

24 July 2023

Sarah Redden
Acting Committee Secretary
Senate Education and Employment Committees

eec.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Ms Redden,

Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

Thank you for your correspondence of 27 June 2023 regarding questions on notice put by the Senate Education and Employment References Committee in relation to its inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters.

On behalf of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership Limited (AITSL), I am pleased to provide a response to these questions on notice at **Attachment 1**.

The remit of AITSL is to provide national leadership for the Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership. AITSL has not been commissioned to do any work associated with school refusal and does not hold or produce research on student attendance and performance.

I note that as outlined in the [Communiqué](#) from the Education Ministers Meeting held on 27 February 2023, Ministers discussed national trends in school attendance, and commissioned the Australian Education Research Organisation to investigate the causes of declining attendance and provide advice to Ministers on evidence-based approaches that support attendance. I understand school refusal is a factor affecting school attendance.

If AITSL can be of further assistance to the Committee in relation to this inquiry or any other matter, please don't hesitate to contact me via email to

Yours sincerely,

Mark Grant PSM
Chief Executive Officer

Attachment 1: AITSL response to questions on notice

Inquiry into the national trend of school refusal and related matters

Question

1. What research has been done on school refusal?
 - a. Has any research been done on the impact to student performance?
2. Are there any suggested policy setting changes or programs that could assist students impacted by school refusal to academically achieve or correct academic performance?

Answer

1. AITSL has not been commissioned to conduct research on school refusal. However, AITSL does publish 'Spotlight' reports, synthesising the latest educational evidence relevant to Australia's teaching profession on issues relating to AITSL's remit.

In 2019, AITSL published [*Spotlight: Attendance matters*](#). The Spotlight outlined Australian attendance data available at that time, impacts of non-attendance, factors influencing attendance and evidence-informed approaches to addressing non-attendance.

AITSL notes that on 27 February 2023, Ministers commissioned the Australian Education Research Organisation to investigate the causes of declining attendance and provide advice to Ministers on evidence-based approaches that support attendance.

2. The AITSL *Spotlight: Attendance matters* identifies three opportunities for teachers and school leaders to address non-attendance:
 - Set positive attendance habits in the early years of schooling.
 - Create a welcoming school environment for students by involving families and communities in purposeful, authentic and ethical ways.
 - Include detailed collection of information about individual absences to enable schools to identify 'at-risk' students and intervene early.

Separately, AITSL has recently provided policy recommendations in its submissions to the Productivity Commission's Review of the National School Reform Agreement ([*Initial Submission*](#) and [*Final Submission*](#)) that could support improved academic performance by school students, including those impacted by school refusal.