

WA Teacher Registration Act Review  
Attention: Mr Terry Werner  
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### Teacher Registration Act Review

Dear Mr Werner,

I have just completed my PhD investigating the experiences of early career casual teachers (ECCTs) and have gained some insights into the difficulties faced by this cohort of early career teachers in regards to transitioning to full-registration. To clarify the context, early career casual teachers in my research were those teachers in their first three years after graduation who worked as day-to-day relief teachers. With the increasing number of early career teachers beginning their careers working as casual teachers (Bitá, 2015; Bryan, 2015; Jenkins, 2013) I feel their voices need to be heard in this review.

My research found that ECCTs were a little confused regarding duration and eligibility of registration. In the information paper in Chapter 7, it states that the duration of provisional registration is three years, however in Chapter 5 it states that:

*For full registration an application must establish that he or she:*

- (a) holds a teaching qualification from an accredited programme (i.e. accredited in Australia) or one recognised by the Board as equivalent;*
- (b) meets the professional standards approved by the Board (at the proficient level) or has done so within the past five years;*
- (c) is fit and proper to be a registered teacher; and*
- (d) has the prescribed English language skills (as set out in regulation 10) (section 15).*

This seems to indicate that full registration can be achieved by meeting professional standards within the past five years even though provisional registration is for three. There are also sections which mention renewal of provisional registration, which is only possible in exceptional circumstances. Participants commented that this information was available on the TRBWA website, but did not provide clarity in the time limits for moving to full registration and few had access to a mentor who could help clarify the time limits. **I recommend that these published details have more clarity to enable ECCTs to clearly understand what they need to do for full registration.**

Western Australia appears to provide the least amount of time for provisionally registered teachers to transition to full registration, which is particularly problematic for ECCTs when they are required to provide evidence of professional practice at a proficient level across all This is of particular concern when taking into account the restrictions placed on renewal of provisional registration. The “Consideration of Extenuating and Exceptional Circumstances for Registration Policy 2014/33348” Issued 06/08/2015 clearly states that:

*For the purpose of the renewal of Provisional Registration, exceptional circumstances are deemed to be those events or situations that are particularly unusual or not typical and only likely to happen infrequently and are relevant to the teacher not being able to meet their obligations. (p. 6)*

Casual teaching does not fit within the ‘exceptional circumstances’ as for ECCTs this is not an infrequent occurrence. An inability to renew provisional registration is problematic for many ECCTs, and is not consistent with the renewal positions taken by other states. This is particularly pertinent when considering the proficient descriptors of the AITSL Standards. There are some standards which are particularly difficult for ECCTs to achieve, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1 *Proficient descriptors of select AITSL standards*

<b>Standard</b>	<b>Proficient descriptor</b>
<b>2.2 Content selection and organisation</b>	Organise content into coherent, well-sequenced learning and teaching programs.
<b>3.1 Establish challenging learning goals</b>	Set explicit, challenging and achievable learning goals for all students.
<b>3.2 Plan, structure and sequence learning programs</b>	Plan and implement well-structured learning and teaching programs or lesson sequences that engage students and promote learning.
<b>5.3 Make consistent and comparable judgements</b>	Understand and participate in assessment moderation activities to support consistent and comparable judgements of student learning.
<b>6.2 Engage in professional learning and improve practice</b>	Participate in learning to update knowledge and practice, targeted to professional needs and school and/or system priorities.
<b>6.4 Apply professional learning and improve student learning</b>	Undertake professional learning programs designed to address identified student learning needs.
<b>7.3 Engage with the parents/carers</b>	Establish and maintain respectful collaborative relationships with parents/carers regarding their children’s learning and wellbeing.

I have summarised comments made by the participants in my research regarding the descriptors in Table 1.

a) Standards 2.2 and 3.2 require early career teachers to develop well-sequenced lessons that engage students and promote learning. As ECCTs may not teach the same class on consecutive days, they may rarely develop learning and teaching programs. Participants in my research commented that they had few opportunities to plan lessons, let alone a series of lessons, and were often provided with lessons by the regular classroom teacher.

b) Early career teachers are expected to set challenging and achievable learning goals (Standard 3.1) but in order to do that a teacher would need to know the students' capabilities and interests. For ECCTs who often teach at different schools and classes this was particularly challenging.

c) Due to fragmented employment few ECCTs were able to participate in moderation of assessments as required in Standard 5.3, unless employed on a long-term basis.

d) Standards 6.2 and 6.4 require ECCTs to engage in professional learning to enhance practice and apply this knowledge to improve student learning. Participants all talked about the difficulties they faced in accessing professional learning, in particular the Graduate Teacher Professional Learning Program organised by the Institute of Professional Learning. At the time of my research casual teachers did not have access to the Department of Education portal and therefore could not enrol in these courses. My findings are supported by other research which suggests that lack of access to professional learning is a common experience of casual teachers, but is particularly challenging for ECCTs (Bamberry, 2011; Jenkins, 2015; Nicholas & Wells, 2016).

e) The Standards also require early career teachers to provide evidence of establishing respectful and collaborative relationships with parents (Standard 7.3). Although some ECCTs in my study had interactions with parents and carers this was mainly confined to teachers in the early years. Therefore many ECCTs may be unable to provide evidence of proficiency in this standard.

Taking in to account these seven standards in which it is particularly problematic for ECCTs to demonstrate proficiency, the time limit for transitioning to full registration and the inability to renew provisional registration, the registration process is quite stressful for ECCTs. **I recommend that it should be possible for ECCTs to renew their provisional registration**

**which would more closely align the conditions in Western Australia with those of other states.**

I would also like to comment on the reporting of teacher numbers. Although research and newspaper articles (Bita, 2015; Bryan, 2015; Jenkins, 2013) seem to suggest that there has been an increase in casualization of early career casual teachers, accurate numbers of ECCTs are hard to find. Chapter 11 discusses the requirements of reporting in public and professional registers, but I believe that information provided to the TRBWA could be used to track trends in casualisation, particularly for early career teachers. The TRBWA requires teachers to provide information regarding their employment details, and therefore it would be beneficial to report accurate numbers of ECCTs in full-time, part-time and casual employment within the annual report. This may assist tracking of trend in casualisation of early career teachers, and early career teacher attrition, as one study in Belgium suggests that there is a higher rate of attrition amongst early career teachers working less than seven months in their first year (Dupriez, Delvaux, & Lothaire, 2015). **I recommend that details of employment statistics be more widely reported, including those of early career teachers on provisional registration and those who have moved to full registration.**

Finally from a personal perspective I would like to comment on non-practicing registration. Whilst this category is useful for teachers taking time out from teaching, it does not discriminate between people who are not teaching and those who are teaching overseas (but outside of NZ). Teaching overseas is not counted towards the minimum number of days teaching per calendar year, regardless of teaching context, such as teaching at an international school. Whilst there may be a different curriculum, many other aspects of the AITSL Standards are still addressed in these diverse teaching situations. In addition, once a teacher with non-practicing registration commences teaching they have to provide evidence of all standards, the same as graduate teachers, within 2 years which is quite onerous. This is of concern to PhD candidates as it is difficult to achieve the required number of days teaching for continued full registration while completing a Doctorate. Teaching in a University context, such as tutors and lecturers in the Schools of Education does not count towards days of teaching and as there is no guarantee of employment in the university sector it adds an additional pressure on teachers attempting to engage in research at the highest level whilst

maintaining registration. As experienced teachers it also means that we are not able to do occasional relief teaching to supplement our limited funds as we can not guarantee that we could fulfill all the standards within two years. **I recommend that non-practising registration is reviewed or discontinued.**

Please feel free to contact me for further information on the experiences of ECCTs as I am quite passionate about having their perspective taken into consideration.

Yours sincerely



Helen Dempsey

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