



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Submission to the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

Brotherhood of St. Laurence

August 2023

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) is a social justice organisation working alongside people experiencing disadvantage to address the fundamental causes of poverty in Australia. Our mission is to pursue lasting change, to create a more compassionate and just society where everyone can thrive. Our approach is informed directly by the people experiencing disadvantage and uses evidence drawn from our research, together with insights from our programs and services, to develop practical solutions that work. For more information visit <www.bsl.org.au>.

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Summary

The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) welcomes the Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System (the Review), and particularly the Review's focus on strengthening outcomes for all children and young people moving through the Australian schooling system.

This submission draws on BSL's experience working with children, young people and their families across Australia, including through the delivery of educational support programs, partnerships with a range of schools in disadvantaged communities and the lessons drawn from our own re-engagement program, the David Scott School – a senior secondary specialist education program in Melbourne.

This submission builds on an interim submission (July 2023) provided to the Review Secretariat that included the following recommendations:

Reducing the concentration of disadvantage in schools

- Improving outcomes through increased – and more targeted - school funding.

Centering wellbeing, and aligning to Measuring What Matters

- Shifting from a traditional focus on academic outcomes toward an equal focus on learning, wellbeing and health for students.

Schools as hubs for broader support and community connections

- Stronger school connections with parents, allied health professionals and social supports.

Belonging and inclusion as overarching aims

- Including flexible and broad supports for disability and developmental delay.

Stronger pathways through education to employment

- Including reducing early school leaving and developing broader systems of recognition.

BSL recommendations in this final submission build on those above and include:

Understanding and improving student outcomes through wider metrics and systems for recognising student achievement

Including:

- Adopting interventions including class size as a lever for responding to the needs of at-risk cohorts, expanding milestones of success and attainment that are used to measure progress through schooling, and professional development for teachers and school leaders.
- Implementing guardrails for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI).
- Using the evidence currently collected and curated by schools and the education system that identifies priority groups at risk to target early intervention and measure progress.

Measuring and addressing student wellbeing consistently across the system while responding to the diversity of children and young people in schools

Including:

- Aligning NSRA indicators with the broader conception of wellbeing and progress as outlined in the Measuring What Matters framework, to ensure that the priorities for our education system are aligned with our vision for wellbeing as an Australian society.
- Use of wellbeing measures that recognise the diversity of Australian school populations and how different young people have different barometers of their own health and wellbeing, shaped by their social and cultural backgrounds and circumstances.
- Timely access to qualified allied health practitioners and resourcing to enable point-of-need services for children and young people.
- Mandating trauma-informed and wellbeing-focused training as a core of all initial teacher education (ITE) programs, to encourage a system-wide approach to inclusion and strengthen a focus on teacher–student relationships.
- A more inclusive core curriculum that fosters student belonging and connection.

Building a sustainable teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of children and young people in Australian classrooms

Including:

- Diversifying the teaching workforce by addressing structural barriers to entry and retention, including the exclusionary impacts of Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education Students (LANTITE) testing and teacher administrative workloads.
- Strengthening the appropriateness and consistency of behavioural and student management policies across Australian schools and the schooling system.
- Adopting competitive salaries and benefits for teachers.
- Assessing the benefits of moving to a single national teacher registration system, including options for mutual recognition.
- Ensuring a pipeline of qualified specialist vocational, technical education and applied learning teachers for the diversifying senior secondary system.

Establishing a richer evidence base of student experience and attitudes to school

Including:

- A comprehensive, nation-wide program of longitudinal tracking of school completers.
- Regular reporting on student outcomes and changes, disaggregated by cohort, jurisdiction, location and statistical area, with academic and milestone metrics complemented by attitudinal and experiential student voice data.
- A national clearinghouse of schooling data available for systems, schools and researchers to contribute expert analysis and design interventions for at-risk cohorts.

Improving student outcomes – including for students most at risk of falling behind

Reducing the concentration of disadvantage in schools must be a national priority through the National Schools Reform Agreement (NSRA).

As emphasised in the interim BSL submission (July 2023), improving outcomes should be a headline aim for the NSRA, and a number of actions should sit under it. Success should be measured in terms of reducing school-based disadvantage and the ability for children experiencing disadvantage to go to school with peers from socio-economically mixed backgrounds and feel safe, valued and a sense of belonging. Schools funding (i.e. an increase to Schooling Resource Standard (SRS) levels) is a key component in this.

This should be seen as a nation-building level investment, targeted at those areas where student learning, health and wellbeing outcomes are poorest. This correlates strongly with areas of greatest socio-economic disadvantage and groups with specific inclusion needs around disability, language and culture including First Nations students. Building connection and recognition in this area also correlates to the short-term future needs of the Australian workforce and collective capacity.

Wider metrics and systems for recognising student achievement

Building traditional academic skills (e.g. literacy and numeracy) is an important student outcome. However, informed by BSL experience with a diverse student population, wider skills (e.g. life skills and relational skills) are also important to enable students to flourish and transition to further study or work and participate in their communities. Accordingly, BSL considers that wider metrics and systems are required for recognising student achievement and informing improvements to teaching practice.

The new National School Reform Agreement (NSRA) should endorse and encourage the development of metrics and systems that go beyond academic performance and better recognise and value what young people can do. How learning is recognised at the end of schooling (for example, the current ATAR), is important for determining post-school pathways and determines what we teach and assess. However, student achievement is more complex and varied than an ATAR measure alone can capture. More comprehensive education metrics can consider the capabilities students need to thrive in the community and workplace. Some innovative approaches are currently being used/trialled in Australian schools, including, but not limited to, the following:

- [The Mastery Transcript \(Mastery Transcript Consortium Australia\)](#)
- [New Metrics \(University of Melbourne\)](#)
- [Edapt \(Edapt Education, Melbourne\)](#).

Interventions to improve student outcomes

In addition to adopting a wider understanding of student progress (above), BSL has observed interventions that have demonstrated success in improving student outcomes – adjusting class size, milestones and professional development for teachers, as indicated in the table below.

Table 1 Example practices to improve student outcomes, by level of implementation

Practice	Description	Level of implementation
Class size as a lever for responding to the needs of at risk cohorts	Responding to class needs (e.g. larger classes for self-directed, research-based, upper level students, with smaller classes for students requiring more structured, externally motivated learning opportunities. Resourcing of classrooms (beyond class size) to achieve equitable practice rather than equal practice.	System and school level intervention
More expansive milestones of success and attainment	Students, teachers, families, tertiary sector and industry have all described current success measures and certificates as no longer fit-for-purpose (for differing reasons). By changing the mechanism by which students describe what they ‘know’ and ‘can do’ (currently an academic transcript), we can diversify young people’s capabilities, ensure inclusion, and increase collective potential and capacity.	System level intervention
Professional development for teachers and school leaders	Mandatory inclusion of trauma-informed practice and understanding of social and class based systems of learning as core to ITE curriculum. ITE should be complemented by embedding regular, meaningful professional development for teaching staff within schools to ensure school practice is predictable and consistent for all students. Support for educators to understand the most effective teaching strategies for students with trauma histories, with the result of increasing success stories, minimising classroom behavioural management needs and consequently increasing teacher satisfaction.	System level intervention

Implementation and guardrails for the use of Artificial Intelligence (AI)

As outlined in the interim BSL submission (July 2023), harnessing technology, including artificial intelligence (AI) offers the potential to reduce educational inequity, but done poorly, it will only further widen the gap. AI is already demonstrating its potential to revolutionise education. However, effective deployment of AI’s benefits requires a fundamental shift in educational systems, culture and policy. To ensure fairness and accessibility as well as providing the enabling conditions for students to use AI to reach their potential, the traditional structure of schooling must be reviewed. By prioritising student-centred learning and personalised approaches and

broadening what the education system deems 'successful', policy makers can open opportunities for all students to engage in more self-directed learning with AI. Alongside the adoption of AI in education there is also a need to prioritise intentional human interaction and relationships.

We agree with and support with important observations made by Professor Leslie Loble in her submission to the review, that AI and edtech tools can help amplify and support schooling reforms but also deserve specific attention to ensure they align with Australian priorities. Professor Loble's work on the role of AI and edtech to addressing the learning gap in Australian schools (Loble & Hawcroft 2022) provides substantial insight to guide how policymakers can promote more equitable outcomes for students by harnessing AI's and edtech's transformative potential. AI can be used to create constructive and exciting opportunities for students and teaching staff that can change the nature of 'learning', encourage self-directed and student-led learning practices and support young people as they move from school into their post-school pathways.

Using the evidence currently collected by schools to identify priority groups at risk to target early intervention and measure progress

Children and young people can face barriers to education, and specific population groups face risks of exclusion in schooling. These include children and young people with experience of:

- out-of-home care
- incarceration (self or family)
- social and emotional disability
- caring responsibilities
- intergenerational early school leaving
- mental health challenges (self or family)
- geographical transience
- family violence and/or trauma
- institutional violence or distrust (self or family), and
- neuro-diversity or atypical cognitive development (self or family).

To design and implement interventions informed by comprehensive data on structural barriers to schooling, different responses are needed for different levels of maturity and development of students, which do not always align with the age brackets/year levels currently used in schools. Such responses need to provide for differing student social, cognitive, cultural and emotional development. This would represent a move away from 'competitive', future-focused schooling towards a more collaborative approach that meets students where they are at and values, and builds on, their learning, skills and capabilities.

Belonging and inclusion should be unifying threads and overarching aims of a new agreement.

As summarised in our interim submission (July 2023), belonging is central to BSL's work with the young people who participate in our programs as evidenced at our David Scott School. Our practice and service design is underpinned by a belief that all children and young people should be genuinely included and valued in mainstream education settings, regardless of disability,

cultural background or family circumstance. From the young people, children and families the BSL works with, we hear too often the experiences of children and young people who do not feel safe at school, of schools struggling to access the additional supports for disability inclusion, or for parents with the required resources needing to advocate to extreme lengths to get children the additional supports they need. The onus for receiving support should not rest on families to advocate. BSL has evidenced that it can be much more effective to implement flexible and broad supports for disability and developmental delay, including through the use of universal design for learning approaches, to support not just for individual students, but groups of children or whole classes.

Improving student mental health and wellbeing

Measuring student wellbeing consistently across the system while responding to the diversity of children and young people in schools

As emphasised in the interim BSL submission (July 2023), shifting from the traditional focus on academic outcomes and achievements needs to equally focusing on learning, wellbeing, and health requires a whole child approach in school and education settings. This approach prioritises the full scope of a child’s needs, capacities, including social, emotional, cognitive, physical, ethical and psychological development, as well as academic growth to ensure that all children are able to reach their full potential. This aligns with the broader conception of wellbeing and progress as outlined in the Measuring What Matters framework. There could be scope to align NSRA indicators against the Measuring What Matters framework. Table 1 below outlines key points of connection between the framework and the school system.

Table 1: Alignment between the Measuring What Matters focus areas and the school system

Draft Measuring What Matters focus areas*	Relevance in the school system
Prosperous: A growing, productive and resilient economy	Prosperous: Schools that prepare young people with the skills, knowledge and dynamic capabilities for success in the future economy
Inclusive: A society that shares opportunities and enables people to fully participate	Inclusive: Schools that enable everyone to participate, regardless of disability, first language, cultural background etc and values a broader set of knowledge systems
Sustainable: A natural environment that is valued and sustainably managed in the face of a changing climate for current and future generations	Sustainable: Schools that foster environmental awareness, connectedness and sustainability
Cohesive: A safe and cohesive society that celebrates culture and encourages participation	Cohesive: A safe and cohesive school system that celebrates culture and encourages participation
Healthy: A society in which people feel well and are in good physical and mental health now and into the future	Healthy: Schools that support good physical and mental health for children and young people now and into the future

**Focus areas from [Consultation Paper](#) released in April 2023*

Challenges exist in measuring student wellbeing across a diverse student population. Nuanced, adaptable instruments need to be created to ensure the measurements are meaningful and practical. At BSL's David Scott School in Frankston Victoria, 94% of students report that mental health challenges impact their lives daily (compared with a nationwide average for this age group of 15%). Most of the students indicate that mental health challenges are/were a prominent factor in their inability to maintain a place in mainstream school.

While survey tools are useful to provide a 'snapshot' of a student experience, unless there are resources to implement support or change where needed, the surveys increase teacher and student workloads without meaningful outcomes. For measures of wellbeing to be meaningful in schools, they must lead to action. Simply put, if young people take the risk to disclose mental health or other concerns and there is no action from the school, their existing mental health challenges can be exacerbated, and they can develop long-term resistance to seeking help. Feedback through BSL's education, child and youth programs reveals that students are reporting wellbeing concerns in schoolwide surveys, without follow-up or intervention. This can leave students feeling invalidated and less likely to report these concerns in the future (Foulkes & Andrews 2023).

Meaningful national insight into the wellbeing of children and young people in schools is important. A core principle for a meaningful and successful student wellbeing measurement instrument is that it must enable comparison across schools but also allow for contextual understanding of differences between schools and their student populations.

Timely access to qualified allied health practitioners

As described in our interim submission (July 2023), BSL sees the value that can come with conceptualising a school as a hub, with stronger connections to family, community, and the broader supports children and families need to thrive, such as allied health and support services. Design changes enabling a 'school as a hub' model include integrating allied health professionals in schools and connecting schools with broader social supports.

Schools play a key role in enabling access to allied health services and can create connections to community services for both students and families. For at-risk children and young people, this contact with health and community services at the school site can also build confidence and relationships that create pathways to services outside the school gate. In their submission to the review process, The Smith Family also emphasise connecting children and their families with allied health and other services and the importance of "putting children and young people at the centre and moving towards enabling educational systems to more effectively work with the wider service systems which impact children" (The Smith Family 2023).

Schools can also act as an advocate for some young people when parents or family are unable to perform this role, via school connections to allied health services (such as school nurses, paediatricians, occupational therapists, psychologists). Importantly, appropriate information sharing protocols are required to build students' trust of allied health services.

Effective partnerships between schools and allied health services require geographic proximity, timely access to qualified practitioners, and resourcing for school staff to maintain the partnership. The current nationwide shortage of allied health practitioners affects different cohorts of children and young people unequally. The NSRA could consider the resourcing needed

to expand access to allied health staff – particularly for disadvantaged schools. This could include resourcing for staff to accompany vulnerable students to appointments when guardians/parents are unable to do so.

This assessment of resourcing need should also examine the financial cost of mental health support for children, young people and their caregivers, which is prohibitive for many. Students at BSL’s David Scott School commonly report that parents or care-givers have had to choose between purchasing medications and paying for specialist support services.

Teacher–student relationship capabilities

Evidence shows that teachers knowing students, and the relationship between students and their teachers, are significant determining factors for strengthening student wellbeing (Kotiw 2017). However, there is inconsistent, often limited focus on teacher–student relationship management within current initial teacher education (ITE) courses. One contributing factor is that topics of trauma-informed teaching practice, wellbeing training, recognising mental health concerns and working with young people from diverse backgrounds may be either elective or core units in ITE courses. Mandating trauma-informed and wellbeing-focused training within all ITE programs could encourage a system-wide focus on teacher–student relationships. The system needs to aim for relationship practices that are less ad hoc and not reliant on the goodwill of teachers to pursue student wellbeing as a ‘extra interest’ on top of their standard teaching load.

The importance of curriculum in children and young people feeling connected to school

There is well-documented evidence regarding the interdependence between academic capacity, capability, aspiration, and engagement and student wellbeing (Dix et al. 2020; Evans-Whipp et al. 2017; White & Kern 2018). School curriculum can play a pivotal role in students’ sense of belonging at school, or sense of exclusion. An inclusive curriculum has features including (but not limited to):

- A culturally sensitive curriculum ensures students from diverse and non-dominant backgrounds can find meaning and connection within school. A curriculum that includes diverse histories, broad recognition and is relevant to students’ lives and interests increases both engagement and alignment between school and lived experience. This, in turn, benefits all students by increasing collective capabilities.
- Maximising real-world examples, project-based learning and practical applications makes the learning experience meaningful for young people, supporting them to feel connected to their learning and, consequently, the school environment. This supports collaboration and connection, and also supports vulnerable students during the recognised high-risk period of the life stage between education and employment.
- Personalising student learning helps students to feel ‘seen’ and supports strong mutually respectful relationships between students and their teachers. A more tailored curriculum can be effective in meeting individual student needs. This supports vulnerable students to build or maintain connection to school; but it requires staff resourcing and time allocation.
- Embedding social-emotional learning (SEL) components in the curriculum helps students develop self-awareness, emotional regulation and interpersonal skills. It also supports students who are out of alignment with the ‘hidden rules of school’ to develop confidence and school connection. An integrated SEL curriculum has been consistently found to improve

students' emotional wellbeing and positively impact whole school culture, leading to a stronger sense of safety and engagement.

- Simplifying traditional curriculum and incorporating 'extracurricular' activities in the school week caters to diverse interests and talents and disrupts the privilege of extracurricular activities. These activities can provide vulnerable students with opportunities to explore their interests, demonstrate broader capacities, build friendships and develop a sense of belonging in the classroom.

The mainstream curriculum used by the current education system, created for a different time, a different population and extremely different required outcomes, is exclusionary and divisive. School curriculum can be a transformative tool that shares and generates diverse knowledge systems and fosters a sense of belonging, engagement and support for all students, including those with a tenuous school connection.

Building a sustainable teaching workforce that reflects the diversity of the Australian classroom

Diversifying the teaching workforce by addressing the structural barriers to entry and retention

BSL acknowledges the difficulty schools have in 'attracting and retaining a teacher workforce that reflects the diversity of Australian communities, schools and student populations' (Expert Panel, p. 28). Addressing the national challenge of building a skilled, sustainable and diverse teacher workforce requires a change in the bureaucratic expectations and conditions within which teachers work. Increasing diversity in the teaching population offers multiple benefits for the education system, teacher collaboration, student connectedness and educational learning opportunities, by widening the expertise, points of view and lived experiences that shape practices within schools.

To diversify the teaching population several base-level changes need to occur. These include addressing cultural bias in the curriculum through consulting with diverse populations, addressing hiring practices that are exclusive to many, cultivating inclusive whole-school practices including staff development, and ensuring diversity in leadership roles for decision making, mentoring and representation.

The Literacy and Numeracy Test for Initial Teacher Education (LANTITE) has been found to be a significant barrier for potential teachers from linguistically or culturally diverse backgrounds, those from first-in-family-to-attend university and Indigenous or Torres Strait Islander populations applying to undertake teacher training (Hilton & Saunders 2023). The LANTITE testing should be shifted from a barrier to entry to teaching to a component of the development of teachers. This would involve using the testing to identify where pre-service teachers need additional development and support within their ITE courses and where adjustments could be made in specific in-school roles to ensure cultural inclusion and to ultimately broaden teacher diversity within schools.

Strengthening the appropriateness and consistency of behavioural and student management policies

Keeping teachers in the workforce require transformation on several levels. This includes in behavioural and student management policies. Initiating supportive and compassionate behavioural systems for students would support teachers and school staff by creating environments which promote empathy, understanding and emotional support for all. Compassionate systems foster a sense of belonging, emotional wellbeing and positive relationships, ultimately enhancing the overall learning experience as well as minimising the long-term behavioural management required of teachers. Ensuring that schools are adequately resourced for wellbeing and engagement needs is paramount for these systems to be successful in school (Patti et al. 2015).

In-school and classroom-based interventions such as restorative practices, trauma informed classrooms, explicit wellbeing programs and culturally inclusive and responsive pedagogies are already in use to varying degrees in some schools. Scaling up these interventions and monitoring the impact of these practices at the system level could address the challenges at-risk learners currently face of confusing, inconsistent and negative school climates. For these approaches to be effective, leadership teams and staff need to understand the reasoning and well-evidenced outcomes of these approaches, including the benefits to students, staff and communities.

Adopting competitive salaries and benefits for teachers

Ensuring competitive salaries and benefits is crucial to attract and retain qualified educators as well as raise the profile of teaching as a profession. Adequate compensation for the physical hours, emotional load and complexity of the role would recognise the value of teachers' work and could help reduce the incentive to leave the profession for higher-paying jobs. Access to flexible work opportunities (including part-time work) is increasingly important in a post COVID-19 hybrid work world. While many other industries have become more flexible, teaching has not. Implementing a more attractive employment environment for teachers will require the focus to shift from a purely timetable and logistics-driven environment to a more 'human-centred' approach that incorporates more flexible structures inclusive of individual needs.

Exploring the benefits of moving to a national registration system for teachers

Governments have established registration schemes in a range of occupations including teaching (and medicine and veterinary science). A common rationale for an occupational registration system is to ensure and signal quality in service provision (Productivity Commission 2015). Typically, registration schemes include entry requirements (e.g. formal education), adherence to practice standards and requirements for continuous professional development (CPD). The potential costs and disadvantages of registration schemes include the risk of creating unnecessary barriers to entry (e.g. for overseas trained teachers), imposing barriers to movement between domestic jurisdictions, and administrative and compliance costs.

BSL notes that all Australian jurisdictions have established teacher registration schemes. In Victoria, for example, teacher registration is overseen by the Victorian Institute of Teaching (VIT), an independent statutory authority. VIT requires teachers to register and then renew their registration annually. Initial registration includes verification of qualifications, suitability assessment and criminal checks. Renewal includes payment of a registration fee, criminal history

checks, cooperation with registration audits, maintenance of contact details, and completion at least 20 hours of CPD each year. Importantly, jurisdictional requirements vary – for example the length of the registration cycle varies from one year (in Victoria) up to seven years (for part-time teachers in New South Wales). A recent review found a lack of alignment between jurisdictional schemes in areas such as requirements for registration and information sharing, and underpinning legislation. This lack of alignment hinders teacher mobility. Current mutual recognition arrangements for teacher registrations aim to facilitate recognition and mobility, but they are not fully effective and teachers report dissatisfaction (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership 2018).

BSL considers that more harmonised registration regimes across jurisdictions offer potential benefits including:

- greater teacher mobility, to allow better alignment of teacher skills to school/student needs. For example, a teacher working in an out-of-field area in one jurisdiction could more easily move to a within-field area in another jurisdiction, or a teacher could more easily move to a role in an area experiencing acute teacher shortages (e.g. a rural or regional school) in another jurisdiction
- strengthening and harmonising quality, by reforming registration requirements in current schemes that are not underpinned by evidence that they lead to improved teaching quality
- reduced regulatory and administrative costs. For example, all jurisdictions have bodies or agencies to oversee registration schemes. A single regulatory body would likely benefit from economies of scale. Savings could be applied to initiatives that more directly improve student outcomes.

Given this context, three options offer potential gains in improving mobility, strengthening and harmonising quality, and reducing administrative costs:

- Option A – Allow more effective mutual recognition of registrations between jurisdictions
- Option B – Reform existing jurisdictional registration schemes to align and harmonise requirements
- Option C – Replace existing jurisdictional registration schemes with a single national scheme. Under this option it is important that the national scheme replace existing schemes rather than add a national scheme to existing schemes. An additional scheme would likely impose additional (and potentially conflicting) requirements on teachers, and additional costs.

Replacement (Option C) is advantageous as it ensures a uniform registration scheme, and allows future modifications to be applied uniformly across jurisdictions. However it may be the most difficult to negotiate and implement. Mutual recognition (Option A) might be advanced more rapidly in the short term, and lay the foundations for replacement (or reform).

Mutual recognition could be advanced by states and territories. The replacement and reform options would require jurisdictional cooperation and Commonwealth Government support and engagement. Under the reform option the Commonwealth could coordinate and act as an independent chair/arbitrator in the harmonisation process. Under the replacement option the Commonwealth would negotiate a replacement scheme with states/territories, and agree transition arrangements from multiple schemes to a single scheme.

Improving teacher workloads and capacity to address inequity

Addressing the link between teacher workloads and inequity is a collaborative process requiring regular feedback from the teaching population. Teachers report feeling unable to adequately cater for high numbers of students requiring individual learning plans, individual adjustments, behaviour modification plans and more face-to-face support, due to heavy workloads.

To address teacher attrition and burnout, changes are needed to the administrative expectations of classroom teachers. Streamlining administrative tasks and paperwork can free up teachers' time to focus on teaching and connecting with students. This can be achieved by investing in technology and in administrative support staff, being realistic about data collecting and response measures, increasing the trust in professional teacher judgement, creating and maintaining reasonable expectations of communication both internally and externally around student learning – including minimising inequitable standardised testing and ensuring all assessments are meaningful for the teacher and/or student. Creating a streamlined and constructive reporting process that minimises modes of assessment that measure outdated notions of success could provide opportunities for deeper learning.

Trusting professional teacher judgment can reduce administrative burden and improve the assessment and reporting mechanisms available in schools while improving teacher workloads. Teacher judgments can also inform equitable and timely allocation of resources to meet student needs.

Additionally, teacher workloads can be managed through the provision of support services – such as counsellors, social workers, and special education professionals, to address students' non-academic needs. Support services for teachers could include mentors and professional development (as listed above) with appropriate time release.

Teachers should be enabled to direct their efforts where they will have the most significant impact on student outcomes. Diagnostic use of engagement and achievement data to identify learners in need of additional support, timely professional development to be skills for working with priority groups and addressing specific learning needs (such as culturally responsive teaching and inclusive practices) and differentiated instruction are just some of strategies that can be more systematically used to enable teachers to direct their expertise to the needs and outcomes of students not currently supported within the school system.

Ensuring a pipeline of qualified vocational education and technical education teachers for the diversifying senior secondary system

Chapter 4 of the Better and Fairer education system consultation paper acknowledges that 'teachers are the most influential in-school factor in student outcomes', and that 'ensuring an adequate supply of effective teachers is critical to improving student outcomes, particularly for those at most risk of falling behind' (Expert Panel 2023, p. 27). Within the wider challenge of ensuring a pipeline of suitably qualified teachers, the supply of qualified VET in schools and technology education teachers is particularly important to the educational opportunities and experiences of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. These young people make up the majority of students reliant on vocational pathways to support their completion of Year 12 (Clarke & Polesel 2013; Van Dyke & Jackson 2019).

Amongst the data gathered on teacher supply and shortages, there is a lack of detailed data about the extent of the supply shortage of VET teachers for Australian schools. An indication of the

shortage can be inferred by the fact that 84% of VET teaching in schools is being conducted by out-of-field teachers (AITSL 2021a).

Targeted action on the recruitment and training of VET in schools teachers is needed to support the expansive senior secondary curriculum needed by the diverse populations of young people staying on to complete Year 12 in Australian schools. However, within current system and policy action on teacher supply and demand, there is limited focus or mention of the specific supply and demand of VET in schools teachers. In Victoria, the only mention of VET teachers in the Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report 2020 (DET 2021) is in the Permission to Teach (PTT) data, where VET trainers (without teacher qualifications) can be, and have been, hired in schools at a lower PTT salary level. Unlike the requirement for teaching academic subjects, the online application process for Permission to Teach (PTT) VET in Victoria does not require concurrent enrolment in an ITE teaching course (VIT 2022). Similar challenges and loopholes exist in other states and territories.

There is an increasing awareness of the importance of VET in schools provision as a core feature of senior secondary school provision (Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet 2020), and acknowledgement of the risks to provision posed by a shortage of appropriately qualified VET teachers (AITSL 2021b). Within the broader system action on teacher supply, specific action is needed to address the shortage of VET in schools teachers who are both industry, vocationally and teacher qualified. A key barrier to building a supply of VET in schools teachers is the lack of a stream for VET in Schools teachers within Australia's mainstream university teacher education courses. In establishing teacher supply targets and action within the NSRA, specific action is needed to rebuild VET in schools and technology education teacher streams within Bachelor of Education and Master of Teacher courses, to ensure a minimum availability of one undergraduate and one postgraduate ITE course in each Australian jurisdiction that offers a pathway for VET in schools pre-service teachers.

Collecting data to inform decision making and boost student outcomes

A richer evidence base of student experience and attitudes to school

In the Australian education system, there is limited longitudinal data that tracks students beyond a single point in time. Existing tracking data is difficult to access and use to inform practice change. A comprehensive, nation-wide program of longitudinal tracking of school completers is needed, building on the longstanding post-school tracking initiatives in Victoria and Queensland, and the more recent initiatives in New South Wales and South Australia. Designing a feasible national longitudinal tracking approach can be informed by existing sample tracking studies, including the Longitudinal Survey of Australian Youth (LSAY), and the longitudinal survey conducted as part of the Victorian *On Track* survey of school completers. Annual touchpoints with students for up to 5 years post-school should be a minimum standard for tracking the outcomes and impact of schooling for young Australians.

In addition, current data is aggregated. Regular data reported on student outcomes and changes should be disaggregated by cohort and location. This should include disaggregation by jurisdiction, by location (e.g. metro/regional), statistical area (e.g. Statistical Areas 3 and 4).

The focus of data collection also needs to be widened. Academic and milestone metrics should be complemented by attitudinal and experiential items (e.g. was what you learned at school useful, did you have access to careers education, how many hours are you spending on extracurricular activities). To allow for an holistic understanding of how age groups of children and young people are progressing through school and also importantly to understand the ways in which their schooling is supporting their development, wellbeing and readiness to thrive post-school. Understanding both the academic and wellbeing impacts and progress in school can inform within classroom and in school practices, as well as help shape system level reforms in response to aggregated data on population group and priority groups.

The utility of data collection in schools would be strengthened by a national clearinghouse of schooling data. This would enable educators and researchers to better understand needs and design interventions. External analysis of trends and contributions by disciplinary experts would enable policy makers to adapt systems to address the needs of at risk cohorts.

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