

IMPACT AGENDA



THE UNIVERSITY OF
NEWCASTLE
AUSTRALIA

TEACHERS
& TEACHING
RESEARCH CENTRE

TEACHERS AND TEACHING RESEARCH CENTRE IMPACT AGENDA: 2025-2028

The Alice Springs (Mparntwe) Education Declaration lays out a vision for an Australian education system that supports every student to be the best they can be, no matter where they live or the learning challenges they face.

The Teachers and Teaching Research Centre at the University of Newcastle outlines its three key education priorities for the next term of federal parliament that will support the government, schools, teachers and the wider community to deliver on this vision.

PRIORITY 1

QUALITY TEACHING FOR ALL TEACHERS AT ALL CAREER STAGES

Quality Teaching Rounds is one of the most rigorously evaluated education interventions in Australia. Successive [randomised controlled trials](#) have demonstrated it improves the quality of teaching, teacher morale, school culture, and student academic achievement, with greater effects in disadvantaged schools. These transformative outcomes come from just four days of professional development, with a Deloitte Access Economics [cost benefit analysis](#) demonstrating an uplift to gross state product of between \$40 and \$150 for every dollar invested in Quality Teaching Rounds.

On the back of this research, Quality Teaching Rounds received bipartisan funding commitments during the 2022 federal election campaign. This expansion of the program was implemented by the Australian Government through a \$5M grant as part of the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan. The initiative, which is [providing Quality Teaching Rounds professional development for 1,600 teachers](#), is designed to help address teacher retention and teacher professionalism while lifting teaching quality and student outcomes.

At the half-way point of this grant, almost 800 teachers from 200 schools in all states and sectors have participated. The initiative joins beginning teachers with more experienced colleagues to participate in Quality Teaching Rounds as part of their induction. Both beginning and experienced teachers are reporting reduced burnout, improved confidence, and improved self-efficacy overall and in the specific areas of student engagement, instructional strategies and behaviour management.



POLICY INITIATIVE 1: ENABLE MORE TEACHERS TO PARTICIPATE IN QUALITY TEACHING ROUNDS

We recommend funding for this initiative continues beyond the current 2026 end date and is expanded to include teachers returning to the workforce, new teachers in schools (not necessarily early career), casual teachers, and all teachers in small, rural, and remote schools regardless of their years of experience.

POLICY INITIATIVE 2: EMBED QUALITY TEACHING IN INITIAL TEACHER EDUCATION

We recommend initial teacher education providers are encouraged to use the Quality Teaching Model as a framework to develop pre-service teachers' understanding of the key dimensions of high-quality practice and support their transition to the workforce. Funding to enable students to complete a free Quality Teaching microcredential prior to final internship would improve outcomes extending through their early career. Uptake and impact of this microcredential could be further strengthened through sector-wide adoption of the Newcastle Teacher Performance Assessment which uses the Quality Teaching Model to facilitate feedback for students on internship.

PRIORITY 2

SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS FOR IMPROVING EQUITY

Between 2020 and 2024, Cessnock High School, one of the most disadvantaged schools in the NSW Hunter region, partnered with the University of Newcastle on a whole-school approach to Quality Teaching Rounds. In 2023, [Cessnock High School](#) ranked first in the Hunter region and 11th in the state for NAPLAN growth from Year 7 to 9. Cessnock students' HSC results also improved by more than 50 per cent in 2022 and 2023. In 2024, Cessnock High ranked second in NSW for its improvement in Bands 4, 5 and 6 HSC results.

Student attendance and engagement grew by seven per cent – triple the state average. Positive behaviour referrals were up 130 per cent in 2023 while negative behaviours significantly decreased.

In a new initiative based on the Cessnock model and other partnerships with schools, TTRC researchers are now [supporting 20 NSW government schools](#) with high concentrations of disadvantage to achieve equivalent results. This project is designed to demonstrate the impact and scalability of these research-practice partnerships throughout Australia.

POLICY INITIATIVE 1: EXPAND RESEARCH-PRACTICE PARTNERSHIPS TO SUPPORT DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS ACROSS AUSTRALIA

The longstanding trend of the poorest Australian students being overrepresented in the poorest public schools is worsening. At Cessnock High School, for example, more than 75 per cent of students are in the lowest socio-educational quartile. Across Australia, almost 400 (mostly government) schools have at least this proportion of enrolments from the lowest quartile. Overwhelmingly, students at these schools feature among those not meeting the minimum proficiency standards in literacy and numeracy.

We recommend the Government provides the policy conditions -- including funding, administrative support and quarantined professional learning time -- to enable such schools to form research-practice partnerships focused on Quality Teaching Rounds thereby improving literacy and numeracy outcomes and narrowing equity gaps.

POLICY INITIATIVE 2: ROLL-OUT THE CULTURALLY RESPONSIVE QUALITY TEACHING PROGRAM

The culturally responsive quality teaching program is an Indigenous-led, evidence-based approach that draws together key elements from the University's sector-leading Cultural Capability Framework and training package, its work on leading Aboriginal education, and Quality Teaching Rounds.

It has been designed to improve the educational outcomes of Indigenous students, specifically those measured under the Closing the Gap agenda, by building partnerships between schools with a high proportion of Indigenous students, the University, and local Indigenous communities.

We recommend this culturally responsive quality teaching program be funded in line with the [pre-budget submission](#) prepared by the University of Newcastle.



PRIORITY 3

ENHANCING POST-SCHOOL EDUCATION

The Universities Accord set a target for 80 per cent of the Australian workforce to hold a VET or university qualification by 2050, with a focus on increasing the representation of Australians from disadvantaged backgrounds in tertiary and higher education degrees. The knowledge and skills provided by VET and university courses will be essential in meeting the work, employment, and productivity needs of a future Australia.

The Accord highlighted the need to improve the quality of teaching offered by VET and higher education institutions to improve learning outcomes and the student experience. It recommended a focus on high quality professional development for teaching staff across the sector.

The Accord also argued for the need to lift the aspirations of students from target equity groups -- students in rural and remote communities, Indigenous students and those from disadvantaged backgrounds. We note, however, our groundbreaking [Aspirations longitudinal program of research](#) found that rather than 'lacking' aspiration, students from underrepresented equity groups often foreclose on the idea of higher education and are more likely to be enrolled in schools lacking the resources and staffing to provide adequate career education.

POLICY INITIATIVE 1: PROVIDE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT IN QUALITY TEACHING FOR EDUCATORS IN VOCATIONAL AND HIGHER EDUCATION

[Quality Teaching academic development](#) has already been successfully piloted and implemented at the University of Newcastle, [demonstrating effectiveness](#) for academics teaching in diverse disciplines, regardless of their teaching experience. Quality Teaching academic development supports the analysis of practice, course planning, peer review of teaching, and the formation of communities of practice, resulting in improved student learning and experiences of higher education. This approach has also been successfully piloted in vocational education settings.

We recommend universities and TAFEs be encouraged to embed this course in their suite of professional learning offerings.

POLICY INITIATIVE 2: PROVIDE EVIDENCE-BASED CAREER EDUCATION TO TEACHERS, PARENTS/CARERS AND FAMILY MEMBERS.

The University of Newcastle's Aspirations research led to the development of [two free online professional development courses](#) to support adults in nurturing aspirations.

- Aspirations: Supporting Students' Futures, an online course for Australian teachers and school leaders; and,
- When I Grow Up: Supporting Children's Aspirations, an online course for parents, carers, family members and community members.

These courses stand apart from other available offerings in drawing on this decade-long program of research. They treat all adults as fundamental to a well-functioning career guidance ecosystem that better prepares young people for their post-school futures.

We recommend support be provided to make these courses more widely accessible in schools and the community.