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**THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY**

TENTH ASSEMBLY

Report No.5 of the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion

Inquiry into the ACT Auditor-General's Report No.6 of 2021:

Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools

Government Response

**Presented by
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Introduction

The ACT Government welcomes the Standing Committee on Education and Community Inclusion (the Committee) *Inquiry into the ACT Auditor-General's Report No. 6 of 2021: Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, released on August 4, 2022.

The ACT Government is committed to high quality educational services to empower each child and young person in the ACT to be a learner for life. The Auditor-General's *Report on Teaching Quality in the ACT* acknowledged the significant continuous improvement that the Education Directorate has undertaken, the ongoing development of a comprehensive school improvement process, and recognised that teaching quality is a 'defining factor in the success of each child or young person's education'.¹

The Government recognises the importance of quality teaching and that this is a key predictor of positive student outcomes. The systems that support quality teaching in ACT public schools will continue to mature and to have a clear focus on teachers who will have in-depth educational knowledge and skills to support individual student achievement, rather than 'one size fits all' education.

As part of the *Inquiry into the Auditor-General's Report No.6 of 2021: Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, the Standing Committee received five written submissions, and spoke with 11 witnesses over three public hearings. The Government would like to thank the Standing Committee and everyone who took the time to participate in and contribute to the Inquiry. The Committee made 19 recommendations in their report.

In our response, the Government has:

- **agreed** to seven recommendations;
- **agreed in principle** to four recommendations; and advised
- **existing government policy** to eight recommendations.

The Inquiry has provided an opportunity to hear community views on teaching quality in ACT public schools, with public submissions being made through the Inquiry.

The Government recognises that key themes have emerged from the Committee report and recommendations, and from the Auditor-General's report and these have been considered in the responses to the recommendations. Themes raised during the Inquiry included the following:

- planning, monitoring and evaluating system-level strategies and initiatives;
- school improvement activities;
- professional learning; and
- workforce management.

¹ ACT Audit Office, *Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools*, Auditor-General's Report No.6 of 2021, p 23.

Government Responses to Standing Committee's Recommendations

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government include a definition of 'teaching quality' in relevant strategic planning documents, and clearly articulate responsibilities for measure to lift teaching quality in ACT public schools.

Existing government policy

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership *Professional Standards for Teachers* (Professional Standards) sets out the national framework for what constitutes teacher quality.

The Professional Standards provide a common understanding of, and language for, the work of teachers and describe professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement.

The Professional Standards underpin ACT professional registration and certification decisions at four different career stages - Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead. They reflect a continuum of teachers developing professional expertise.

Further, the Education Directorate has aligned the Professional Standards in the Teacher Performance and Development Framework embedded in the *ACT Public Sector Education Directorate (Teaching Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2018-2022* (Agreement).

Teachers are required to demonstrate these standards in their annual professional planning discussions. These discussions ensure that teacher professional development reflects strategic planning at their school.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the Education Directorate clearly articulate in its response to a System School Review Report (Review Report) how it has implemented the recommendations set out in the Review Reports for previous years.

Agreed

The Education Directorate will include in future responses to System School Review Reports (Review Report) how it has implemented recommendations that have been set out in Review Reports from previous years.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest in strategies to support greater engagement between parents and educators.

Existing government policy

Through the *Future of Education* Strategy, the ACT Government recognises that teachers and school leaders must work in partnership with families, support staff, and other professionals to ensure strong supports in and around schools.

The Education Directorate continues to work with schools and community groups to ensure parents and carers are active participants in school life and are involved in the learning of their children through engagement with key partners, including the ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Association and Schools Volunteer Program ACT.

ACT teachers engage with families by upholding the professional standards of the *Early Years Learning Framework* (Principle 2 - Partnerships), the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL)

Professional Standards for Principals (Professional Practice 5 - Engaging and working with the community) and the AITSL Professional Standards for Teachers (7.3 Engage with the parents/carers).

The Directorate continues to curate online resources, support school transition programs and delivers eSafety webinars specifically for families.

The ACT Government invests in parent engagement in both public and non-government schools. The ACT Government's Supporting Parent Engagement Grant Scheme strengthens parent engagement in ACT public schools. To date, 52 public schools and Parents and Citizens Associations have received a total of \$776,506 to enhance parent engagement and business acumen in ACT public schools.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the government invested \$560,000 for enhanced parental engagement within ACT non-government school communities. Grants are provided to enhance family-school partnerships through the development of effective parent strategies, resources, governance, and capability to run work health and safety compliance programs.

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all teachers in ACT public schools are provided with appropriate facilities to access time away from classroom teaching responsibilities.

Existing government policy

The ACT Government is committed to ensuring that appropriate, comfortable, and secure amenities are provided to public school staff at all ACT public schools.

As part of the Public Schools Infrastructure Renewal Program, the Education Directorate works closely with school principals, teachers, and other staff in school communities to ensure facilities and amenities are upgraded when required as part of each school's specific requirements.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure all teachers and learning support assistants have access to appropriate information technology (IT) equipment.

Agreed

In the 2022-23 Budget, the government invested \$6.8 million over four years to provide laptop devices to all teachers, casual staff relief teachers, learning support assistants and administration staff based in ACT public schools.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government incentivise high-performing teachers to pursue Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher certification.

Existing government policy

The reward and recognition process for teachers who achieve certification at the national *Australian Standards of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher* (HALT) career stages was established in 2015. The Agreement recognises and financially rewards certified teachers with an additional salary increment, or equivalent allowance, for one year.

On 22 March 2022, the Teacher Quality Institute Board approved the adoption of the HALT Certification 2.0 Modular Model as the approach for teachers to apply, and be assessed for, national recognition as a Highly Accomplished or Lead by in the ACT.

The new approach for certification makes the HALT program more attractive and accessible to more teachers who may have previously been unable to make the commitment over one year, reduces the intensity of the workload that is required to prepare submissions for certification, and distributes the cost of certification over time.

The modular model allows for greater flexibility for teachers, gives teachers more opportunity to improve between modules, and is more sustainable for assessors. These new benefits make certification more attractive to potential candidates and school leaders.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government facilitate professional learning communities across school networks, as well as within individual schools.

Existing government policy

The ACT Government recognises that targeted and high-quality professional learning is inextricably linked to school improvement. All ACT public schools have a professional learning plan that is closely aligned with their school improvement journey.

Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) are being implemented across and within ACT public schools. School leadership professional learning programs continue to focus on providing differentiated supports for schools to strengthen their Professional Learning Communities. This will occur through universal leadership offerings, selected initiatives, and targeted school support as well as across-school network PLC platforms.

The Education Directorate provides opportunities for PLCs across school networks and within individual schools including Instructional Mentor-facilitated PLCs, SLC middle leadership forums in networks and at schools, and with targeted groups such as Literacy Champions and Inclusion Groups.

There will be a focus across the system on leadership development plans, with an emphasis on systemic leadership capacity building and providing opportunities for leaders to connect, network and share.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in occupational health and safety for ACT public schools, and ensure that at a minimum:

- *all public schools in the ACT have clear, consistent policies for managing occupational violence in school settings and reducing the risks to staff and students;*
- *staff have the capacity to manage the risks of violence, including clear strategies for escalation and de-escalation; and*
- *staff have access to streamlined processes for reporting and recording incidents and are enabled to share experiences in a safe and non-judgemental setting.*

Agreed

The ACT Government established the Safe at School Taskforce (the Taskforce) within the ACT Education Directorate to develop and coordinate a system-wide approach to safe systems of work in ACT public schools. This includes addressing the safety and wellbeing and processes to support staff and students in ACT public schools. The Taskforce received \$1.1 million in the 2022-23 Budget.

A critical component of this work will be a comprehensive review into existing processes for managing incidents of occupational violence to identify areas for improvement, including a review of incident management, professional learning offerings; and the creation of a system wide safety culture, supported by improved incident data recording and analysis.

The Taskforce will coordinate the development of additional advice, resources, and professional learning to support school staff understanding and skills in meeting the needs of all students.

The Taskforce will also coordinate any reviews, revision and development of policies and procedures relating to Work Health and Safety in ACT public schools.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government invest additional resources in allied health and social health in ACT public schools, including by:

- *increasing the number of allied health professionals including social workers in ACT public schools, based on identified need;*
- *engaging Community Coordinators and other professional to coordinate a wraparound approach to service provision;*
- *providing additional guidance and training on working effectively with allied health professionals; and*
- *setting clear policy on which supports are to be provided within schools, and which are to be provided externally.*

Existing government policy

The Education Directorate directly employs psychologists, speech pathologists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, and social workers to support classroom teachers and schools respond to student needs. All public schools have access to a school psychologist and can request support from the allied health team as required.

In the 2021-22 Budget, the ACT Government provided \$7.4 million for an additional 25 social and youth workers.

Public schools regularly work with private allied health supports to ensure consistency between supports and strategies used in the home and at school. With consent, public schools share information about the individual needs of a student with the private providers. The Directorate's allied health team is also available to assist public schools to support student learning in implementing the recommendations of external providers.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement measures to increase awareness of learning programs offered through the Education Support Office.

Existing government policy

The Education Directorate will ensure that professional learning opportunities continue to be promoted consistently through School Bulletins, the Directorate Intranet and on the staff Learning Management System.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide additional learning and development opportunities to all educators focussed on inclusive education and behaviour management.

Agreed

The Education Directorate will continue to build on its learning and development offerings to all educators in relation to inclusive education and behaviour management.

Training is available for Directorate employees through the online learning modules of Disability Standards in Education through the National Consistent Collection of Data website (NCCD.edu.au). This training is mandatory for school-based staff.

A range of professional networks exist to provide information sharing and professional learning opportunities for educators at regular meetings facilitated by the Directorate. The Directorate's School Psychology Service, Allied Health Service and Inclusion Coaches are also available to visit schools and provide targeted advice to educators.

Staff can access professional learning as individuals or as part of their school through online training and face to face courses. Training can be customised to address specific needs at individual schools.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that all school leaders are provided with the necessary resources to implement and evaluate Annual Professional Learning Programs.

Agreed

Subclause N7.2 of the Agreement recognises that the annual professional learning plan must be developed in accordance with the ACT Government's professional learning framework described within the *ACT Teacher Quality Institute Act 2010* and associated Regulations, Directions, and procedures and can be accessed on the ACT Teacher Quality Institute website.

Instructional Mentors are a resource to support school leaders to align priorities across the National School Improvement Tool. This ensures that their professional learning plan is developed to support the Annual Action Plan and Principal Professional Development Agreement and are overseen by the relevant Director of School Improvement.

Resources, training, and coaching for leaders at all levels are provided to school leaders through several avenues to best support the needs of all school leaders. These activities occur across the entire school year and are differentiated to support changing leadership contexts across the public school system.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government implement in full Recommendation 11 of the Auditor-General's Report 6 of 2021: Teaching Quality in ACT Public Schools. This should include close consultation with New Educators, and the provision of clear guidance as to the operation of the New Educator Support Program and associated entitlements.

Agreed in principle

The Education Directorate will strengthen central oversight of the implementation of New Educator supports outlined in the Clause N5 of the Agreement following the delivery of the ACTPS Human Resources Information Management System (HRIMS). The HRIMS implementation will support the Directorate to systematise the recording of New Educator Support Plans and provide greater data to enable the Directorate to monitor and oversee New Educator supports.

The Directorate will consult with new educators in the development of clear guidance as to the operation of the New Educator Support Program and associated entitlements.

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government expedite development of systems to estimate and address future workforce needs in ACT public schools. The system should capture specialist roles, experienced teachers, and learning support assistants.

Agreed

The Directorate has developed a teacher workforce projections methodology in partnership with the Australian Education Union (AEU) through the Teacher Shortage Taskforce. This methodology will enable the Directorate to better understand the projected quantum of teachers required to meet the system's growing needs.

The Directorate has established processes to report on and oversight the distribution of experienced teachers across the system.

The Directorate intends to continue to mature its workforce planning and projections methodologies, including incorporating segmentation of teacher specialisation requirements.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide incentives for teachers with relevant expertise to take up specialist teaching roles.

Agreed in principle

The Education Directorate will explore possible incentives to encourage teachers to undertake further training and take up specialist teaching roles.

However, it noted that any financial incentives or changes to working conditions may require changes to provisions the new Teaching Staff Enterprise Agreement subject to the outcomes of current negotiations with the AEU.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government work with teachers, school leaders and other relevant stakeholders to develop and implement clear policy and guidance on the work that teachers can reasonably be expected to perform outside of school settings, and the priority that should be assigned to particular activities.

Agreed in principle

The core role of teachers and professional responsibilities is defined in Subclause P1.1 of the Agreement.

The Education Directorate will establish a Sustainable Workload Management Committee to further explore the core role of teachers and tasks that may be able to be performed by staff other than teachers as a recommendation from the *Teacher Shortage Taskforce – Final Report*.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure that educators are never required to supervise classes of a larger size those set out in the Education Directorate's Class Size Policy. This should involve:

- *more effective oversight and enforcement of the Directorate's Class Size Policy and Class Size Procedures; and*
- *consideration of a cap on class sizes in enterprise agreements for teaching staff.*

Agreed in principle

Subclause P4.1 of the Agreement acknowledges the Education Directorate and AEU recognise the fundamental contribution of class size to the learning outcomes for students, quality of teaching, and the health and wellbeing of teachers as outlined in the agreed *Class Size Policy* provided in the Agreement.

The principal is responsible for implementation and management of class sizes in accordance with the *Class Size Policy*. This is agreed and negotiated with staff through the annual Enterprise Agreement Implementation Plan at each school.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government ensure a more even distribution of teachers across the ACT public school system, including but not limited to consideration of:

- *providing incentives for experienced teachers to transfer to schools with a low concentration of experienced teachers – particularly school in areas of lower socioeconomic advantage; and*
- *limiting the ability of principals to exempt teachers from the transfer round.*

Agreed in principle

The Education Directorate acknowledges the important role that teacher experience plays in providing high-quality teaching outcomes. It is also noted that placement of teachers is made based on a number of factors relevant to the needs of schools and individual teachers.

The Directorate will explore possible incentives to encourage a more even distribution of teachers across the system, however any financial incentives or changes to working conditions may require changes to provisions in the Agreement and will be subject to the outcomes of negotiations with the AEU.

The Directorate will explore limitations that may be placed on principals' decisions to exempt teachers from the transfer round, particularly whether changes to the Agreement are required.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the ACT Government provide more guidance and training to school leaders on performance management and review, including when to initiate formal performance management processes and how those processes should be implemented.

Agreed

The Education Directorate will develop more guidance and training for school leaders to assist the performance management process, including on a range of practical supports that underpin the procedures within the Agreement.