

NEWS IN BRIEF – SEPTEMBER 2023



President's Report



APTA President, Cheryl Brennan

Terms 2 and 3 have been very busy for Australian Professional Teachers Association (APTA) and APTA Board members. We have made significant headway with our advocacy work at the federal level, which is pleasing. However, the challenge now is to increase APTA's access to financial resources so that we can expand our work and success.

There are a range of inquiries and federal government initiatives currently underway, including:

- the formulation of Professional Standards for Middle Leaders
- work towards the next National School Reform Agreement (NSRA)
- changes to initial teacher education (ITE)
- work to improve the attractiveness of the profession, and,
- consideration of the use of generative artificial intelligence in the Australian education system.

Contact your state/territory Joint Council representative if you have any comments on these topics.

APTA continues to work to support the effectiveness of teacher associations across the country and to achieve greater synergy between Joint Councils. APTA's upcoming face-to-face strategic planning weekend and AGM in early November will be crucial in this work. Your state/territory Joint Council representatives on the APTA Board would be happy to bring any ideas you have to this meeting.

APTA Board for 2023

The APTA Board for 2023 continues as follows:

President: Cheryl Brennan (PTC NSW)
Vice President: Karen Yager (PTC NSW)
Treasurer: Phillipa Greig (JCQTA)
Secretary: Steve Hawkins (PTANT)

Board members:
Deb Hull (CPTAV)
Carolyn Broadbent (COACTEA)
Jill Abell (NEAT)
Rod Nancarrow (Educators SA)

APTA's Strategic Plan

APTA's strategic plan incorporates a vision to provide national leadership that supports and advances the teaching profession. Our Strategic Plan for 2022 – 2024 is illustrated in the graphic below.



The three strategic pillars that continue to guide the direction of the APTA Board during 2023 are:

1. **Synergy:** Combining efforts and expertise to produce greater effectiveness of Joint Councils and their teacher association members.
2. **Advocacy:** Speaking out and acting to ensure that the interests of Joint Councils and their teacher association members are considered.
3. **Support:** Providing support to our Joint Council members, ie. teacher associations across the country and the teaching profession.

APTA Board members have been making efforts to communicate details about all federal government reviews to Joint Councils and their member associations to receive feedback. It is important that APTA submissions on proposed education policy have the input of teacher associations. APTA welcomes comments about current initiatives and inquiries.

APTA 2023 Annual General Meeting

After several years of online AGMs due to COVID disruptions, this year the APTA Board will meet in person for a strategic planning weekend on Saturday 4 and Sunday 5 November, with the formal Annual General Meeting scheduled for **Sunday 5 November 2023 at 1 pm in Melbourne**.

AITSL CEO Mark Grant will be speaking to the APTA Board at 10 am on Saturday 4 November.

Please pass on any comments regarding the strategic direction of APTA to your state or territory representative on the APTA Board.

Meeting with Minister for Education

On Monday 11 September, I met with the Hon Jason Clare MP, Minister for Education, along with APTA Vice President Karen Yager, Australian Alliance of Associations in Education (AAAE) President John Saunders and AAAE Treasurer Tim Warwick. We discussed the vital role of teacher professional associations and how teacher voice needs to be central in policy making about education.



AAAE Treasurer Tim Warwick, Hon Jason Clare MP Minister for Education, APTA President Cheryl Brennan, APTA Vice President Karen Yager.

Federal Department of Education

I met with staff from the Federal Department of Education on 22 August, along with APTA Board members Deb Hull, Karen Yager and Phillipa Greig. We discussed Action 14 of AITSL's Guidelines for early career teachers and new school leaders (Action 14 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan), the proposed Professional Standards for Middle Leaders (Action 15 of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan), and teacher wellbeing. We received an update on the National Schools Reforms Agreement Review.

APTA will have the Term 4 meeting with the Department of Education later this year. Any issues that you would like to be considered for the Agenda, please email contactus@apta.edu.au

Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

I have had several meetings with AITSL CEO Mark Grant during Terms 2 and 3, supported by APTA Board members Jill Abell, Deb Hull and Karen Yager. We lobbied for greater inclusion of teacher association voice in educational decision making by AITSL to improve the quality of education policy. We stressed the important role of teacher associations in promoting specialist expertise across schools/sectors. I have since been appointed to AITSL's School Leadership and Expert Teacher Standing Committee. In addition, AITSL CEO, Mark Grant has accepted APTA's invitation to attend our strategic planning session on 4 November 2023. Further, AITSL General Manager, Teaching and School Leadership, Daniel Pinchas, will present an APTA webinar on 1 November 2023.

I met with AITSL staff on 8 August to discuss the Draft Middle Leader Teacher Standards. More information about this can be found [HERE](#). APTA Board members Karen Yager and Phillipa Greig were also in attendance. Middle leaders play an incredibly important role, making up a large proportion of the leadership workforce in schools. The Professional Standards for Middle Leaders will align with, and complement, the Australian Professional Standard for Principals, and the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. The national validation process is now complete and AITSL is working with the Department of Education, Queensland to progress the new standards and ready them for a Queensland trial during October and November 2023. To express interest in being involved in the trial, please contact middleleaders@aitsl.edu.au. The standards process will be completed in 2024.



Teachers who lead. Source: AITSL – <https://www.aitsl.edu.au/lead-develop/teachers-who-lead/middle-leadership-standards>

Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System

The **Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System Consultation – Department of Education, Australian Government** closed on 2 August 2023. APTA made a submission to this Review (available [HERE](#)), focusing on proposals, questions, and concepts in the paper that touch on APTA's areas of responsibility and expertise. APTA's response emphasised the crucial role that teacher knowledge, professional learning networks and resource-sharing play in achieving Australia's goals of educational excellence and equity, and the ways in which the next NSRA could better support these.

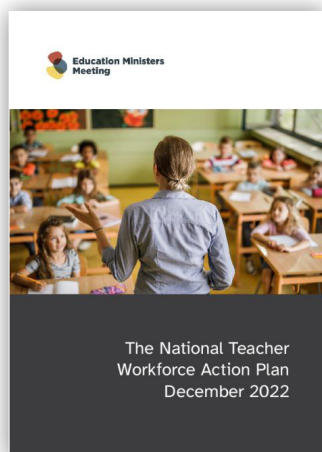
APTA noted that quality research continues to highlight the importance of teacher knowledge in the separate and distinct disciplines/subjects, yet the processes by which teachers are expected to gain and build on this knowledge are rarely defined or nurtured in major policy documents. Professional teacher associations were formed by teachers to perform exactly this role and support members to become expert teachers of their subject/discipline and are well positioned to support schools to improve in this domain.

APTA also noted that while the Grattan Institute accurately identified resource development as one of the factors contributing to teacher workload, it proposed a flawed solution. The problem with the Grattan Institute proposal lies in imagining that it is possible for governments to produce comprehensive, quality-assured curriculum and assessment materials that teachers could easily find and would value. APTA suggested that there are alternative ways of achieving similar results, through teacher associations that offer the best existing models for state-wide teacher networking and resource sharing. There are teachers' associations around Australia that offer mentoring programs, professional learning conferences and events, and online teacher networks. One of the primary reasons that teacher associations exist is to save teachers' time while improving their practice. Teachers' associations have been refining and evaluating these services for decades.

The federal minister, Jason Clare, announced the establishment of an expert panel to advise Education Ministers on key targets and specific reforms that should be tied to funding in the next National School Reform Agreement. The expert panel is chaired by Dr Lisa O'Brien, AM and will deliver its report to Education Ministers by 31 October 2023. The recommendations of the Expert Panel will inform the negotiations next year between the Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments.

APTA noted that there are no teacher associations or associated peak bodies represented on the Ministerial Reference Group or the Expert Panel. This omission has the unintended consequence of disempowering the teaching profession and producing sub-optimal educational policy.

National Teacher Workforce Action Plan

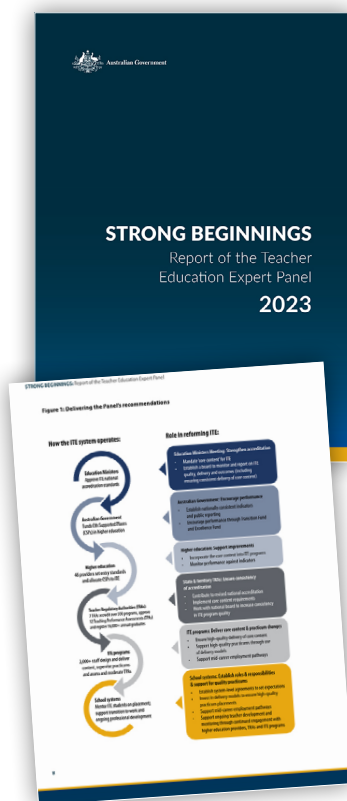


On 15 December 2022, Education Ministers agreed on a National Teacher Workforce Action Plan which sets out a clear pathway to addressing the national issue of teacher workforce shortages. The Action Plan includes five priority areas:

1. Improving teacher supply
2. Strengthening initial teacher education
3. Keeping the teachers we have
4. Elevating the profession
5. Better understanding of future teacher workforce needs.

Details of the Action Plan can be found [HERE](#), including APTA's submission which focused largely on maximising the time to teach as well as better career pathways to retain teachers in the profession. APTA advocated for the role of professional teacher associations on issues regarding out-of-field teaching, providing professional development, mentoring those new to teaching and resourcing teachers. APTA recommended that policy makers consult with professional teacher associations when developing policies and strategies relating to the teaching workforce and consider the role professional teacher associations can play in giving a practitioner perspective that is directly connected to classroom practice. The federal government is committing significant funds into implementing this plan, so it needs to remain a priority for APTA.

Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Expert Panel



The final report was released on 6 July 2023 and can be accessed [HERE](#). The report contains four chapters aligned to the key areas of reform within the Panel's remit. Each chapter provides an outline of the context, key findings and recommendations for reform, informed by stakeholder feedback received on the Panel's Discussion Paper.

- **Chapter 1** focuses on **strengthening ITE programs** to deliver confident, effective beginning teachers (aligned to QITE Review Recommendation 7) and provides Recommendations 1–3.
- **Chapter 2** focuses on strengthening the link between **performance and funding of ITE programs** (aligned to QITE Review Recommendation 15) and provides Recommendations 4–7.
- **Chapter 3** focuses on improving the **quality of practical experience** in teaching and provides Recommendations 8–11.
- **Chapter 4** focuses on improving postgraduate ITE programs for **mid-career entrants** and provides Recommendations 12–14.

Of particular interest to our Joint Councils and teacher associations' members is the new direction for ITE providers – a strong focus on explicit instruction. This will flow through to PD courses provided by teacher associations. See Appendix D (pages 103–111) of the report for more details.

Senate Inquiry into the issue of increasing disruption in Australian School Classrooms

APTA made a submission to the Inquiry which can be found [HERE](#). The committee will report on its findings on 16 November 2023. APTA Vice President Karen Yager represented APTA at a public hearing (face-to-face) in Sydney on Friday 4 August.

Senate Inquiry into National Trend of School Refusal and Related Matters

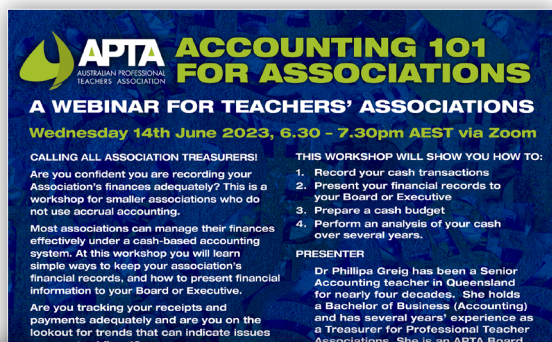
APTA made a submission to the Inquiry which can be found [HERE](#). The Committee released a report on its findings in August 2023, which can be accessed [HERE](#).

House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training Inquiry into the use of generative artificial intelligence in the Australian Education system

Public submissions to this Inquiry closed on 14 July 2023, and APTA's submission can be accessed [HERE](#). Thanks to APTA Board member Jill Abell for taking the lead on developing APTA's submission, drawing on comments from Joint Councils and member associations. Public hearings are ongoing and the Government Response to the Inquiry is not yet available.

APTA's recommendations included:

- Clear differentiation to be accepted or evident between the learning areas and subjects, rather than generic 'rules' for generative AI use or the limitation of AI in schools. Transdisciplinary inquiry and subject disciplines are demonstrating different approaches to the generative language models (LLMs), such as first steps in an effective discipline-specific research strategy.
- Public support, trust and confidence must be built, and a vision communicated for the safe and effective use of generative AI software and tools in professional teaching standards, in early learning centres, schools and teacher education institutions. A human-centric vision within the anticipated draft AI framework must include the principles of inclusion, equity, access, quality, safety, and security.
- The use of generative AI tools for learning, differentiation and assessment in automated systems and augmented intelligence systems should be introduced as a key element of Initial Teacher Education.

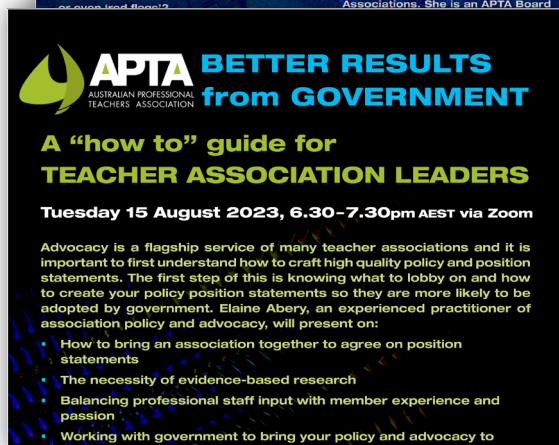


APTA webinars

On 14 June, APTA Treasurer Phillipa Greig presented a webinar on "Accounting 101 for Associations" via Zoom. This provided detailed information on how to effectively manage finances for smaller associations and was well received. Thanks to Phillipa for running this webinar.

On 15 August, Elaine Abery from *Unravelling Red Tape* delivered the APTA webinar on *Better Results from Government – a "how-to" guide for teacher association leaders*. This helped teacher association leaders to understand specific strategies to achieve greater success in influencing education policy.

On 1 November 6.30 – 7.30pm AEDT, Daniel Pinchas, General Manager, Teaching and School Leadership at AITSL, will present on AITSL's work across initial teacher education reform, quality teaching support, school leadership development for professional teaching standards, and HALT – national consistency. Registration details for this webinar will be out at the start of Term 4.



Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative

You are encouraged to include the following information in your communications with your teacher association members:

Informing the future of the teaching profession!



The **Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative** provides a comprehensive picture of the teaching workforce nationally, across all states, territories and sectors, from initial teacher education through all stages of the teaching career, so we can understand how to build a sustainable teaching profession for the future.

Although part of the same profession, every teacher has a unique experience. To truly understand the rewards and challenges of the modern teaching career, we need all teachers to share their experiences annually.

The annual **ATWD Teacher Survey** is the voice of teachers. Join the growing 'Teacher Voice' and share your experiences to help us learn more about how to better support you and your teaching profession.

What's in the ATWD Teacher Survey?

You will be able to share your experiences on:

- The hours you spend on teaching and non-teaching activities.
- Your well-being and career intentions.
- Whether your qualifications and expertise are being fully utilised.
- The types of support early career teachers need for a fulfilling career.
- The career pathways of teachers.

Every teacher's story is unique. Every teacher's story matters.

The ATWD Teacher Survey is the largest survey in Australian education and is providing the evidence we need to build a sustainable teaching profession. It takes only 10-15 minutes to complete and is for all registered teachers and leaders across schools and early childhood services Australia.

The ATWD Teacher Survey will be emailed to all registered teachers between August and October 2023. Look out for an invitation from your teacher regulatory authority.



Summary, Comments and Follow Up

In summary, Joint Councils are encouraged to contribute their comments, suggestions and to follow up on the following items mentioned in this APTA News in Brief to contactus@apta.edu.au:

- ATWD Teacher Survey to be emailed to all registered teachers between August and October 2023. Look out for an invitation and encourage teachers in your member associations to participate.
- Term 4 meeting with Department of Education – issues for the agenda
- Registration details for an APTA webinar on **1 November 6.30–7.30pm** AEDT will be out at the start of Term 4. Presenter: Daniel Pinchas, General Manager, Teaching and School Leadership at AITSL. Topic: AITSL's work across initial teacher education reform, quality teaching support, school leadership development for professional teaching standards, and HALT – national consistency.
- Comments about the strategic direction of APTA for the November 4–5 strategic planning meeting and considerations, or issues for discussion at the APTA AGM.
- Joint Councils to note The Strong Beginnings: Report of the Teacher Expert Panel's recommendation for a strong focus on explicit instruction. This will flow through to professional development provided by teacher associations. [See Appendix D \(pages 103 – 111\)](#).
- APTA Board members communicate details about reviews and initiatives to Joint Councils and their member associations to receive feedback. It is important that APTA submissions on proposed education policy have the input of teacher associations. APTA welcomes comments about current initiatives and inquiries. Contact the APTA Board member representing your State or Territory.

Cheryl Brennan, President, APTA

WHAT WE DO



Common Voice

We speak up to raise the profile of the teaching profession.



Networking

We build networks for collaborative activities, projects and research.



Policy Contribution

We are proactive in the development, implementation and review of policy.



Advocacy

We advocate in matters of significance to the teaching profession.



Collaboration

We liaise, collaborate and network with relevant national and international organisations.



Support

Our shared experiences allow us to support our members to achieve their goals.