

Introduction

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL) is pleased to respond to the Joint Standing Committee on Migration’s inquiry into the value of skilled migration to Australia.

Since 2006, AITSL has been the gazetted authority for assessing the skills of individuals who wish to migrate to Australia as teachers, and currently delivers skills assessments for seven teacher occupations¹. AITSL views its role as an assessing authority as critical to maximising outcomes for Australian learners, by supporting the supply and quality of teachers migrating to Australia, and maintaining the quality of teaching in our classrooms.

As the national body for teachers and school leaders operating across all levels of the education sector in Australia – and at the intersection of multiple Commonwealth, state, and territory departments, systems and sectors – AITSL has a deep understanding of the requirements of the skills, knowledge and attributes required to be a teacher in Australia..

AITSL’s remit is to define, elevate and support quality teaching and school leadership to maximise the learning of every child and young person in all Australian schools and early learning settings. Our work extends to teachers at all stages of their professional career, including their training through initial teacher education (ITE) and ongoing skill development, through to leadership roles. AITSL also leads the national conversation on teacher workforce supply through its implementation of the [Australian Teacher Workforce Data \(ATWD\) initiative](#) on behalf of Education Ministers.

Economic, social and cultural value of skilled migration to Australia

AITSL acknowledges the valuable expertise migrant teachers can contribute to Australia’s educational and economic development. They play a small but critical role in alleviating teacher shortages, whilst also bringing greater diversity to the teaching profession.

Economic value

AITSL’s skills assessment data indicates two clear cohorts of applicants, demonstrating that skilled migrants contribute via multiple pathways. AITSL sees skilled migration applicants that:

- have studied their ITE overseas, and are generally migrating to Australia as an experienced teacher
- have completed their teacher qualifications in Australia; generally younger applicants with limited or nil teaching experience.

Teacher shortage remains a key issue across Australia, and in December 2022, Education Ministers agreed on a [National Teacher Workforce Action Plan](#) with increasing teacher supply being a priority. Skilled migration is one measure that contributes to addressing this issue and this

¹ The seven teacher occupations include: Primary School Teacher, Middle School Teacher, Secondary School Teacher, Special Needs Teacher, Teacher of the Hearing Impaired, Teacher of the Sight Impaired, Special Education Teachers.

has been acknowledged through Ministerial Direction No. 100, which prioritises the processing of skilled visa applications in relation to all teaching occupations.

National data in the Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) has enabled analysis of the workforce who have migrated to Australia to teach. In 2023:

- Six per cent (6%) of all classroom teachers held ITE qualifications obtained overseas.
- Eighteen (18%) of all classroom teachers in Australia were born overseas.
- Nine per cent (9%) of students commencing an ITE qualification in Australia were international students.
- Teachers with an overseas ITE qualification were more likely (35%) to intend to remain in the profession until retirement than teachers with an Australian ITE qualification (25%).

Migrant teachers will continue to be an asset in ensuring children and young people in Australia have access to quality teachers. The ATWD indicates that over a period of 18 years (2005 to 2023) there has been little change in the numbers of students commencing and completing their teaching qualification, whereas the overall population of school age children and young people continues to increase.

Alongside initiatives to attract more people into teaching, and to retain those who are part of the profession, attracting skilled migrant teachers has become an important component of education employer recruitment. In particular, the large employers such as individual state and territory governments have specifically focussed on attracting migrant teachers to their jurisdictions; for example, the Western Australian Government provides specific information and relocation support aimed at international teachers.²

Social and cultural value

Migrant teachers bring with them a range of cultural experiences and backgrounds that can have a positive impact in our classrooms. Multiculturalism or cultural diversity is regarded as a positive element by Australians, as evidenced in the *Australian General Social Survey*³. In this survey of the social characteristics, wellbeing and social experiences of people in Australia, 85% people agreed that it is 'a good thing for a society to be made up of people from different cultures'¹.

Migrant teachers and school leaders, those born overseas and/or trained overseas do more than supplement the teacher workforce. As outlined in the AITSL publication *Pathways to teaching in Australia*⁴ overseas trained teachers bring a range of educational, cultural and language experiences that make for a more diverse education sector. Research highlights that a teacher workforce reflecting broader society promotes intercultural competence and gives students a balanced picture of society, so they can better complete in a globalised world.

Australian classrooms are becoming more diverse; however, this is not matched by similar diversity in the teaching workforce. The 2024 Teaching and Learning International Survey (TALIS) conducted by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) noted that in Australia 34% of

² Department of Education WA, (2025) [Overseas qualified teachers](#), accessed 21 November 2025

³ Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), (2022) [General Social Survey: Summary Results](#), Australia

⁴ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), (2025), [Pathways to teaching in Australia](#), accessed 26 November 2025

teachers work in schools where the share of students whose first language is not the language of instruction is above 10%.⁵

Welcoming overseas trained educators promotes multiculturalism and improves the cultural and linguistic diversity that may be lacking in many Australian education workplaces and communities. Migrant teachers bring the benefits of cultural exchange. They can act as role models and assist migrant students in feeling less isolated, as well as teaching Australian-born students about the world.⁶

It is also reported that teachers who are not from the dominant culture are more likely to engage in culturally relevant pedagogy, more willing to embrace multicultural education, and are more empathetic to, and can act as advocates for, children and young people from diverse backgrounds. Further to their value as a role model, minority teachers can raise career aspirations of minority ethnic students. Having a personal, lived understanding of racism is a sobering 'benefit' of being a minority teacher.⁷

The scope for skilled migration settings to more effectively support Australian businesses, boost productivity and encourage innovation

Visa pathways

The multiple pathways offered in the Australian skilled migration program enable potential migrants, schools and employers to identify avenues that work best for their context. In the teaching occupations, AITSL is aware that a range of migration pathways are utilised including, employer-nominated, state- and territory- nominated and general skilled migration.

It is also worth noting the potential overlap between employer- and state- and territory- nominated pathways in a sector such as teaching, where government departments are the predominant employer.

Greater availability or utilisation of state- and territory-nominated visas, along with employer-nominated visas, which can direct and tie migrants to areas of workforce need, could be an effective model of supporting employers and the sector. This is particularly relevant in an occupation like teaching where it is an essential service delivered in metropolitan, regional and remote areas and incentives may be needed to attract candidates to the areas of most need.

Visa pathways that do not directly tie to employment within the nominated occupation also create the potential for successful visa applicants to work in other professions and not contribute to identified workforce needs. Through AITSL's skills assessment process, candidates have been identified that – while meeting the qualification and English language requirements for a skills assessment – do not have the pathway of qualifications typically seen for an applicant genuinely pursuing a teaching career. In AITSL's experience, this is particularly the case with applicants who are recent ITE graduates, have nil or limited teaching experience, and have predominately studied onshore in Australia.

⁵ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), (2024) [Results from TALIS 2024 – Country notes: Australia](#), accessed 26 November 2025

⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), (2025) [Setting up for success](#), accessed 26 November 2025

⁷ Basit, T. N., & Santoro, N. (2021). Playing the role of 'cultural expert': Teachers of ethnic difference in Britain and Australia. *Oxford Review of Education*, 37(1), 35-52

Visas linked to work rights, particularly tied to specific occupations or location, would bring greater certainty around the impact applicants for skilled visas will make to skill and labour shortages.

Assessing authorities and skills assessments

The role of assessing authorities is a critical factor in the skilled migration system, providing a consistent foundational framework to the determination of skills. Predominately operating at a national level, the role of a skills assessment determined by an authorised body gives confidence to all potential employers that candidates verified as suitable for their nominated occupation will have demonstrated the skills needed to be successfully employed in Australia. The skills assessment process generates a pool of potential candidates for employers and businesses, all assessed consistently against publicly available criteria, making it a transparent process for potential migrants.

The skills assessment process conducted by assessing authorities complements registration and licensing requirements in relevant occupations, however, provides additional value to the migration process. It is targeted at a visa process and can be amended in response to employer and workforce needs, which is not the case for professional regulation. As in the case in the teaching profession, registration may also be tailored towards specific jurisdictional needs rather than national requirements, it may not be specific to an occupation and may allow aspects of the requirements to be met across a period of time. A strong skills assessment process, with criteria aligned with professional registration or licensing requirements, is complementary but retains its value as a point in time assessment of an applicant's skills in order to meet predetermined workforce expectations and resourcing needs, as determined by government.

Conclusion

In summary, recruiting and welcoming migrant teachers to Australia presents a set of benefits to our education sector and classrooms, enhancing the supply of teachers and helping to build a teaching workforce that is representative of the diversity in the wider community.

The skilled migration system supports the attraction of potential migrants, providing multiple visa pathways and, via assessing authorities, a clear and national determination of the skills required for listed occupations. Opportunities to tie visa pathways to occupations or location may further enhance the current process.