

WA Teacher Registration Act Review
Attention: Mr Terry Werner
Department of Education
151 Royal St
EAST PERTH WA 6004

To Whom It May Concern,

Re: Teacher Registration Act Review Submission

Thank you for undertaking a review of the Teacher Registration Act 2012.

I would like to tell you a little about my situation and my experiences with the TRB.

I moved from Geraldton to Perth at 17 to undertake my studies at ECU Churchlands and then Joondalup to complete a Bachelor degree in Education (K-7). This was with great support from my parents to keep me in Perth. My first teaching placement was at St Lawrence's Catholic Primary School, Geraldton. I taught Pre-Primary for 4 years here. I then transitioned to the Department of Education whilst on Maternity Leave from Catholic Education. My husband and I, with our 18 month old daughter, were required to move to the small remote town of Useless Loop, Shark Bay, WA (a five hour drive to Geraldton, with 120km of that drive a gravel road) due to his work. 9 years on, we now have 4 children ranging in ages of 10, 7, 6 and 2 years old, and remain in Useless Loop.

I am a teacher. Yet recently when my Full Registration period was up for renewal, I was forced to apply for Non-Practising Registration. This rocked my self esteem, as I have only ever wanted to be a teacher, it was and is what makes up a big portion of who I am, yet, because I have had children, and live in a remote location, I was no longer allowed to teach. No longer able to stay connected to my profession and continuing my use of skills and staying up to date with curriculum, as I was now not able to access the Education Department Professional Learning. No longer able to support and supplement our household expenses with the money I was able to earn in a relief/DOTT provider capacity.

I can see that this would be a problem for many women on Maternity Leave and taking a break from teaching to look after their families. It seems to me a very big step back in time to when women would have to resign from their jobs when they were married to have babies! And unfortunately for us here, we have the added disadvantage of remoteness. It seems that the very institution that should be advocating on behalf of teachers is turning teachers away from the profession that they are passionate about.

I believe that having children has made me a better teacher, I am constantly researching and looking for information on ways to better parent and educate my children and to raise healthy, well adjusted future adults of our community.

The decision to reenter the workforce and 'transition' back to Full Registration is somewhat bittersweet. The small, remote community in which I live, Useless Loop, has a small primary school, currently catering for 17 students. 3 of these students are my own, and I have a 2 year old daughter who currently attends with me when I teach relief days and my fixed term day. We have no childcare facilities, and my family is 500kms away. Every opportunity I have had to work at the school, I have accepted. But, being a small school,

there is limited time and funding available. I therefore have no way of ever meeting registration requirements in my situation.

This year, the Principal of our school has required extensive leave for personal reasons and also to use her Long Service Leave. This has meant, that our school teachers have been under a lot of pressure with lack of DOTT time and a larger workload to make the difference. I felt, that whilst I could assist voluntarily, that it was necessary to recommence teaching. My children, and the students of this community, deserve to be educated by healthy teaching staff, not stressed and worn out ones. For our town, to have a teacher with a teaching degree, but not able to teach due to political reasons, seems absurd!

By 'transitioning', I am now able to provide 1 Full day of DOTT relief and any relief they require. This has been positive for me, as I have reconnected with my passion and my love for teaching. Bittersweet though, as I know, that I will not fulfill registration requirements of teaching hours after the 2 year transition time. What then, will I do? How do I stay in a profession, that seems to not value what I have to offer?

Upon asking this question, the person at the TRB informed me that there are always options to ask for extenuating circumstances. I am reluctant to believe this to be true, and my trust in the TRB is minimal. I did ask for extenuating circumstances in the renewal process in 2016, which included the reasons of two Maternity Leaves and the death of my father after a 9 month battle with Leukemia, and living remotely and a lack of availability of teaching hours. Extenuating Circumstances could not be considered because I had not obtained enough teaching hours. What a cycle - not enough teaching hours, but the reasons for not being able to teach not considered?! I am not sure how at the end of this current 2 years, any leniency will be granted, due to my remoteness and lack of hours available to teach.

A frustration amongst this is that had I been more informed leading up to renewal for Full Registration, had I submitted my renewal before the end of December 2015, I would have met the requirements and continued on with Full Registration. My registration period was from March 2011 to March 2016.

How can it be fair that the goal posts change within a registration period?! How does it make sense that I am disadvantaged by not submitting my forms before December 2015 when my registration requires me to submit them before mid February 2016?! I am not sure if I missed emails from the TRB regarding this change? Certainly no evidence of information in the 'correspondence' section on my TRBWA Registration page. Or was I disadvantaged as I am not attached to a school where the Principal or other staff would be informing me of changes and the steps I must take? Or must I login to the TRB website to view Announcements every day?

Whilst I had not met the hours of teaching in those 5 years, the amount of time I have provided to the school and community as a volunteer, at the school (which benefits the school and my children at the school), actively participating on the P&C committee and the School Council and leading our Playgroup as President, would far outweigh the amount of time required for Registration. Nowhere in the documents of the registration renewal does it state that the time must be paid. So therefore, could I have included the copious amount of volunteer time to renew my registration as Full Registration? Should I have tried? I was at the time of renewal, away from my home for 6 weeks ('confinement', as living remotely you must leave your home to move closer to a hospital in preparation to have a baby). That was the November, December of 2015. In the February of 2016 when I was

submitting my forms, I was working at the school, with a 2 month old baby and toddler, and transitioning my 3 1/2 year old into kindy. I was sleep deprived and hormonal and not thinking clearly as to how I could obtain Full Registration in any way other than the most honest way, not trying to find loopholes in the rules that govern the TRB Registration process. Yes, in hindsight, I should have clicked the button that said I had met requirements.

Another frustration is that for the last 10 years I have paid my Registration Fees to remain registered as Full Registration and then Non-Practising. Yes, members must continue to pay fees, even though they are being held back from teaching and earning money to pay for this registration. I feel that perhaps, in hindsight, I should never have tried to continue working and to maintain registration. I should have let my registration lapse and focused on my children rather than trying to help and assist in a system that displays no respect or thoughtfulness, no gratitude for effort.

The effort that I now have to go to, to attempt to work as many hours as possibly able in this remote location, to maintain the hours of Professional Learning *online*, I then also have to prove competency in all the Professional Standards, 'One of the essential requirements for Full Registration is that the teacher must be able to demonstrate that they have met the Professional Standards for Teachers in Western Australia (Professional Standards) at the Proficient Level'. How do I do this? Is my teaching practise evidence enough? Can the Principal sign a declaration based on observing me in the classroom, teaching, and from the evidence of my planning and assessments? Must I create a Professional Portfolio? An online blog? A website showing how I meet each Professional Standard at Proficient Level? I am not sure that that actually makes me a better teacher? How do I show that I am proficient? I cannot find concrete information, and nor when I have asked Principals and other teaching staff, do they have a clear understanding of what is required. Am I required to provide the same amount of proof as that of a Graduate? Does my previous experience not account for anything?

Thank you for your time, I would assume that the Teacher Registration Board would like to function to its best ability to provide the best teachers for educational institutions. I understand the need for regulations. I have 4 children and I do expect quality teachers to assist in their education. I therefore hope that my feedback is appreciated and seriously considered.

I would like to note the following that may assist in the performance and a more user-friendly body governing our teaching profession.

- A governing body that **advocates** for teachers, not just a governing body that takes our money, and provides no service in return.
- A list of Professional Learning that are recommended by the TRB. Quality Professional Learning.
- A Return to Work Seminar or course that those who have been on leave can participate in to reacquaint with their teaching skills and updated information on curriculum and other teaching knowledge and skills. And that this to be offered online and in person. Looking at other states Registration Boards, this is something that is offered. It makes sense to provide as much assistance to teachers to remain up to date and informed on current practise, curriculum and policy.
- We have a national curriculum. Perhaps there is a need for a National Registration Board, for fair and equal governing of teachers in Australia. So teachers do not need to

apply to each state if travelling and wishing to teach. So we are all on the same page, with the same information and the same standards and expectations, particularly if we are delivering the same curriculum.

- A more user friendly TRBWA website, that motivates a person to use it, and where information can be easily accessed.
- Remoteness, consideration for those of us who live remotely, never able to meet the teaching hour requirements, with limited access to quality Professional Learning, with hit and miss technology and internet service, not fast never ending usage allowance like my city friends, but Satellite service that is intermittent in its reliability and amount available, internet that I must conserve to ensure I have enough internet to order our shopping online that comes via a 5 hour truck ride once a week.
- Another category for Relief Teaching staff, whereby yes, standards are required for both Teaching Hours and Professional Learning, but not as many as required for Full Registration, and that it be given a name that is respectful of the service that Relief Teachers who include graduates, women on maternity leave, retired teachers with so much knowledge and experience to continue to give, deserve!
- Consideration of women on Maternity Leave. This does not make us deficit, quite the opposite. It makes us better teachers.
- Better communication between the TRB and its 'members'