Teacher Retention Network:
2026 policy briefing

Preamble

The Teacher Retention Network (TRN) was established by researchers leading major Australian Research Council- and Australian Government-funded projects focused on some of the most pressing challenges facing Australia's teaching workforce. Since the inaugural meeting in 2023, the TRN provided a forum for sharing insights, learning about methodological approaches, and bringing diverse findings into dialogue.

This document summarises work undertaken across TRN projects, detailing key findings and policy recommendations. Collectively, this evidence-based resource offers critical knowledge to support teacher retention and workforce sustainability.

Projects

Project: Invisible labour: Principals' emotional labour in volatile times (2023-2026, Australian Research Council Discovery Scheme)

Investigators: Professor Jane Wilkinson, Professor Lucas Walsh, Dr Christine Grice, Dr Fiona Longmuir, Dr Philippa Chandler, Professor Amanda Keddie and Tim Delany

Purpose of project

This project aims to influence policy reform, workforce development and public awareness to better support the emotional wellbeing of principals.

Our study has three overarching key objectives:

(i) Develop a theoretically rigorous conceptualisation of public-school principals' work that addresses the intensified emotional demands of the role in times of heightened social divisions;

(ii) Generate a robust evidence base to inform scholarship, education policy and workforce development reforms to enable educational systems and principals to recognise and productively manage these new and intensified forms of labour; and

(iii) Develop theoretical and practical tools to better understand, prepare and support principals and systems to manage the increasingly complex emotional demands that characterise principals' work.

Method and sample

The study uses a multi-method qualitative approach, including 298 critical incident testimonies from 256 public school principals, 28 stakeholder interviews and focus groups, a policy audit, and four case studies of emotional labour in diverse school settings.

The project has been designed to support an activist stance, amplifying principal voices and advocating for public education as a public good.

Key findings

1. **Principals face escalating psychosocial risks**, including burnout, exposure to violence, emotional exhaustion, and trauma.

2. **Violence in schools is rising and becoming normalised**, with over 60% of principals reporting physical or gendered violence, threats, harassment, or abuse.

3. **Emotional labour is a core but unrecognised part of the role**, requiring principals to suppress personal emotions, mediate community conflict, and manage crises.

4. **Principals increasingly act as first responders** (quasi–police, counsellors, paramedics) during critical incidents without formal support or training.

5. **Gendered impacts are significant**, with women principals most affected by harassment and violence.

6. **Rural, remote and low-SES school principals face disproportionate burdens**, including isolation, complex trauma, community-wide crises, high poverty, and severe under-resourcing.

7. **Systemic underfunding and bureaucratic overload exacerbate emotional and physical strain**, leading to moral injury and deteriorating wellbeing.

8. **Perceived employer neglect is widespread**, especially after critical incidents, driving distrust, attrition, and feelings of abandonment.

9. **Lack of formal recognition of psychosocial risk** in role descriptions and standards leaves principals unprotected in legislation and WHS frameworks.
10. **Support structures are inconsistent and inadequate,** though peer networks, clinical supervision pilots and Designated Working Groups [DWGs] show strong promise.
11. **Teacher and principal workforce pipelines are declining**, with fewer teachers aspiring to leadership due to unsustainable emotional demands.
12. **Equity gaps persist**, with insufficient culturally safe supports for Indigenous, minority, and historically excluded principals and communities.

Recommendations

1. **Fully fund public schools to 100% of SRS** to mitigate systemic drivers of psychosocial harm and school-based violence.
2. **Embed psychosocial risk and principal wellbeing** into state and territory role descriptions, WHS frameworks, and accountability structures.
3. **Establish a national plan to address school violence**, including gendered and community-based violence, with a federal-state implementation framework.
4. **Recognise principals as first responders** and provide mandatory training for crisis, trauma and critical-incident management.
5. **Create and resource clinical/professional supervision access** for all principals at all career stages, independent of line management.
6. **Convene a federal–state policy roundtable** to modernise principal role descriptions, standards, and workload expectations.
7. **Strengthen safety and support for rural, remote, and disadvantaged schools,** including restructured regional governance and increased support staff (e.g., counsellors, youth workers, special needs and wellbeing specialists).
8. **Legislate protections against occupational violence**, supported by fair and consistent systems for managing parent and community aggression.
9. **Invest in school–community partnerships and public respect campaigns,** aimed at reducing hostility and building trust across diverse communities.
10. **Develop a workforce pipeline strategy** to diversify the principalship, support early-career leaders, and address the decline in aspirants to the principalship.

Project: Strengthening Induction through Quality Teaching Rounds (2023-2027, Australian Government)

Investigators: Distinguished Laureate Professor Jenny Gore AM, Dr Drew Miller, Dr Sally Patfield, Dr Leanne Fray, Professor Nicole Mockler

Purpose of project

Funded through the National Teacher Workforce Action Plan (2022) under priority area three ('keeping the teachers we have'), this national scaling project aims to support teacher retention by providing Quality Teaching Rounds (QTR) professional development to 1,600 teachers between 2023 and 2027. QTR is a collaborative, school-based form of professional development that has been found to produce positive effects for teachers and students through successive randomised controlled trials.

Method and sample

Teachers from all Australian schools are eligible to participate in this project. To take part in QTR, schools can form any number of professional learning communities (PLCs), each comprising four teachers, with a minimum of two early career teachers (three or less years full-time equivalent) and a maximum of two experienced teachers (more than three years full-time equivalent). Teachers in each PLC can come from any grade or subject area and to support the participation of small, rural and remote schools, networks of schools can also form PLCs.

Data are being collected in the form of pre- and post-QTR surveys using an interrupted time series design, meaning participants complete the same survey twice (a week apart) before and after their engagement in QTR. Semi-structured interviews are also being conducted with a sub-sample of teachers from 20% of participating schools, as well as with school leaders who are coordinating implementation within their settings.

As of February 2026, 928 teachers (541 early career teacher and 387 more experienced) have been trained in QTR, and interviews have been conducted with 106 teachers (41 early career, 43 experienced and 22 school leaders) from across all states and sectors.

Key findings

The project provides the following key insights into the state of induction in Australian schools:

1. **Induction experiences vary more by school, rather than state or sector.** Quality induction remains heavily contingent on access to school resources – both financial and human resources.
2. **The dominant technical focus of induction narrows teachers' development,** with compliance-oriented induction activities such as classroom management, teacher registration, and onboarding given priority over teachers' core work—pedagogy.
3. **Mentoring, classroom observation and release time are the three most commonly used structures for induction.** Most of these accommodations conclude, by design or default, within the first-year or upon fulfilment of accreditation requirements. Focusing solely on short-term accommodations risks undermining essential long-term capacity building.
4. **Hierarchical relationships are central to the implementation of induction but limit teacher autonomy and opportunities for collaborative growth.** Ongoing personal and collective development can be constrained by top-down approaches, such as the allocation of grade, subject or accreditation supervisors and even by informal more experienced mentors.

Importantly, for both early career and more experienced teachers, participation in QTR is:

5. **Increasing teacher retention.** When asked to indicate their intention to leave the profession within the next six months on a scale from 0 (not at all likely) to 10 (extremely likely), almost 40% of those who had previously indicated some intention to leave changed their response to 0 following participation in QTR. Notably, two thirds of those rating their intention to leave as 7-10 no longer plan to resign.
6. **Increasing teacher wellbeing with reduced burnout and increased shared vision, trust and respect, connectedness to school, and collegial connections.**
7. **Increasing teacher efficacy in overall effective practice, classroom management, instructional strategies, and student engagement.**
8. **Enhancing professional knowledge** by providing valuable insights into their own and others' practice and greater clarity about quality teaching.
9. **Enhancing professional practice** through supporting pedagogical change, with perceived flow-on effects for improving students' learning.
10. **Improving professional wellbeing** by increasing confidence and providing opportunities for reflection and re/affirmation.

Recommendations for policy makers

1. **Strengthen effective induction across Australian schools by:**
   a. Recognising the importance of building teacher capacity beyond meeting technical or basic requirements.
   b. Embedding more consistent support structures for early career teachers, especially in schools where resources are scarce.
   c. Fostering less-hierarchical relational environments for induction to ensure teacher collaboration and growth across all career stages.
2. **Improve impact of the induction guidelines** by clarifying characteristics of effective induction programs, including substantive, structural and relational aspects.
3. **Develop national targets to track measurable improvement in early career teacher access to induction supports** (i.e. the AITSL National Teacher Workforce Data).
   a. Convene a federal-state working group to ensure national consistency, clarify stakeholder involvement in induction activities, and drive effective induction practices.
4. **Create and resource evidence-backed teacher development programs that align with the policy aspirations for effective induction and a strong teacher workforce.**
   a. Continue to fund Quality Teaching Rounds, which has been demonstrated to improve induction experiences, boost retention, teacher wellbeing and student outcomes.

Project: Still standing: A study of the impact of 'teacher turnover' on those teachers who remain teaching (2023-2026, Australia Research Discovery Scheme)

Investigators: Professor Jo Lampert, Dr Amy McPherson, Professor Bruce Burnett, Dr Alonso Casanueva Baptista and Ms Amelia Hawkins

Purpose of project

This project investigates the lived experiences of teachers during a period of unprecedented teacher shortages. While previous studies have examined the causes of teacher shortages, this project makes a significant contribution to the literature on teacher retention by shifting the focus to teachers who remain in the profession. By addressing retention in this way, the findings provide a much deeper understanding of how education systems, as well as individual schools, support teachers who continue to work under these conditions.

This study examines the experiences and challenges faced by teachers in hard-to-staff schools to inform the development of responses that recognise the pressures shaping their working lives, improve their working conditions, enhance student learning, and inform education workforce policy at both State and Commonwealth levels.

Method and sample

In this project we take an ethnographic case study design to examine the lived experiences of teachers during a period of unprecedented teacher shortages. An ethnographic analysis of teacher shortages in hard-to-staff schools serves a different purpose from supply-and-demand workforce analyses or policy responses to the workforce crisis. Whereas workforce reports quantify such things as vacancy rates and attrition patterns, ethnography explains how shortages are lived, interpreted, and managed within everyday school life. Fieldwork was conducted across nine State schools in three Australian states, Victoria, New South Wales, and Queensland, and involved 58 teachers and school leaders. The school sites included those in metropolitan, rural and remote locations across the regions. Data were gathered using multiple qualitative methods. Two researchers spent up to one week at each school site, engaging closely with participants through interviews, observations of daily work practices, informal conversations, and the collection of daily reflective journal entries.

Key findings

1. **Teacher attrition and shortages have significant effects on the teachers who remain in high-turnover schools ("stayers").** Persistent workforce instability disrupts instructional continuity, increases workload, and undermines collegial relationships and organisational functioning across multiple dimensions of school life. These conditions shape teachers' professional practice and emotional wellbeing and play a critical role in influencing their decisions about whether to remain in the school or the profession.
2. **Workforce precarity has emerged as a systemic issue, with implications for the sustainability and quality of teaching in schools.** Schools are increasingly relying on employment-based pathways, provisional teachers, Permission to Teach staff, and support workers to fill classrooms. While these measures keep classes staffed, building a stable and high-quality teaching workforce requires major changes to teacher status, working conditions, role clarity, autonomy, and professional agency.
3. **Teacher shortages are not the result of single factors but emerge from interconnected personal, organisational, and institutional conditions.** Understanding teachers lived experiences

within this broader ecological context reveals how workforce instability reflects deeper pressures on the profession, requiring responses that extend from individual schools to system-level reform.

4. **Policy responses to teacher shortages should address the cumulative, system-wide effects of workforce instability in hard-to-staff schools, not just vacancy filling.** Schools experiencing persistent shortages are required to manage high turnover, ongoing induction, out-of-field teaching, increased workloads, and disruption to student relationships simultaneously.

5. **Teachers' work is undergoing significant transformation, with implications for retention.** While early-career teachers tend to enter the profession with expectations that are broadly aligned with contemporary role demands, many mid- and late-career teachers experience a growing misalignment between their original professional aspirations and the realities of their current work.

6. **Informal and incidental mentoring in hard-to-staff schools is widespread and intensifying.** As workforce policies prioritise attracting and recruiting new teachers, hard-to-staff schools, where many early career teachers begin, have become key sites of induction and support. These findings highlight the need for policies to consider distributional effects of recruitment and better resource mentoring and retention in hard-to-staff schools.

7. **Teachers in hard-to-staff schools are increasingly relied upon to sustain schooling through care exploitation.** These arrangements contribute to cumulative exhaustion, burnout, and decisions to leave the profession.

8. **Work–life conflict is a significant issue for teachers in hard-to-staff schools, despite the historical positioning of teaching as compatible with family life.** The findings show that both time-based and strain-based conflict are shaped by heavy workloads, emotional demands, and professional cultures that sometimes normalise extensive care labour.

Recommendations

1. **Rebalance the current labour-market emphasis on recruitment and supply towards a more balanced approach that prioritises retention, particularly in hard-to-staff schools.** Recognise and intervene at key "walking point" moments across the teaching career span, from early-career teachers to long-serving teachers and school leaders, to support more targeted strategies to reduce attrition. Ensure retention approaches are informed by evidence on why teachers remain in the profession, including professional purpose, supportive leadership, autonomy, and collegiality.

2. **Move beyond short-term vacancy filling to address longer term cumulative effects of chronic instability in hard-to-staff schools.** Persistent shortages generate compounding pressures, including high turnover, continuous induction, out-of-field teaching, increased workloads, and complex student needs. Strategies would prioritise stabilising staffing conditions, reduce turnover, and strengthen organisational capacity.

3. **Explicitly recognise and support the critical work undertaken at the school level to recruit, retain, manage vacancies, and minimise turnover.** Schools are required to address these challenges in real time, often with limited resources. Strengthening school-level capacity in addressing teacher shortages is essential to sustaining staffing stability and improving retention, particularly in hard-to-staff settings.

4. **Embed robust, evidence-based evaluation across teacher recruitment and retention initiatives, particularly those targeting hard-to-staff schools.** Despite substantial investment over the past two decades in teacher education pipelines, financial incentives, and leadership development, the impacts of these approaches, especially on teacher satisfaction and long-term retention, remain insufficiently understood. Strengthening evaluation would support the identification, refinement, and scaling of initiatives that demonstrably improve workforce stability.

Project: Teacher attraction and retention in hard-to-staff schools (2023-2026, Australian Research Council)

Investigators: Professor Martin Mills, Professor Terri Bourke, Professor Simone White, Associate Professor Reece Mills and Associate Professor Lisa van Leent

Purpose of project

The aim of the project is to develop a robust understanding of issues impacting on teacher attraction and retention in hard-to-staff schools in Queensland and their relationship to social justice. These new understandings will enable the identification of wider avenues for teacher recruitment and retention policies in schools and systems nationally and internationally.

Method and sample

The project adopts a qualitative multi methods research design with a longitudinal dimension to explore the research problem from multiple perspectives using three data sets (A, B & C).

- **Data Set A**: Audit of attraction and recruitment strategies. Policy analysis and systems level interviews with HR/staffing officers.
- **Data Set B:** Case studies of 5 schools across regional, rural, remote, and culturally and linguistically diverse and high poverty metropolitan contexts. Interviews with principals and teachers, as well as focus groups with community and students and document collection.
- **Data Set C:** 25 Early career teacher narratives tracked over the three years.

Key findings

Policy Discourses in Australia and England:

1. English and Australian policies both call for a 'strategic and/or significant investment/support in career progression implying its current absence.
2. Teacher shortages are presented as school-level cultural issues associated with workload, or the leadership.
3. Both countries prioritise accelerated pathways and professional standards with limited attention to the broader working conditions.
4. Both refer to a need for further diversity in teacher recruitment with reference in Australia to career changers, skilled migrants, First Nations people and culturally diverse backgrounds.
5. Policies in both countries assume that a coherent career pathway and supportive school culture will increase retention. However, there is an assumed quality and availability of resources for these programmes.
6. Addressing teacher shortages requires a shift towards re-professionalisation and social justice, including joined-up policies beyond education alone.

Social Justice and ITE reform:

7. Recent Australian reforms, particularly *Strong Beginnings*, have intensified government regulation of initial teacher education (ITE), risking the undermining of teacher professionalism by narrowing the scope of educational knowledge.
8. Policy reforms impact ITE content and course design through prescribed mandated "core content" focused on cognitive science, explicit instruction, and behaviour management.
9. Current policy positions ITE as both the cause and the solution to teacher shortages while reshaping accreditation requirements and program design in ways that overlook the structural and systemic factors driving the crisis.

10. Policy reforms fail to address the social justice issues shaping educational experiences and workforce stability including poverty, ethnicity, gender, discrimination, teacher/student voice, and workplace justice, despite these being central challenges for hardest-to-staff schools.

Rural/remote staffing and community fit:

11. The concept of "right fit" has become central to staffing rural and remote schools, emphasising that effective staffing is not just about teacher supply but requires alignment between communities, schools, and teachers to address unique local needs.
12. Teacher recruitment should consider the community–school context, with rural and remote settings requiring suitable context-based personal and professional attributes in teachers, h matching these characteristics leading to stronger staffing outcomes.
13. Sustainable staffing depends on both attraction and retention, showing that retaining teachers is as important as recruiting them and that retention succeeds when teachers feel supported, valued, and embedded within the school community.
14. Community relationships play a critical role in successful staffing initiatives, as strong connections between teachers and local communities support teacher wellbeing and effectiveness and contribute to longer-term stability in rural and remote schools.
15. Policy approaches must move beyond simplistic teacher-supply solutions which rely on narrow representations of teacher shortages and overlook important social-justice considerations. More nuanced, context-responsive staffing strategies are needed.

Recommendations

1. Reframe teacher shortages through (re)professionalisation by restoring teacher autonomy and preserving their roles in curriculum making.
2. Strengthen teacher retention by addressing workload changes targeting government-imposed administration and performativity culture and addressing discrimination to ensure safe and inclusive workplaces.
3. Shift student behaviour management fixes toward a joined up social policy that considers broader social and community factors (housing, food, transport, community wellbeing).
4. Further investments in community infrastructure in low socioeconomic and remote areas.
5. Integrate geographic considerations into policy development and formation to avoid metrocentric policy that marginalises remote and rural voices.
6. Provide redistributive financial support for pre-service and mid-career entrants (especially those with families and existing economic commitments), so aspiring teachers can complete ITE without severe financial stress.
7. Embed social justice as a core tenant in ITE to include foundational learning about poverty, sociology of education, discrimination, and community contexts to equip teachers to work effectively in hardest to staff schools.

Project: Career change teachers: Addressing teacher shortages in Australia (2023-2026, Australian Research Council)

Investigators: Professor Martin Mills, Professor Terri Bourke, Professor Simone White, Associate Professor Reece Mills and Dr Craig Wood

Purpose of project

The study explores career change teachers' learning needs in both initial teacher education (ITE) and in schools, the support mechanisms and resources needed for their retention, their expectations, and experiences of the realities of the teaching profession, and how these are shaped by differences amongst them. The study also considers why they might decide to stay in or leave the profession. This project aims to better understand the differing motivations and experiences of these teachers from diverse backgrounds, and to determine how they can be better prepared and supported through their early years of teaching. A clear benefit of this project will be the longer-term success for career change teachers and their schools and will ensure young people are not disadvantaged by high teacher turnover.

Method and sample

This project adopts a multi-method research design with a longitudinal dimension, comprising quantitative and qualitative data which allows for both a broad and in-depth examination of Initial Teacher Education (ITE), schools and systems, and career change teachers. The ITE data were generated from interviews with 23 Queensland teacher educators, a Queensland Council of Deans of Education (QCDE) focus group, 5 case study schools which included interviews focus groups observations and document collection, a statewide survey of Queensland career change teachers (n=345), Life history interviews were conducted with a sample of those surveyed, and 14 Preservice teacher interviews.

Key findings

Who are career change teachers?

1. CCTs are not a homogenous group. They enter teaching from diverse prior careers and from undergraduate and postgraduate ITE programs and come from vastly different backgrounds in terms of age, gender, and race or culture.
2. CCTs are likely to enter teaching with one or more dependents, so they may face additional challenges during ITE.
3. CCTs felt underprepared by ITE in the areas of classroom management, working with diverse students, and engaging with colleagues and parents.
4. CCTs expressed not experiencing sufficient 'training' to adapt to the teaching profession and had mixed views on the professional learning and opportunities for career progression available to them.
5. CCTs considered leaving the teaching profession because of student behaviour, excessive workload, stress, administrative overload, and poor work-life balance.
6. CCTs see positive relationships with students and colleagues as key aspects to their teaching job satisfaction.
7. While many policies focus on attracting CCTs, retention is a pressing issue with close to 1 in 4 CCTs intending to leave the profession or have already left.

Teacher educator perspectives of career change teachers:

8. CCTs are widely viewed as highly motivated, engaged and intrinsically committed to becoming teachers, inadvertently generating self-imposed high-expectations.

9. CCTs may have an idealised/romanticised view of teaching, it was indicated that they also may have fixed beliefs about teaching and learning.
10. CCTs face financial pressures which includes the loss or a diminished income from prior career, which can be exasperated by unpaid professional experience.
11. 'Permission to teach' arrangement may introduce risks as CCTs may prioritise their school-based responsibilities over university progression.
12. CCTs struggle with the cultural shift into hierarchical, bureaucratic school environments. Making mentoring especially important during the early stages of their teaching career.
13. CCTs status transition from expert in their previous field to novice in teaching, potentially undermines their confidence and could contribute to attrition from the profession.
14. Fast-tracked, employment-based pathways need to adopt wrap-around support so that career change teachers are not pushed into classrooms before they are ready.
15. Broadly, teachers in the community need to speak about the profession more positively.
16. Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is frequently contested, creating uncertainty about CCTs transition into teaching with processes needing to adopt greater consistency.
17. Incorporating Recognition of Practice (RoP) needs to be considered to acknowledge previous roles related to teaching, e.g. coaching.

Recommendations

1. Strengthening of school-university partnerships to support CCTs more effectively through joined up policy environments and improved workplace conditions.
2. Finding ways to leverage CCTs' previous expertise within schools.
3. The implementation of mentoring for CCTs when they arrive in schools to assist with their professional transition and familiarisation into the profession which could be considered in parallel with universities' flexible learning and wellbeing support.
4. Expand the RPL within higher education to broaden access to teaching for various professions. This could include standardising evidence requirements and mapping of prior learning to school curriculum and pedagogy not just content.
5. Current policy prioritises attracting CCTs via financial incentives and accelerated pathways. A strategic policy shift should be encouraged, to move from attraction with more focus on retention that supports CCTs through the entire process starting from their own ITE experience through to their time in the classroom as teachers.
6. Economic barriers must be addressed for CCTs.
7. Cultural barriers must also be considered, as women with caring responsibilities need flexible study patterns, and housing must be made more accessible—particularly for students from overseas and marginalised backgrounds.
8. Certain groups feel barriers more acutely, including those facing economic marginalisation, racism, misogyny, heteronormativity, and ableism, and these must be addressed so career changers are not discriminated against.
9. Teacher shortages require short-, medium-, and long-term approaches, and the complexity of the issue demands multifaceted, holistic, and systemic responses involving universities, schools, and systems working together.
10. Broader policy responses need to include factors such as gender pay gaps, childcare availability and access, student support and welfare, housing affordability, and robust anti-discrimination policies.

Project: Improving teacher induction: Supporting precariously employed early career teachers to manage student behaviour (2023-2026, Australian Research Council Discovery Scheme)

Investigators: Professor Anna Sullivan, Professor Stuart Woodcock, Dr Neil Tippett, Professor Andrea Reupert, Professor Simone White, Professor Michele Simons

Purpose of project

This project aims to investigate the ways in which Australian induction policies support precariously employed early career teachers to effectively manage student classroom behaviour. This project expects to generate new knowledge of workforce development and induction experiences of early career teachers employed on casual and short-term contracts. Expected outcomes of this project include alternative policy and practice recommendations to support the transition of insecure replacement teachers within the profession. The benefits of this research include improving teachers' classroom management practices; the retention of new teachers; improving teacher workforce development; and building a healthier education system.

Method and sample

The project is comprised of four interrelated phases. (1) National Policy Audit; (2) National Overview of Early Career Teachers' Induction Experiences; (3) Illustrative Case Studies; (4) Set of Policy Alternatives.

Key findings

Induction and the teacher workforce in Australia:
1. Substitute teachers remain largely invisible and marginalised in policy and practice.
2. Induction is often directed to teachers with job security, rather than an overall system of practices that develop all new teachers regardless of their employment mode.
3. Induction is seen as a 'site-specific practice', focusing mainly on the job at hand and not on the teachers' career more broadly.
4. Induction for early career substitute teachers is largely limited to ensuring compliance with site-based rules and regulations. This approach largely ignores the important elements of onboarding (clarification), socialisation and professional learning which are required to develop quality teachers who can not only perform well in their jobs but also thrive in their professional careers.

Human resource management practices for substitute teachers:
5. There is significant variability in the extent to which substitute teachers are supported and developed through HRM practices.
6. When substitute teachers are hired, they are often provided with minimal support, including limited resources, a partial induction (if any), and few opportunities to connect with other members of the school community.
7. There are significant disparities in the allocation of resources for substitute teachers, with access to essential technology, lesson plans, and classroom materials varying widely across schools and districts.
8. The management and support of substitute teachers often falls short of the standards typically associated with effective human resource management practices.

The early career phase:

9. Early career teachers as a career phase are increasingly diversifying. The early career phase now covers the later stages of completing a teaching qualification to the first three to five years of teaching, arguably an 8–10-year period. Those within this phase can now include a far greater set of diverse needs than ever before.
10. Nomenclature used to describe early career teachers varies across contexts, contributing to the cohort's limited visibility.
11. Current policy fails to reframe the specific needs of those who now are defined as within the early career phase.
12. The teacher profession is not a homogenous body; a one-size fits all approach which does not effectively address the induction of teachers and runs the risk of not retaining teachers, particularly in the often most marginalised schools and communities.
13. Differentiated supports are essential to address the diverse and evolving needs of today's early career teachers.

Recommendations

1. Establish clear and consistent definitions of early career teachers.
2. Identify and address the needs and induction supports required for this increasingly diverse group of teachers, including those employed on insecure or short-term contracts.
3. Apply contemporary human resource management principles and practices to reconceptualise how the diverse needs of early career teachers are being addressed throughout the induction phase.
4. Coordinate induction at the system or sector level, rather than residing solely with individual schools, considering the complexity of the nested employment structure of the teacher workforce.
5. Centrally funded induction hubs that provide onboarding, mentoring, professional learning and accreditation support for early career teachers, regardless of their employment mode. This would enable substitute teachers to access consistent (and equitable) support as they move across schools.
6. Induction entitlements could be made portable, allowing professional learning, mentoring and accreditation evidence to travel with teachers rather than being tied to a single site. While such approaches would require investment and coordination, they also offer the potential to reduce duplication, relieve pressure on schools and improve retention by recognising substitute teachers as a stable and essential part of the workforce.