

**Submission to the Review Team undertaking the Statutory
Review of the Teacher Registration Act 2012 (WA).**

Submitted by L F (jigs) Bootsma Ba Sociology & Anthropology,
Ba Hons. Legal Studies, Grad. Dip. Education.

This submission draws attention to the difficulties experienced by Casual Relief Teachers (CRTs) insofar as the registration requirements as they exist in the current categories, and the system of registration of teachers, as administered by the Teacher Registration Board (TRB).

What follows is a description of the difficulties, a possible explanation as to why the problems exist and; a suggestion for a solution.

The information presented is largely drawn from personal experience and anecdotal material gained from talking to other CRTs.

Section 1. An Outline of the Difficulties.

It is recognised that Teacher Registration in WA is a requirement that ensures teachers are fit and proper persons and that the safety and education of children is paramount in this process. The four categories of registration fail to take into account teachers who fall between “Provisional” and “Full” registration.

Provisional Registration, intended for new graduates, has a “use by date”. The transition to full registration must be undertaken before provisional registration expires (three years after first registered). Page 22 of the *Information Paper and Call for Submissions* (Higher Education and Legislative Review Directorate, September 2017) points out that “Section 22(3) provides that the Board may only renew provisional registration if there are exceptional circumstances for doing so” (emphasis added). The circumstances CRTs find themselves in are neither “exceptional” nor “extenuating”.

CRTs who do not want to, or cannot undertake full time or permanent part time work; those Casual Relief Teachers who enjoy their work and want to continue working across a variety of schools with a variety of students at different levels on a day to day basis are unable to honestly meet all of the standards prescribed by the TRB at the Proficient Level. This in effect means that a graduate’s teaching life as a relief is limited to three years.

CRTs do not have a regular place of employment, this means that they do not have the same access to administration support, personal development and collegiate interaction as those who are regularly employed. This is not a complaint but rather a statement of the difficulties that CRTs deal with. My own employment history over the three years since graduation is an example: A full time teacher has 190 class contact days per year; I generally work from one to three days per fortnight at schools across the Northern and Eastern corridors of Perth (up to 60 days a year). I seldom work more than one or two days in succession at any one school. School Administration often run Personal Development Modules, these are not generally available to CRTs: We source and finance our own Personal Development Modules and undertake them in unpaid time.

Section 2. Meeting the Assessment Requirements.

The transition to full registration is based on an assessment of evidence provided by the applicant. The *Transition to Full Registration: Guide to Evidencing the Standards at the Proficient Level* (The Guide) (Teacher Registration Board, November 2016) will be used as a source throughout this and subsequent sections. In the introduction it states: “*Teachers transitioning to Full Registration are advised, at the beginning of the process, to discuss with their mentor/supervisor/appropriate person the requirements at their school/workplace.*” The Guide mentions that: “In a school, an applicant’s Principal or a person delegated by the Principal who is currently working within the same educational venue as the applicant would be appropriate.” It further states that: “Generally, it is expected that the appropriate person will be from the applicant’s current educational venue with sufficient knowledge of the applicant’s professional knowledge as a teacher” (emphasis added).

CRTs by the nature of the work they undertake do NOT have access to a mentor or “appropriate person”. Our supervisors or line managers are Relief Coordinators or Administration Staff who more often than not, do not teach. They generally do not have the time to, nor should they have to, undertake supervision which is not a part of their job description

The TRB allows for Direct Submission of Evidence – Professional Standards; this enables applicants to provide, independently of a workplace, evidence of meeting the standards. This process is difficult in that a very “long bow” must be drawn to even touch on some of the standards if you are a CRT.

As mentioned above this process is an assessment. A common mnemonic used by educators when engaging in assessment is SMART. Assessments should be: Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant and Timely. The assessment of CRTs in meeting some of the standards does not meet this criteria. They are not Achievable because we do not work in areas where we could use them; they are not Relevant because they have little or nothing to do with the work we do; and, they are not Timely, because we do not take on a full time workload.

Section 3. The Focus Areas of the Standards that are Problematic for CRTs.

The Guide (Appendix 1) gives the applicant 37 Focus Areas across seven standards. What follows is a list of which Focus Areas are difficult for CRTs to meet at the Proficient level based on their Descriptors. What should be remembered here is that the requirement is to provide evidence that the applicant has developed these skills from the graduate to the proficient level.

CRTs do not usually have opportunities to undertake the areas in italics below. We do not generally, other than in a session by session basis; design or implement plans that are our own; we do not plan programs; we are not in a position to track student achievement; we do not have access to feedback; nor to student assessment data; it is rare for us to be in contact with parents/carers; we do not assess student learning; we do not have opportunities to participate in moderation; and, we do not write reports.

- 1.2 Structure *teaching programs* using research and collegial advice about how students learn.
- 1.3 *Design and implement* teaching strategies that are responsive to the learning strengths and needs of students from diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds.
- 1.4 *Design and implement* effective teaching strategies that are responsive to the local community and cultural setting, linguistic background and histories of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.
- 1.6 *Design and implement* teaching activities that support the participation and learning of students with disability and address relevant policy and legislative requirements.
- 2.2 *Organise* content into coherent, well sequenced learning and teaching *programs*.
- 2.3 *Design and implement* learning and teaching *programs* using knowledge of curriculum, assessment and reporting requirements.

- 2.5 Apply knowledge and understanding of effective teaching strategies to support literacy and numeracy *achievement* of students.
- 3.2 *Plan and implement* well-structured learning and teaching programs or lesson sequences that engage students and promote learning.
- 3.6 Evaluate personal teaching and learning programs using evidence including *feedback from students and student assessment data to inform planning*.
- 3.7 *Plan* for appropriate and contextually relevant opportunities for *parents/carers to be involved in their children's learning*.
- 5.1 *Develop* select and use informal, formal, diagnostic and summative assessment strategies *to assess student learning*.
- 5.3 Understand and *participate in assessment moderation* activities to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.
- 5.4 *Use student assessment data* to analyse and evaluate student understanding of subject/content, identifying interventions and modifying teaching practice.
- 5.5 *Report* clearly, accurately and respectfully to students and parents/carers about student achievement, making use of accurate and reliable *records*.
- 7.3 *Establish and maintain* respectful collaborative relationships with *parents/carers* regarding their children's learning and well-being.

This is not to say that CRTs do not know about or how to approach these areas, it highlights that CRTs cannot realistically and honestly develop these areas past the graduate level. The difference between regular teaching and relief teaching is highlighted by the following Focus Areas:

- 1.5 Develop teaching activities that incorporate differentiated strategies to meet the specific learning needs of students across the full range of abilities.
- 2.4 Provide opportunities for students to develop understanding of and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories, cultures and languages.
- 2.6 Use effective teaching strategies to integrate ICT into learning and teaching programs to make selected content relevant and meaningful.
- 3.1 Set explicit, challenging and achievable learning goals for all students.
- 3.3 Select and use relevant teaching strategies to develop the knowledge, skills, and attributes required by the applicable curriculum or educational program.
- 3.4 Select and/or create and use a range of resources, including ICT, to engage students in their learning.
- 4.1 Establish and implement inclusive and positive interactions to engage and support all students in learning activities.
- 4.2 Establish and maintain orderly and workable routines to create an environment where student time is spent on learning tasks.
- 4.5 Incorporate strategies to promote the safe, responsible and ethical use of ICT in learning and teaching.
- 5.2 Provide timely, effective and appropriate feedback to students about their achievement relative their learning goals.
- 6.1 Use these professional standards and advice from colleagues to identify and plan professional learning needs.
- 6.2 Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.
- 6.3 Contribute to collegial discussions and apply constructive feedback from colleagues to improve professional knowledge and practice.
- 6.4 Undertake professional learning programs designed to address identified student learning needs

What these Focus Areas have in common is that Casual Relief Teachers usually do deal with these but in an ad hoc manner depending on need and opportunity. All of these are limited to the day and the teaching sessions that arise on a daily basis. If taking a Humanities and Social Science class for example, it is usually an opportunity to introduce Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perspectives in a set lesson, but things like this are done “on the fly” since we do not plan the lessons.

A problematic area in State Schools for CRTs is the inability to access the schools computers unless you teach for more than a few days. This limits the use of ICT by Relief Teachers.

As mentioned earlier CRTs do not have the same access to collegiate discussions and Personal Development Modules that regular teachers have: This not to say there are none but it is only what they actively seek out and organise for themselves for the most part. CRTs generally have well developed Classroom Management Skills and by the nature of their work, are very flexible in what they will cover. They often plan and modify their days or sessions as the need arises. The standards do not reflect this.

Section 4. A Proposed Solution.

There is an underlying assumption (which should be made) that anyone who is initially provisionally registered meets the standards at a graduate level. As the registration categories and their administration now stands there is an underlying assumption that EVERY graduate teacher wants to or can become a full time or permanent teacher. This is not the case. The workforce has changed and is still changing, more often casual work is being undertaken in all areas of employment. The current situation means those teachers who are working as reliefs are finding it difficult, onerous and irrelevant to meet standards that do not apply to their situation. I know from conversations with other relief teachers that some are leaving the profession because they see the registration requirements as obstacles.

Casual Relief Teachers need to be recognised as important, it is certainly the case that Relief Coordinators and Administration Staff do value them. I was told at a Relief Teacher Conference recently that CRTs contribute to 10% of every child's education.

It is recognised that not everyone can be a good relief teacher, but good or not, the current structure does not make relief teaching a viable option in the medium to long term. Instead of relegating Relief Teaching to a stopgap measure for new graduates I propose that Relief Teaching is recognised as a career move.

One way to retain those that are good is to recognise them as such; encourage their development in a manner that is relevant and achievable in a time frame that reflects their working hours: Develop the Standards that are achievable and directly related to the work they do, encouraging them to excel as Relief Teachers.

My proposal is that another level of registration is worked out with Focus Areas within the Standards that apply to and are achievable by CRTs. This is NOT to water down the expectations or the Standards for teachers: this is about Specific, Measureable, Achievable, Relevant, and Timely assessment of CRTs.

Firstly Relief teaching needs a definition to separate it from contract work, it needs this so that limits are placed on the type of work a relief teacher does to maintain Relief Registration. A suggestion here is that relief work comprises

mostly of day to day or a week or so work in a block. Certainly if a relief teacher accepts a contract for longer than a term they would be moving to the requirement for full registration

Currently, new graduates are required to meet the standards within a three year period, if they want full time or regular work this is generally achievable under the current structure. This does not need to change. The changes need to be made through these three years for graduates who want to establish themselves as Relief Teachers, with the same level of registration being made available to teachers with other levels of registration who wish to work relief only.

If a graduate chooses to be a relief teacher they should be given the option to transition to Relief Teacher Registration and show they meet the standards that apply to Relief Teaching before or at the end of their three year period.

Section 5. Conclusion.

Teachers, be they recent graduates or experienced teachers, are by the requirements for, and the categories of, Registration limited in employment opportunities. At a time when workforces are becoming fractured Casual Relief Teaching is not a viable career move in the medium to long term.

To insist that applicants provide evidence to meet standards that have little relevance to Relief Teaching results in one of two ends: The truth is stretched, whether by applicants or those who help them meet the Standards: Or, if the applicant is truly honest, they despair of meeting them and abandon teaching.

Relief Teaching is challenging and rewarding. Those who undertake it have a different skill set to regularly employed teachers. If Casual Relief Teachers later decide to transition to more permanent work they will bring with them a skill set that is different to regular teachers but is a wonderful base to build development in other areas on.

As the situation now stands graduates have only one choice: To become regularly employed teachers. This means that if they are unable by circumstances or choice, to do so they have a limited working life as a Casual Relief Teacher. The fallout from this is that these teachers will leave the profession which is a waste of their education, a waste of human resources insofar as teachers are concerned, and that there will be a decrease in available Casual Relief Teachers.

This submission calls for changes to be made that address the issue of continuing registration for those who choose to be Casual Relief Teachers. This is tied in to the Standards being applied across the board rather than in a manner that recognises the difference between relief and regular teaching. I ask that the Review Team consider carefully the matters and proposal raised by this submission.

jigs Bootsma

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