



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND COMMUNITY INCLUSION
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Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into the ACT Auditor General's report No 6
of 2021: Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools

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AEU Submission – Teaching Quality Inquiry

The Australian Education Union – ACT Branch (AEU) is the union representing teachers and school assistants in ACT Public Schools and teachers at the Canberra Institute of Technology. We have approximately 4000 school teacher members. The AEU is also the professional voice for teachers and school leaders. We advocate on behalf of the teaching profession to ensure that high standards of professional ethics and teaching quality are observed. We are pleased to have the opportunity to provide this submission in relation to the *Report into Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools* (audit report).

What constitutes quality teaching is a question for broader professional debate. As expert practitioners, teachers should be enabled to determine what constitutes quality teaching for themselves. However, at its most basic level, quality teaching requires maximising the time spent by every student on-task and working towards a clear learning outcome.

To ensure that their students are on-task and learning, teachers need the time, space and resources to do their job. The audit report identifies some of the areas where these key, material conditions are lacking. However, there are other factors impacting on teaching quality. The most critical of these is the teacher shortage, which has been acknowledged by the ACT Government and which must be urgently addressed.

Most critically, the audit report does not identify the impact of social welfare provision and inclusion support on time spent on-task. It is the responsibility of governments, not schools, to feed, clothe and house students and their families. Schools are not treatment facilities for health conditions. However, the lack of adequate provision of these services by governments at all levels fundamentally undermines the ability of public school staff to focus on education. We cannot deliver a quality education to students until we meet their basic needs and those of their families.

Based on the findings of the audit report and other available data, the AEU recommends that the ACT Government take steps to ensure that the time students spend on-task is maximised by:

Ensuring that teachers have access to their workplace entitlements, through:

Recommendation 1: Establish an annual audit of compliance with the Enterprise Agreement

Recommendation 2: Establish clear limits on teachers' workloads outside the classroom

Taking steps to raise the status of the teaching profession, through:

Recommendation 3: Address teacher pay to raise the status of the profession

Addressing the in-school factors that take teachers away from teaching, through:

Recommendation 4: Increased social welfare provision to improve learning outcomes

Recommendation 5: Provide adequate resourcing for work safety measures

Recommendation 6: Improve work safety monitoring systems

Recommendation 7: Provide programs that allow students to access treatment and support outside of school settings

Ensuring that there are sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications for their teaching area, through:

Recommendation 8: Ensure staff are supported to fill areas of demand



Ensuring that teachers have access to their workplace entitlements

Teachers' working conditions are students' learning conditions

The audit report does not tell us much about teaching quality. Most of the report is focused on management-level activities, rather than classroom teaching. Of the recommendations, only four identify activities targeted at classroom teaching staff:

- Recommendation 7 – Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers proposes that the Directorate should clearly identify and articulate its expectations for the role and responsibilities of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers in ACT public schools. This aligns with section N6.6 of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* (the Agreement), which provides that:

Teachers who achieve certification at the higher career stages of the Standards will be encouraged to take up leadership roles in modelling exemplary teaching practice and in building capacity for excellent teaching within schools and across the system.

- Recommendation 8 – Annual Professional Learning Programs proposes that the Education Directorate should develop a practice for the Education Support Office to oversee the completion of each school's annual professional learning program and the development of a school's annual professional learning program as part of the school improvement process. The program should identify the development needs of teaching staff in connection with school improvement goals, and the expected impacts on student outcomes. Again, this is simply a recommendation that the Education Directorate properly implement the conditions it has committed to in the Agreement, most notably section N7.9 which requires that:

The school's annual professional learning program should... be a coherent program, consistent with the system or school development plan and/or an individual's performance and development plan.

- Recommendation 9 – Professional Learning Communities proposes that steps be taken to increase understanding and consistency in the quality and impact of professional learning communities for the purpose of improving the quality of teaching practices in all ACT public schools. However, professional learning communities are a solution that was initially proposed by the AEU in enterprise bargaining as a demand of the profession on the employer. They are contained in section N8 of the Agreement, which begins by noting that:

Research indicates that regular, structured, collaborative professional learning programs in schools, known as 'professional learning communities', have a direct impact on continuous improvement of teaching and learning in the classroom.

- Recommendation 11 – New Educator Support Program relates simply to ensuring that the new educators are the beneficiaries of a series of entitlements that the AEU has won through enterprise bargaining. Those entitlements are intended to support the professional development of new teachers and are contained in section N5 of the Agreement.

What the audit report identifies is that the failure by the employer to properly implement these conditions is negatively impacting teachers' ability to deliver quality teaching. Public school teachers engage in enterprise bargaining with their working conditions as a secondary consideration to making sure that their students get a fair go. The entitlements in the Agreement arose from claims made by AEU members aiming to improve student learning conditions and to raise the status of the teaching profession. The first step that we can take to improve teaching quality is to ensure that teachers are getting the conditions and entitlements that their employer has agreed to.



Resourcing is central to quality teaching

Further, some of the most valuable observations of the audit relate to parts of the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* (the Agreement) that are not resourced or sufficiently implemented in practice. This includes:

- Failure to provide targeted and useful professional learning;
- Inconsistent implementation of professional learning communities;
- Failure to account for the productive use of supports to early-career teachers;
- A lack of performance and development planning;
- A lack of strategic workforce planning which contributes to the concentration of less experienced teachers in particular schools;
- A lack of engagement with performance improvement processes that are intended to assist and recover underperforming staff.

Had the audit report looked further into employment conditions, it is likely that other deficiencies would have been identified. The AEU's survey into staff shortages,¹ conducted in 2021, found that:

- More than half of the principals surveyed are unable to fill ongoing or temporary positions at their school;
- 97% of school staff said that students are disadvantaged and their learning outcomes compromised by split or modified classes;
- Almost all teachers report working unpaid overtime every week, and more than 40% of teachers report working an average of two days of unpaid overtime every week;
- 70% of principals rate their workload as very or extremely difficult, and more than one third of principals regularly work between 10-15 hours unpaid overtime every week and a further third report working more than 20 hours unpaid overtime every week;
- More than half of the classroom teachers surveyed would not recommend teaching as a career to family members or friends;
- 85% of respondents said they did not think that the Education Directorate was sufficiently resourced to meet the demands put upon schools.

These findings are consistent with findings of the audit report, such as findings that:

"School leaders and New Educators reflected that accessing the provision (for New Educator entitlements) in full was impractical due to staffing pressures including the difficulty in obtaining relief teaching staff." (p15)

Schools need to receive adequate resourcing to be effective at their job. Whenever an absent teacher is not replaced and a class split to other classrooms, we greatly diminish the quality of the education those young people receive. We also expose them to a higher risk of violence in their classrooms. Our students deserve better.

We know that teacher working conditions are student learning conditions, and the full implementation of existing Agreement provisions will significantly improve these.

Recommendation: Establish an annual audit of compliance with the Enterprise Agreement

If teachers do not have access to their workplace entitlements, they cannot provide quality teaching to their students. It is incumbent on the ACT government to ensure that schools have sufficient resources to provide teachers with those entitlements. This can only be achieved if the government is aware of the ways that it is currently falling short. To this end, we suggest that the ACT government establish a regular audit of its compliance

¹ AEU ACT Branch, *Under-staffed, under-resourced, under-appreciated: The teacher shortage and its impact on our schools. Findings from the AEU ACT Branch 2021 Educator Survey*, https://www.aeuact.org.au/application/files/4216/3003/1401/AEU_Report_FINAL_26AUG2021.pdf



with the Agreement, including whether it has provided sufficient resourcing to schools for the entitlements in the Agreement.

Recommendation: Establish clear limits on teachers' workloads outside the classroom

Finally, the ACT government should end the confusion of teacher workloads by clarifying that teachers, including school leaders, are not expected to work more than a total of 36.75 hours per week during term time. This is consistent with the approaches of other jurisdictions, including:

- Victoria, where teachers receive time in lieu for tasks completed outside of the regular working week; and
- Queensland, where teachers are rostered for a maximum of 25 hours a week (including time on-class), allowing them to exercise professional judgement about how they spend their remaining time.

Until teachers' time outside of the classroom is treated as a finite resource, we will continue to see the proliferation of compliance and excessive administrative tasks that take time away from quality teaching.

Taking steps to raise the status of the teaching profession

As the AEU has noted repeatedly over the last 18 months, the ACT does not have any identified problem with teaching quality. There has been no real attempt to establish a baseline measure of quality teaching, nor is there any clear definition for schools of what it means. While other jurisdictions have identified high-impact interventions, the ACT prefers to leave schools to determine the approach that will work best for their community. This is an approach that the AEU supports: teachers are the experts in what is good practice in their profession and should be allowed professional autonomy.

The ACT does, however, have an identified problem with teacher availability. That is, like all other Australian jurisdictions, we do not have sufficient teaching staff and the problem is projected to worsen.² This shortage of teaching staff, though not identified by the audit report, is the greatest risk to quality teaching faced by the ACT.

While there is already a wealth of information available about addressing teacher shortages, the most recent is the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review (QITER)³ commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, Skills and Employment. The review expressed serious concern about teacher workloads, salaries and career progression, and indicated that these problems are reducing the attractiveness of teaching as a career overall. It noted that these issues are significant deterrents for young high achievers and mid-career professionals:

"Concerns with teacher salaries and workload are held by a majority of stakeholders. The Expert Panel recognises that these matters are predominantly workforce related and not specifically part of ITE, however, the potential effect of these broader issues on attracting high quality entrants to the profession should not be ignored." p4

The QITER found that higher salaries are the single most significant factor that would attract more people to teaching. The review surveyed 501 young high achievers and 1,432 mid-career professionals. The bar graphs on pages 15 and 17 of the QITER show that lifting pay levels to \$130,000 is the most impactful change that would increase the probability of young high achievers and mid-career professionals choosing to become a teacher. Currently, this would require a raise of approximately \$16,000 at the top of the classroom teacher salary scale.

Increasing the starting teacher salary to \$90,000 is the second most significant change that would increase the number of mid-career professionals and young high achievers choosing teaching. This is reflected in anecdotal evidence provided to the AEU regarding early-career teachers choosing to start in the private school sector due to

² See, for example: Rorris, A (2021) *Impact of Enrolment Growth on Demand for Teachers*, at <https://www.nswtf.org.au/files/rorris-report.pdf>

³ Department of Education, Skills and Employment, (2022) *Next Steps – Report of the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review*, at <https://www.dese.gov.au/quality-initial-teacher-education-review/resources/next-steps-report-quality-initial-teacher-education-review>



accelerated pay advancement early in their careers. A graduate teacher in Catholic education may earn as much as \$40,000 more over the first five years of their career compared with their public school counterparts.

Recommendation: Address teacher pay to raise the status of the profession

The evidence is clear that a substantial improvement in teacher pay and a reduction in workloads is required to attract and retain staff. Ensuring that we attract and retain sufficient teaching staff addresses the number one threat to teacher quality in the ACT.

The ACT Government should base teacher remuneration on the evidence base of extensive research that shows that significant improvements in teacher pay are required. Whether this is achieved by following the dollar-figure formula suggested by the QITER, or through percentage pay rises as identified by the report of the Gallop Inquiry,⁴ it is clear that teacher pay must rise substantially over the short term.

Addressing the in-school factors that take teachers away from teaching

The audit report begins with a facile and misleading statement, taken from a decade-old Grattan Institute report,⁵ that:

“The impact teaching practices have on a student’s learning outcomes outweighs the effect of every other factor outside the student’s socio-economic and family background.”

The claim in the Grattan Institute report is drawn from an even older OECD report from 2009 on the Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS).⁶ The same claim, in largely the same form, has become pervasive in education discourse, much to the detriment of a full and honest discussion about the factors that affect learning.

The statement is deliberately structured to obscure the importance of non-teaching factors affecting learning outcomes. A less misleading version of the same statement might say:

“The impacts of a student’s socio-economic status and family background are the most significant factor in learning outcomes, followed by the impact of teaching practices.”

The message intended from the opening statement of the audit report is that the educational outcomes for young people could be improved if only teachers were better at their jobs. It is intended to divert us from a focus on the other factors impacting educational achievement, which are no less important than teaching practices. As one researcher notes:

“State and Commonwealth education ministers have tended to focus quite selectively on research findings that speak to the positive outcomes associated with quality teaching, while neglecting the complexity of this field of research and the role that other factors (such as peer influences, parental involvement, or socio-geographical factors) may play.”⁷

That the two most important predictors of outcome are socio-economic factors and family background demonstrates an absolute failure of Australian governments to create a society that is fair and equitable. Worse, governments compound this inequity through the continued provision of excessive public funding to private schools,

⁴ See, NSWTF, (2021), *Valuing the teaching profession: an independent inquiry*, at <https://www.nswtf.org.au/inquiry>

⁵ Jensen, B. (2010). *Investing in our teachers, investing in our economy*. Melbourne: Grattan Institute. Page 10. Interestingly, this is one of three citations in the same paragraph, none of which is from a source created in the last decade. Two (the Grattan report and a conference paper from Dylan William) are not to research on teacher quality, but to reports and conference papers that refer to other sources.

⁶ OECD (2009a). *Creating Effective Teaching and Learning Environments: First Results from TALIS*. Paris, France

⁷ Vickers M. (2015) *Neglecting the Evidence: Are We Expecting Too Much from Quality Teaching?*. In: Proctor H., Brownlee P., Freebody P. (eds) *Controversies in Education. Policy Implications of Research in Education*, vol 3. Springer, Cham.



nearly all of whom receive public funding greater than their entitlement according to the Schooling Resource Standard (SRS), while under-funding public schools by as much as 20%.⁸

In real terms, this means that 1 in 5 students in some Australian public schools are receiving no government funding at all. This is a national disgrace.

The ACT is more equitable than the rest of the nation, but only marginally. By 2023, ACT public schools are projected to receive 100% of their public funding entitlement. ACT private schools, however, will receive 106% of their entitlement. This is equivalent to receiving funding for an entire additional 1.5 students for every class of 25 in a private school.

Governments cannot reasonably claim to be seeking to address teaching quality when they do not fund schools based on their need. Likewise, they cannot reasonably claim to care about schooling outcomes for students if they do not seek to address the most significant factors affecting student achievement.

Socio-economic factors

The most significant factor affecting student learning outcomes is their socioeconomic status. Despite the transformative power of public education, the evidence is clear that education alone is insufficient to address structural economic inequality. It must be supported through proper provision of social welfare and public services.

The ACT Government knows this. The Education Directorate's own ten year strategy, *The Future of Education*, clearly acknowledges this fact. It says:

"A holistic view of students as people recognises that basic welfare and wellbeing needs, things like nutritious food and physical and mental health support, provide the basis on which learning can occur. Meeting these needs allows the full opportunity of education to be made available."⁹

The ACT is, however, far away from meeting these minimum needs for every student. According to the ACT Council of Social Services:

- Almost 40,000 Canberrans live in households that are among Australia's most disadvantaged;
- Since COVID-19, the number of people living in poverty has increased from just under 30,000 people to just over 38,000 people;
- Over 25,000 people in low-income households are experiencing food stress;
- Almost 23,000 people are living on JobSeeker, Youth Allowance, or other working-age allowances eligible for the Coronavirus Supplement;
- Almost 9,500 low-income rental households are in rental stress; and
- Almost 8,000 children (12%) live in low-income households in the ACT.¹⁰

These factors all have an impact on how much time a student can spend on-task and working towards an identified learning outcome. We can easily assume that a student who is hungry will struggle to focus on their schoolwork. A parent who is working extra shifts to pay the rent may not have time to help their kids with their homework. A child who doesn't have access to a computer or internet at home will struggle to complete research for school assignments.

⁸ Rorris, A (2020), *The Schooling Resource Standard in Australia*, https://puttingourkidsfirst.com.au/application/files/1216/2277/6954/Amended_Rorris_report_-_combined_doc_-_The_Schooling_Resource_Standard_in_Australia_2.pdf

⁹ ACT Government Education Directorate (2018), *The Future of Education: An ACT education strategy for the next ten years*, <https://www.education.act.gov.au/the-future-of-education/home/resources?a=1231080>

¹⁰ ACT Council of Social Services (2020), *Poverty and COVID-19 in the ACT*, <https://www.actcoss.org.au/sites/default/files/public/publications/2020-factsheet-poverty-and-inequality-in-the-act.pdf>



The impact of economic inequality has long been obvious to teachers in ACT public schools. In 2021 the AEU office was called on multiple occasions to assist with situations where individual students were disengaged from learning and their behaviours were causing a risk to staff health and safety because their families were struggling to make ends meet. The precipitating factors were not educational, but socio-economic. These included:

- Shift worker parents with multiple jobs who were too exhausted to engage with their school;
- Single mothers escaping family violence barely seeing their young children for weeks because they had to work the night shift;
- Parents unable to attend restorative conferences or parent/teacher interviews because missing a shift would mean losing their casual job;
- Students who had become homeless and were sleeping rough, in cars or on friends' couches;
- Students and parents who were in crisis but unable to access mental health crisis support.

In one particularly heartbreaking case, a school reported that a parent was unable to attend school during their child's medical emergency because they were so fatigued from night shifts that it was not safe for them to drive. Instead, an ambulance had to be called.

Further, school leaders have consistently expressed frustration at the thresholds set by support services before they will become involved. In particular, one school reported being advised by Child and Youth Protection Services that they would not become involved in a serious and escalating mental health crisis because the student involved was not suicidal and that they expected the school to provide mental health crisis support.

The impact on teaching quality from these circumstances is significant. Staff at all levels in the school were required to devote significant additional time and resources to meet the needs of their students and their families. Often, all that would have been required to avoid these circumstances is secure work and access to paid leave so that parents had time off work to focus on their family.

Instead, schools are called on to devote additional time and resources to attempting to find ways to provide support to the student's family that are well outside of any educational role. With limited time and resources, schools are forced to choose between ensuring wellbeing and the work required to implement the best quality teaching. Additionally, there are considerable health impacts for educators doing mental health crisis work with no training or support. These educators often sustain serious psychological injury as a result of this unsafe work, compounding the issues of staffing shortages.

[Recommendation: Increased social welfare provision to improve learning outcomes](#)

As noted above, improving school resourcing and teacher salaries will lead to better educational outcomes, but only if combined with other interventions. In the short term, the ACT Government should greatly increase the support to schools from social workers and allied health professionals including school psychologists.

In the long term, the ACT should review its provision of social welfare services with a view to removing the burden on schools to undertake tasks including:

- Finding housing for students and their families;
- Providing legal assistance;
- Advising on the availability of welfare payments and assisting students and their families to apply;
- Providing mental health crisis support;
- Providing financial support to parents; and
- Feeding and clothing students.

Further, the ACT government should pursue strategies to improve wealth and income equality across the Territory. These strategies should include measures to support workers with job security and access to paid leave.



Finally, the ACT Government should review the provision for mental health services to young children to ensure that services are available and accessible, including to children of primary school age.

Teacher safety

Teachers cannot focus on teaching unless their workplaces are safe and orderly. However, the data shows that work safety and workplace injuries remain a concern in ACT public schools.

Occupational violence rates remain unacceptably high,¹¹ despite a nation-leading program to reduce workplace violence in schools. This flows over into an unacceptably high level of workplace injuries in the ACT Education Directorate, which has the highest number of workers' compensation claims and is consistently the government's worst performer on return-to-work indicators.¹²

Despite clear communication of expectations from senior leadership, it remains the case that AEU members report being discouraged from reporting workplace safety incidents. This includes:

- Teachers being told by their managers not to report incidents;
- Principals being:
 - told by their Director, School Improvement (DSI) to reduce reporting of occupational violence incidents;
 - advised by their DSI that high levels of reporting reflect badly on the school and its leadership;
 - refused funding for measures identified in Occupational Violence Risk Assessments as being required for safety reasons;
 - asked to explain high levels of work safety related expenditure, rather than provided with support to address the root causes of work safety issues.

Additionally, we are aware of incidents where poor planning or a weak policy environment have led directly to unacceptable work safety outcomes and workplace injuries. This includes failure to have in place policies and procedures for confiscating and disposing of weapons, the failure to provide appropriate spaces for the inclusion support needs of students and the failure to complete capital works in a timely manner leading to overcrowding.

In addition to the direct impacts of workplace violence, teachers are required to spend significant time reporting and recording incidents on both work safety and student management platforms. When staff do not complete these reports, they are sometimes denied additional support by their school or the Education Support Office on the grounds that there is insufficient evidence of the student's behaviour. Staff in specialist schools, in particular, consistently advise the AEU that they simply do not have enough time to log all of the work safety incidents that occur during a regular school day.

The AEU is also aware of the persistence of some unsafe work practices in some areas. These include:

- Requiring staff to continue engagement with abusive and hostile parents, including requirements to call a student's parents to advise them of the student's behaviour during the day. This often leads to aggressive responses from parents, including blaming the teacher for their child's behaviour or denying that it occurred. These experiences are often traumatic for the teacher and lead to significant additional workload.
- Returning students to class shortly after an incident where they have physically assaulted a staff member without first consulting the staff members involved about their willingness to have the student returned to their classes.

Occupational violence is also impacted by the splitting or sharing of classes. According to the AEU's Teacher Shortage survey:

¹¹ According to Education Directorate Work Safety Pulse Reports provided to the AEU on a confidential basis

¹² According to information available from Work Safety Pulse Reports, provided to the AEU on a confidential basis



When “asked whether educators surveyed have experienced violence in their workplaces as a direct consequence of a split or cancelled class... one in five of those asked – 278 people – had experienced violence for this reason”.¹³

Recommendation: Provide adequate resourcing for work safety measures

The ACT Government should act to ensure that measures identified in work safety risk assessments are properly resourced, including through the provision of additional funding to schools where an occupational violence risk assessment identifies additional need.

Further, measures should be taken to reduce the incidence of violence, including urgently upgrading capacity through the provision of appropriate school infrastructure and ensuring that class size limits are observed and classes are not “split” or “shared”.

Recommendation: Improve work safety monitoring systems

A more streamlined system of work safety incident reporting should be implemented that integrates work safety and student management functions. Additionally, a guiding principle should be established that school staff are trusted when they describe their experiences of workplace violence.

Recommendation: Provide programs that allow students to access treatment and support outside of school settings

In addition to maintaining a clear process to suspend students (including those with a disability) for behaviour that threatens safety, additional non-suspension measures should be made available. This should include the exploration, in consultation with relevant stakeholders, of a system of modified attendance at school where a student is participating in treatment or other programs that are expected to improve the student’s ability to engage positively with school.

Ensuring that there are sufficient teachers with appropriate qualifications for their teaching area

As noted above, the greatest threat to teacher quality is the worsening teacher shortage. Where those shortages are most felt are in hard-to-staff positions, particularly specialist settings.

The ACT allows teacher registration on the basis that all practitioners are generalists. However, specialist skills are needed to complete particular teaching roles. These include:

- Working with students in special education settings;
- Teaching specialist subjects, such as a language other than English;
- Teaching subjects at senior secondary level.

Unfortunately, many staff report being asked to teach in areas where they do not have the requisite skills or knowledge, due to staffing shortages. This places additional workload pressure on those staff as they learn new pedagogies and content, while placing students at a disadvantage because their teacher is not experienced in the subject matter that they are teaching.

Further, and especially in special schools and other special education settings, inexperienced and underqualified staff do not implement safe work methods and often put themselves and others at risk due to their lack of training and inexperience. It is in these settings that it is most important that staff receive additional support.

Recommendation: Ensure staff are supported to fill areas of demand

The joint AEU/Education Directorate Teacher Shortage Taskforce has identified that workforce profiling should be completed to provide a clear picture of which staff work in which schools and what their specialisations are. This

¹³ AEU ACT Branch, *Under-staffed, under-resourced, under-appreciated: The teacher shortage and its impact on our schools. Findings from the AEU ACT Branch 2021 Educator Survey*, https://www.aeuact.org.au/application/files/4216/3003/1401/AEU_Report_FINAL_26AUG2021.pdf



work should be completed as soon as practicable to ensure that recruitment and retention efforts can be targeted to areas of demand.

Once areas of demand are identified through a mature process of workforce profiling, the Education Directorate should implement a program of targeted training and scholarships, including the provision of paid time away from the classroom, to build workforce capacity in these areas of demand.

The training programs and professional learning should be centrally funded to ensure that there is not a disproportionate impact on individual schools. These programs should be prioritized for access by teachers who are already teaching outside their area of specialisation.

Conclusion

This Inquiry provides an opportunity for the ACT Government to consider and address the myriad factors that impact teaching quality. The AEU has argued that the shortage of teachers is the most critical risk to quality teaching in the ACT. Proper workforce profiling, planning and execution that enables teacher supply to be appropriately targeted will go some way to mitigating this risk. Improved salaries and meeting conditions *already agreed to* will attract more people to the profession.

To meaningfully change outcomes in the classroom, the Government must invest in a range of measures outside the scope of teaching. It cannot leave critical social services provision to teachers. Inequality is the driving force behind low student outcomes, and the ACT Government has an opportunity to commit to meaningful and sustained action on this front. Valuing teaching quality in ACT public schools means valuing the human lives of every child in every classroom.