuals to demonstrate competence.</p>	<p>Develop a framework for competency-based eligibility to provide ITE candidates opportunity to demonstrate subject knowledge and expertise.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change the requirement for mid-career professionals to have completed a Bachelor degree from within the past 10 years to the past 15 years. • Develop additional ways for mid-career professionals to demonstrate currency in their major learning area (i.e. a standardised subject knowledge audit). • Align AITSL standards for major requirements in a recognised learning area to total credit points within a Bachelor degree rather than based on an assumed standard unit sequence, and enable inclusion of research-based units. • Help reduce opportunity cost for mid-career entrants by extending eligibility for Federal and State scholarships and bursaries top articipants of employment-based pathways. 	<p>Area 4 - Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants</p>

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<p>2. ITE course content and high-quality practical learning opportunities</p> <p>Strengthen what is taught in ITE courses, and adjust for how it can be learned; enable practicums, school placements and post-course support for beginning teachers, acknowledging these aspects can accelerate skills and competencies for classroom practice.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explore opportunities to enhance ITE course content by ensuring inclusion of evidence- based practices that improve student learning, and boost classroom readiness for beginning teachers. • Build sector consensus and trusted guidance on which evidence-based practices are preferential for particular contexts. • Develop a comprehensive set of practice illustrations and examples to support any amendment to Accreditation Standards and Procedures. • In addition to practicum guidelines, consider supporting schools with a brokering and support service, with focus on those with highest workforce need, ie. regional, rural and remote communities. • Include high quality coaching support for ITE students during their practicums. • Introduce standard practice for all new teachers to be supported with formal coaching and mentoring in their early years, and resource schools to provide this. • Endorse ITE providers to explore development of Applied Master of Teaching courses, and assist in mitigating any current regulatory barriers. • Develop an independent practicum assessment model, including guidelines, assessment tools and potentially an independent labour market, to enable professional practicum assessments to occur at scale and at quality. • Consider at-scale role out of remote observation technology to enable cost effective delivery of high-quality remote practical coaching and assessment in regional, rural and remote contexts. 	<p>Area 1 - Classroom ready, with evidenced-based practices</p> <p>Area 3 - Improving practical experience</p> <p>Area 4 - Improving ITE pathways for mid-career entrants</p>
<p>3. ITE key performance indicators and funding</p> <p>Increase accountability for ITE providers for quality outputs; improve transparency for aspiring applicants to assess courses before enrolment; and support scale for proven innovative ITE pathways, recognising these pathways can increase workforce supply, and are particularly appealing to mid-career entrants.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce KPIs at individual ITE program level to improve transparency of performance in the sector. • Preference excellence funding for high-performer programs over transition funding for under-performing programs • Foster innovation, without disadvantageous outcomes for smaller innovative non-traditional providers. 	<p>Area 2 - Stronger link between performance and funding</p>

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