

# SUBMISSION TO THE INQUIRY INTO THE STATE EDUCATION SYSTEM IN VICTORIA

October 2023



Dear Members of the Legislative Council Legal and Social Issues Committee,

Teach For Australia is pleased to make this submission to the Inquiry into the state education system in Victoria.

This submission has relevance to point two of the Inquiry's Terms of Reference, i.e. "the state of the teaching profession in Victoria". It draws on Teach For Australia's experience in recruiting and retaining teachers, training and professional development of teachers, and makes suggestions for improving measures to recruit and retain teachers.

## About Teach For Australia

Teach For Australia (hereafter, TFA) is a not-for-profit organisation that confronts educational disadvantage and strives for an Australia where education gives all children greater choice for their future. Our mission is to grow a community of leaders committed to equity, by recruiting and developing exceptional people to teach and lead across Australia.

TFA's flagship initiative, the Leadership Development Program (LDP), is Australia's leading graduate employment-based pathway into teaching. TFA recruits, trains and supports high-calibre people from all walks of life to become 'Associates' – motivated teachers and inspiring leaders who work with students from low-socioeconomic communities.

All Associates are qualified to teach their subject areas, and many bring career experience from other industries into the classroom, helping students see real-world relevance to the curriculum.

TFA partners solely with schools serving low-socioeconomic and regional communities, who face the most challenges in attracting new teachers. Alongside this, TFA recruits people skilled to teach hard-to-staff subjects, such as languages, arts, and science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) fields. A significant proportion of current teachers in Australian schools are teaching STEM 'out-of-field', meaning they do not hold the qualifications necessary to teach these subjects<sup>1</sup>.

TFA's employment-based initial teacher education (ITE) model makes teaching a compelling career choice for graduates and professionals in other industries who are not willing to return to the full-time study of traditional ITE pathways. Applicants are also attracted to TFA because they share its values and want to join its mission to address educational inequity.

Independent evaluators for the Australian Government have noted the LDP "produces highly effective teachers that perform as well or better than graduate teachers"<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Shah, C., Richardson, P. and Watt, H. (2020), Teaching 'out of field' in STEM subjects in Australia: evidence from PISA 2015, Global Labor Organization Discussion Paper, <https://apo.org.au/node/303739>

<sup>2</sup> Department of Education, Skills and Employment (2022), [High Achieving Teachers program evaluation interim report](#).

## TFA in Victoria

TFA has proudly worked with Victoria since the launch of the LDP in 2010. We acknowledge the support of the Victorian Department of Education, with whom we have a collaborative partnership.

**Over 14 cohorts in Victoria, 769 TFA Associates have commenced teaching in 119 Victorian schools as part of the LDP:**

- 98% have been placed in eligible government schools<sup>3</sup>;
- 50% have been placed in regional, rural or remote schools;
- 44% teach STEM subjects;
- 55% have advanced degrees;
- 59% came to TFA as career-changers or young professionals.

There are currently 138 TFA Associates at Victorian government schools, with more than half in regional communities.

In recruiting for the LDP, TFA has focused on providing teachers to the schools and positions that need them most. Since 2010, this has meant increasing the proportion of Associates placed in regional Victoria from 32% in 2010 to 51% in 2023, and increasing the proportion of those teaching STEM subjects in Victoria from 25% in 2010 to 41% in 2023.

## TFA Alumni continue to have an impact in Victorian schools

94% of Associates that commenced teaching in Victoria complete the two-year TFA program.

Our in-program completion rates are higher than mainstream ITE pathways – on current AITSL data, only 78% of postgraduates and 51% of undergraduates complete mainstream ITE<sup>4</sup>.

In 2023, 82% of the 573 Victoria LDP Alumni were working in the education sector, including 69% working as teachers and leaders in schools.

Of those working in schools, 43% hold a position of school leadership.

**We are proud that there are 134 TFA LDP alumni currently in leadership roles in the Victorian Government school system, including 20 in principal-class positions.**

As a community, TFA Associates and Alumni working in Victorian schools since 2010 have reached over 290,000 students.

## Improving measures to recruit and retain teachers

Victoria, as with other Australian states, is facing an unprecedented teacher supply and retention challenge. As forecast by the Commonwealth's 2022 Teacher Workforce Shortages Issues Paper (2022), "[national] demand for secondary teachers will exceed the supply of new graduate teachers

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<sup>3</sup> TFA places a minimum of 90 per cent of its national LDP participants in schools with an Index of Community Economic Advantage (ICSEA) value equal to or below the national median (1000), which is a marker of educational disadvantage.

<sup>4</sup> Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) workforce data, 2020  
<https://www.aitsl.edu.au/research/australian-teacher-workforce-data>



by around 4,100 between 2021 to 2025<sup>5</sup>. Growing student enrolments, declining ITE enrolments and an ageing teacher workforce are noted among the key drivers.

With respect to teacher attraction and retention, TFA suggests that Victoria continues to commit to measures that inject additional, high-quality teachers to schools where they are most needed.

As TFA's LDP has already proven:

- Teaching is an attractive career option for high-performing university graduates, despite claims to the contrary.
- Employment-based ITE pathways are well-suited to career changers.
- Candidates can be effectively supported to lead classes from their first year when given quality coaching, mentoring and school support.
- Intentional recruitment can bring more high-calibre people willing and motivated to serve disadvantaged communities and hard-to-staff schools.
- Employment-based ITE pathways are cost-effective, able to produce high-quality teachers and scalable.

### Removing barriers to post-graduate ITE pathways

TFA strongly supports the removal of barriers for mid-career professionals to from other backgrounds to enter teaching.

Some of the barriers to entry into teaching, as identified by TFA's Recruitment and Admissions teams in their work supporting and assessing almost 16,000 applications for the LDP, include:

- Financial and opportunity cost of completing a two-year, full-time Master of Teaching degree.
- Subject-eligibility limitations for enrolment to the Master of Teaching.
- Recognition of prior professional experience.
- Personal circumstance and responsibilities.

### Increasing access to coaching and mentoring for early career teachers

Throughout the two-year LDP, TFA provides wraparound, high-quality coaching and mentoring support for Associates. Access to coaching and mentoring support is a critical element of TFA's success in creating classroom-ready graduates who continue to teach and lead in schools.

To increase classroom readiness and contribute to retention across the teaching profession, TFA suggests:

- Consideration be given to ITE models that enable high quality coaching support for participants during their practicums.
- That it should be standard practice for all new teachers to be supported with formal coaching and mentoring in their early years, and schools should be resourced to provide this.

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<sup>5</sup> Ministerial Media Release, Minister Jason Clare - 8 Aug 2022  
<https://ministers.education.gov.au/clare/teacher-workforce-shortages-issues-paper>

