DATTA Vic

Feedback on the Draft National Teacher Workforce Action Plan 2022

In 2022, the Australian Government released their **Draft National Teacher Workforce Action** Plan. This was developed to address teacher shortages by helping to attract and retain more people in the teaching profession.

The Plan includes 28 actions across six priority areas:

- Elevating the profession
- Improving teacher supply
- Strengthening initial teacher education
- Maximising the time to teach
- Better understanding future teacher workforce needs
- Better career pathways to support and retain teachers in the profession

The Plan was developed by a Working Group led by the Secretary of the Australian Government Department of Education with senior officials from state and territory governments and representatives from unions and education peak bodies.

Consultation feedback on the Plan will inform discussions of Education Ministers at their meeting in December and further refinement of the Action Plan.

Below is DATTA Vic's submission on behalf of our members.

Priority Area 1 - Elevating the profession
The actions proposed recognise the value teachers bring to students, communities and the economy.

DATTA Vic Feedback:

Action 1. Design & Technologies is one of the learning areas most affected by the teacher shortage in Victoria, so while a general campaign to recruit more teachers is a positive step, there should be a particular focus on Technologies to address this. The campaign also needs to be backed up with financial support for career transition, tuition fees and better conditions when in the education workforce.

Action 2. Awards for teachers are positive and can raise positive awareness of the profession, but all learning areas must be recognised, not just the larger ones. The majority of Teachers' Associations already give awards each year, and they are often best-placed to identify the most highly accomplished teachers in each of our areas. And often these types of awards can increase the non-teaching burden on teachers and schools as they draw focus and time away from the classroom and into writing lengthy nominations.

Action 4. It is unclear how a teacher being recognised as high achieving or highly accomplished is of concrete benefit to them. They are not sufficiently financially rewarded, and often find heavy demands on their time as they are called on to mentor and support less experienced staff, without any extra provision in their working schedules. This also fails to support new or out-of-field teachers – an area which urgently needs addressed.

Priority Area 2 - Improving teacher supply

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

DATTA Vic Feedback:

Actions 5-7. As identified in the most recent Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report, Design & Technologies (D&T) has the second-highest no-appointment rate (just behind our sister subject Digital Technologies). The critical shortage of Design & Technologies teachers is highlighted in our own report from 2019 - (https://www.datta.vic.edu.au/resources/Documents/2019/Draft%20DATTA%20Vic%20Tech%20Teacher%20Shortage%20Report%202019%20vic.pdf). This reveals some alarming statistics, including the fact that 90% of schools are forced to use out-of-field teachers to deliver the D&T Curriculum.

We certainly welcome any initiatives which encourage more people to consider a career in education – particularly when they are backed up with financial incentives. And the benefits of attracting young professionals from design and engineering would be incredible. Your High Achieving Teachers' Program through Teach for Australia and La Trobe University are wonderful on paper, however, neither of these institutions offer a Design & Technologies specialisation/method. Therefore none of this significant amount of funding will do anything to help the learning area with some of the worst staffing shortages. Your Action Plan will fail to succeed if it does not ensure that all curriculum areas are addressed.

Action 8. Teachers' Associations should be a key partner in the delivery of programs that support new teachers as they enter the profession and encourage experienced teachers not to leave. We provide networking, professional learning support, resource-sharing and mentoring in the subject-specific matters that otherwise take up huge amounts of teacher time and contribute to feelings of dissatisfaction with the profession.

Increasing teacher confidence in their knowledge and expertise will also boost public confidence in their expertise – which is the key aim of teachers' associations.

Priority Area 3 - Strengthening Initial Teacher Education (ITE)
The actions proposed will ensure initial teacher education supports teacher supply and quality.

DATTA Vic Feedback:

Action 10. While improved access to ITE is important, the investment is wasted if there is not ongoing professional support for new and existing teachers – especially those out-of-field educators required to teach unfamiliar subjects. Again, with significant financial support and resources, Teachers' Associations are best placed to ensure ongoing, practical support to those teachers who need it.

Action 11. Better recognition of previous work and study is essential when looking to improve access to ITE, but this must be looked at carefully for a range of specialist areas so that it is not too restrictive. Currently, VIT requirements in Victoria don't recognise a range of suitable experience and qualifications to become candidates for Technologies teaching. The focus is on trade qualifications and experience – currently, an Industrial Design or Engineering graduate does not meet the requirements, yet this is exactly who we need as D&T teachers. Also, this prior experience should be reflected in the salaries of these teachers as many would have to accept a significant drop in income to become educators.

Action 12. It is wonderful that this action plan identifies the need to recruit more First Nations teachers into our schools, but we also need comprehensive and accessible professional development for how non-indigenous educators can teach indigenous culture and history in ethical and respectful ways in a range of contexts. This means that a whole school can become culturally responsive.

Priority Area 4 - Maximising the time to teach
This action aims to improve retention and free up teachers to focus on teaching and collaboration.

DATTA Vic Feedback

Action 14. The workplace demands on teachers of Design & Technologies are significant. The practical nature of the subject requires extensive materials preparation, ongoing equipment maintenance, vital and detailed risk management procedures and practices and one-to-one instruction. DATTA Vic urges this Action Plan to include provision of Design & Technologies technicians for all schools.
Teachers have an incredible amount of administrative tasks to perform over and above their classroom teaching. An investment in more admin and support staff in school would be the most effective way to tackle this. These roles should be paid better in order to attract and retain staff. Also, some of these support staff could be encouraged to enter ITE and become teachers, and they would have a fantastic background to build on.

Action 15. Currently, teachers do not have enough time to plan and prepare for each lesson. However, simply supplying pre-prepared resources will not help this as they still have to be

studied and modified for each session. Teachers always differentiate and tailor lessons and resources for the students they are actually teaching. And in a subject like Design & Technologies, where classes are engaging in project-based learning and many projects are student-led, this will not reduce workload

Action 16. For new teachers, ongoing, subject-specific professional development is often only available through their own school or teachers' associations. Schools struggle to support specialist learning areas due to lack of teachers in these areas. Therefore, teachers' associations are best-placed to help improve standards of all curriculum implementation.

Action 17. And in terms of the assessment of these new initiatives, this is likely to inflict a significant administrative burden on schools. Teachers' associations can provide expert and detailed feedback which reflects the views of their members.

Priority Area 5 - Better understanding future teacher workforce needs
This action aims to better understand future teacher workforce needs, including the number of teachers required.

DATTA Vic Feedback

Action 19. Workforce data on specific learning areas is often unclear. Technologies is routinely missed out from STEM education data and this data is often retrieved through tracking advertised roles in government schools. (In the 2019 Victorian Teacher Supply and Demand Report for example, Design & Technologies was listed as a non-STEM subject.) Many schools do not advertise for roles they know they can't fill, so often they remove the hard-to-fill learning areas from their school's curriculum.

Teachers' associations have had to survey their own members to identify the real situation in most schools.
https://www.datta.vic.edu.au/resources/Documents/2019/Draft%20DATTA%20Vic%20Tech%20Teacher%20Shortage%20Report%202019%20vic.pdf

Action 21. VIT in Victoria doesn't recognise many suitable backgrounds and qualifications as meeting standards for becoming a Technologies teacher – their requirements reflect a time when Design & technologies education was only a route into trade. Progressive national standards would be helpful in addressing the acute shortage of D&T Teachers.

Action 22. This must be supported by adequate funding and ongoing teacher training for provisional or conditional teachers. This would cause a workload increase for those teachers engaged to mentor them, which also must be taken into consideration. Teachers' associations could play a central role in finding placements and allocating mentors in areas of need – DATTA Vic already manages a mentor teacher list and a list of schools able to take on student D&T placements.

Action 23. The impact of teacher workload is already widely recognised and understood. Schools need more teachers to deliver high quality education that is tailored to the diverse needs of all students, and capable support staff and technicians who ensure the

teacher is freed up to teach. More ongoing support, especially for out-of-field teachers in specialists areas through teachers' associations, would help to ensure teachers have the necessary knowledge skills and resources they need throughout their careers.

Priority Area 6 - Better career pathways to support and retain teachers in the profession
The proposed actions will improve career pathways, including through streamlining the process for Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher (HALT) accreditation, and providing better professional support for teachers to retain them in the profession.

Action 24. Again, Teachers' Associations are best placed to work with the Education Department and Curriculum Authority to deliver ongoing professional development for teachers. Over the past 3 years, DATTA Vic has run our own Teaching Design Masterclass for over 150 teachers, which was designed to support out-of-field teachers to deliver the D&T curriculum and existing D&T teachers to improve their practice.

Action 25. It is vital that mentor teachers are properly supported and not have the burden of helping an inexperienced educator added to their already-considerable workload. Many leaders develop their skills out of schools by volunteering with Teachers' Associations, as a committee member or by running professional development workshops and conference sessions. Increasing support for Teachers' Associations increases opportunities for career development throughout the education sector. It should be a national requirement that schools connect early career teachers with the associations that support the subjects in which they are teaching (including subjects in which the teacher is out of field), and school systems should guarantee access to professional learning – both funding and time - that enables these teachers to accelerate their early career development. This could be key to retaining teachers beyond the first five years.

Action 27. Reviews to HALT processes should be carried out in ongoing consultation with expert bodies such as teachers' associations to ensure the accreditation is up to date and fit for purpose.

Action 28. Micro-credentials are a really positive way forward to ensure access to ongoing professional development in a way that teachers can fit into their already busy schedules. Micro-credentials can also contribute to teacher satisfaction and retention. It would be helpful to have these standardised nationally and developed and delivered with teachers' associations, who already provide the bulk of ongoing professional development opportunities outside of schools, especially in specialist areas like Technologies.