



Australian Government
Department of Education

Our Ref IS22-000011

Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment References Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Ms Osbourne

Thank you for your letter of 30 November 2022 to Dr Bruniges AM, Secretary of the Department of Education, inviting the Department to provide a submission to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee on the Inquiry into disruption in Australian school classrooms.

The Department notes the Inquiry's terms of reference and would like to provide the Committee with information on measures being implemented by the Australian Government to support teachers and students and encourage the development of safe and engaging classrooms with less disruption.

In 2022 the Quality Initial Teacher Education Review found that many initial teacher education (ITE) graduates are under-prepared in a number of key areas, including classroom management, and recommended that ITE programs be strengthened to deliver confident, effective, classroom-ready graduates. In response, a Teacher Education Expert Panel has been established. Chaired by Professor Mark Scott AO, the Panel will provide advice to Australian Education Ministers on reforms in a range of areas, including on strengthening ITE programs, and with particular attention on teaching reading, literacy and numeracy, classroom management, cultural responsiveness, teaching students with diverse needs and working with families and carers.

On 16 December 2022, Australian Education Ministers released the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan which sets out a clear pathway for addressing the national issue of teacher workforce shortages. The Action Plan builds on initiatives already underway in jurisdictions, sectors and individual schools and is the first step of an ongoing strategy to attract more people to the profession and retain more teachers in the workforce. The Australian Government is investing \$328 million to implement initiatives across the Plan's five priority areas. This includes \$5 million for the design and delivery of three microcredential professional learning courses at low or no cost for teachers. With a foundation in evidence-based practice, the microcredential courses will be focussed in three identified areas of need: classroom management, phonics and explicit teaching. This initiative will support the current teaching workforce to utilise evidence-based professional learning to promote quality teaching and improve student outcomes.

Through national education agencies: the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL); Education Services Australia (ESA); and the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA), the Australian Government is supporting the professional development of pre-service teachers, practising teachers and school leaders. The Government is also investing \$3.5 million for the Australian Educational Research Organisation (AERO) to develop evidence-based guidance and tools specifically to support effective classroom management. AERO will develop

professional learning resources to support primary and secondary teachers to develop and implement effective routines and approaches that maximise student engagement in their own classrooms, and school leaders and teaching teams to develop and implement whole-school positive behaviour management systems.

While student disability and classroom disruption are not synonymous (all students are capable of being disruptive), the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability has heard that students with disability are at times disciplined for poor behaviour rather than being provided with reasonable adjustments such as behaviour support measures. All schools have legal obligations through the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and its subordinate legislation, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 (Standards), to support students with disability. This includes providing reasonable adjustments to ensure that students with disability can access and participate in education on the same basis as their non-disabled peers, and to prevent discrimination, harassment and victimisation of students with disability. The 2020 Review of the Standards found that enhanced teacher knowledge of, and capability to support students with disability, would lead to better education experiences and outcomes for students with disability.

To support the objectives of the Standards, and to assist teachers and other staff in supporting students with disability, the Department of Education is working with ESA and the AITSL to develop new resources on the Standards that provide good practice examples for teachers and schools leaders on how to meet their obligations under the Standards. These resources have been developed in consultation with key stakeholders and experts in inclusive education and will be available in 2023. Additionally, the Australian Government's Positive Partnerships program has developed a range of short courses to help teachers better support autistic students in classrooms and schools.

Like students with disability, literature suggests that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are overrepresented in school discipline statistics, and stakeholders have identified that the onus tends to be placed on students as the problem, rather than school systems, when outcomes are not achieved. In November 2022, following a four-year project sponsored by the Australian Government, AITSL published tools and resources to support the cultural competency of teachers. The tools encourage all teachers to self-reflect on their intercultural capability and unconscious biases to enable them to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

I trust this information is of interest to the Committee. If the Committee wishes to discuss the measures outlined or related matters, please contact Ms Genevieve Watson, Assistant Secretary, Teaching Branch

Yours sincerely

Meg Brighton
Deputy Secretary
Department of Education

13 April 2023