

DRAFT SECOND READING SPEECH

Honourable Roger Jaensch MP

Teachers Registration Bill 2026

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Honourable Speaker, I move that the Bill now be read a second time.

The purpose of this Bill is to repeal and replace the *Teachers Registration Act 2000* with a new, consolidated Act that delivers a modern, child-safe, and nationally aligned registration framework for teachers in Tasmania.

It implements the Government's commitments arising from:

- Recommendations from the 2025 Teachers Registration Act Review Final Report.
- The Commission of Inquiry into the Tasmanian Government's Responses to Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Settings, and
- The national extension of mandatory teacher registration to university qualified early childhood teachers working in regulated early childhood education and care settings.

Honourable Speaker, teachers have a profound impact in shaping the lives of children and young people. Regulation through teacher registration is an important way of recognising the role of the teaching profession, establishing minimum professional standards, and promoting community confidence that teachers have the necessary skills and character to educate and support our children and young people.

The current *Act* was introduced in 2000 and has been in operation for 25 years. It now requires comprehensive reform to reflect contemporary professional, safety and regulatory standards.

The Teachers Registration Act Review commenced in late 2024. Its objective

was to make recommendations to ensure:

- Children are safe while they learn.
- Teachers, including those in early childhood education and care settings, are high quality and meet professional standards, and
- The legislative framework reflects modern regulatory practice and is fit-for-purpose.

The Minister for Education, the Hon Jo Palmer MLC, appointed a Steering Committee to conduct the review. It comprised an independent chair, representation at senior level from each of the three school education sectors and a person with regulatory expertise. Public consultation was undertaken to inform the Committee's deliberations, and we thank those organisations, individuals, children and young people who contributed.

The Review included consideration of how best to implement relevant Commission of Inquiry recommendations, to strengthen child safety and accountability. It also considered how best to give effect to the Government's 2021 commitment to introduce registration for early childhood teachers in early childhood education and care settings.

The Committee delivered a detailed Review Report with 28 recommendations addressing the regulatory framework, registration standards, child safety and alignment with national frameworks and agreements.

By way of context, teacher registration in Australia is regulated by each jurisdiction and is guided by a framework agreed by all governments: the *Framework for Teacher Registration in Australia*. This framework sets out the uniform principles for the registration of teachers in educational settings, including teachers in early childhood and care settings, across Australia.

Honourable Speaker, how will the current regulatory framework change?

Under the current *Act*, mandatory registration is limited to those teaching in government and non-government schools, including those teaching specialist vocational education and training programs in Tasmanian schools. Mandatory registration will continue for those teaching in schools.

In more recent years, there has also been greater recognition of the value and importance of teaching and learning that is being delivered in non-school environments such as the early childhood education and care sector and Child and Family Learning Centres.

The regulatory framework set out in the Bill reflects this shift. It provides an integrated approach that is based on the practice of teaching rather than on setting alone.

Registration of those teaching in non-school educational environments has the same benefits as it does for teachers in schools. It provides professional recognition, establishes minimum professional standards, and helps to protect children and young people from potential abuse.

Only those employed in designated teaching roles as defined in the Bill will be required to register. The framework will not apply to tutors, education support staff, or vocational trainers operating outside regulated educational settings. This provides national consistency, ensures clear scope for registration, and prevents unintended regulation of non-teaching roles.

Early Childhood Teacher Registration

Mandatory registration will apply to early childhood teachers who hold an early childhood university teaching qualification approved by the Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority and are employed in designated teaching roles within regulated early childhood education and care settings. This includes long day care centres and other services regulated under the *Education and Care Services National Law Act 2010*. It will also apply to any early childhood teachers employed in designated teaching roles in services regulated under the Tasmanian *Child Care Act 2001*. It will *not* apply to educators employed in non-

teaching roles, such as assistants, centre managers, relief staff, or Family Day Care providers who do not perform teaching duties.

Extending registration to early childhood teachers in these settings aligns with the National Early Childhood Education and Care Workforce Strategy, which was agreed by all governments in 2021. It also aligns with recommendations from the national 2023 Review of Child Safety Arrangements in Early Childhood Education and Care Settings, which endorsed teacher registration in this sector as a key mechanism to enhance child safety. Most other states and territories have implemented this national commitment, while the remaining jurisdictions, Queensland and the Northern Territory, are working towards implementation.

The vast majority of stakeholders in this sector in Tasmania support early childhood teacher registration. They were consulted ahead of the national commitment in 2021 and have continued to advocate for Tasmania to implement registration since that time. Further extensive targeted consultation was undertaken with the sector as part of the Teachers Registration Act Review, and the majority of stakeholders strongly supported the introduction of teacher registration in this sector.

It is understood approximately 300 degree-qualified educators working in Early Childhood Education and Care settings may be eligible for registration. Of these, only those specifically undertaking the role of an early childhood teacher would be required to register.

To ensure a smooth transition, this new requirement will be implemented as soon as practicable and within a maximum of three years. Early childhood teachers will need targeted support to understand what is required of them to register as will the services in which they work. The Teachers Registration Board will develop and implement registration processes tailored to a cohort of teachers working in settings that differ significantly from schools, ensuring that the system is responsive to the unique characteristics of Early Childhood Education and Care environments. It must also be done in a way that is not in conflict with the requirements providers must meet under the National Law. This timeframe will allow the necessary work to be done in a way that provides both the sector and the Board with adequate time to prepare.

Other non-school educational settings

Registration will also be required in other non-school educational settings where teachers are performing duties aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teaching and they meet the qualification requirements of the Teacher Registration Framework in Australia. In effect this will bring those teaching in Child and Family Learning Centres within scope of the updated Act and recognises the importance of the work they do with and for Tasmanian children.

As I said earlier, it focuses on the practice of teaching rather than on setting alone.

As with the Early Childhood Education and Care sector, this change will be implemented as soon as practicable and within a maximum of three years to ensure a smooth transition for those impacted.

What are the Registration categories?

Honourable Speaker, the revised regulatory framework now provides for practising and non-practising teacher categories.

A practising teacher is a registered teacher who is employed at a school, or in a non-school setting such as a long day care service to teach students. This includes those who hold provisional or full registration.

A new non-practising teacher category has been included in the Bill to better support the needs of teachers as their career and life circumstances change. This category would be available to fully registered practising teachers who are not currently performing teaching duties in educational settings but wish to maintain their professional registration status. This could, for example, include those working as school counsellors or those on secondment to the central areas of the Department for Education, Children and Young People.

The specialist Vocational Education and Training registration category continues as in the current Act.

Under the current Act, registration pathways also include 'Limited Authority to

Teach'. The Board may grant this authorisation for up to two years, subject to specific conditions, to individuals with specialist skills and knowledge where a suitable teacher is not available, or to students completing a teacher education program. This pathway would continue under the new Act and has been renamed 'Alternative Authorisation to Teach', consistent with the *Framework for Teacher Registration in Australia*.

How does this Bill address the Commission of Inquiry recommendations?

The Commission of Inquiry made seven recommendations about teacher registration to improve safeguarding of children. These relate to information sharing, better tracking of who is teaching, the power to issue infringement notices for non-compliance with the Act, immediate suspension where there is an unacceptable risk of harm to children, automatic mutual recognition, professional development and child safety training, and funding for the Teachers Registration Board.

Given the Government's commitment to implement the Commission's recommendations in full, the Steering Committee did not re-prosecute those issues but made recommendations on how best to implement them.

In line with the Commission's recommendations, the information sharing provisions have been significantly strengthened to ensure the Teachers Registration Board is able to get the information it needs to make informed decisions as to whether or not to register a person as a teacher and to undertake investigations. These provisions are tied tightly to the functions of the Board.

As with the current Act, the Board will also be able to share information with other relevant entities where such requests fall within the scope of the new Act. The Board can, for example, share information with corresponding registration authorities in other states and territories. Further, the Bill also amends the *Child and Youth Safe Organisations Regulations 2023* to include the Teachers Registration Board as body which may share information between other bodies under that legislation that relate to reportable conduct. This is another significant step towards ensuring the legislation supports the Teachers Registration Board to keep children safe.

The Commission recommended that the Board should be allowed to suspend a person's registration or alternative authorisation to teach where that person has been charged with a serious offence. The term 'relevant offence' is used in the Bill as these offences are more serious and are generally heard in the Supreme Court of Tasmania. They generally carry a maximum term of imprisonment of 12 months or more and include matters such as murder, rape, child sexual abuse and persistent family violence. The Bill goes further than the Commission's recommendation. It enables the Board to immediately suspend a teacher's registration or an alternative authorisation to teach where a person is charged with a relevant offence. It requires the Board to suspend a registration when that relevant offence also relates to the safety or wellbeing of a child or young person.

The Commission of Inquiry's scope was to consider the Government's responses to child sexual abuse in institutional settings. The Bill ensures those recommendations relating to teacher registration will flow on to those teaching in non-government schools as the same registration requirements apply regardless of school setting. The Bill also goes further than child sexual abuse and encompasses protection of children from all forms of abuse.

Similarly, the proposed new regulatory framework means that the Commission's recommendations would extend to early childhood teachers in the early childhood sector.

The extension of the Commission's recommendations on teacher registration to all forms of abuse, and to the non-government schools and non-school settings will better protect children and young people.

Registration requirements

The *Teacher Registration Framework in Australia* provides that a teacher should have an initial period of registration before meeting the requirements for full registration, and that full registration should be attained within five years of receiving provisional registration.

Provisional registration is intended to allow new graduates to be employed as a teacher and undertake the workplace learning and development that equips them to demonstrate they can meet the Australian Professional Standards for

Teachers at the proficient level and progress to full registration.

There is no requirement in the current Act for full registration within a set timeframe. Through consultation we heard that the provisional to full registration process was inhibitive for teachers to undertake. This has led to a situation where, of the approximately 12,000 teachers in Tasmania, almost one-third are provisionally registered and have not undertaken the process to be fully registered. This means that approximately 4,000 teachers in Tasmania have never demonstrated that they can meet the proficient standard of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers. This number includes experienced teachers who have taught for many years.

Mandating the requirement to move from provisional to full registration within five years will bring Tasmania into line with other jurisdictions. It will demonstrate that Tasmanian teachers meet the standards set by national frameworks to best support children and young people's education.

Changes to the current full registration process have also been recommended. This would further streamline it, while ensuring it remains robust, to help support teachers to make the transition from provisional to full registration.

While a streamlined process will better support teachers moving from provisional to full registration, the new requirements will affect nearly 4,000 provisionally registered teachers who would need to be fully registered within five years. There are significant workload issues, particularly for principals and the Teachers Registration Board in managing the process. Against a backdrop of a national teacher workforce shortage, there is also a workforce retention risk, particularly in relation to those who are towards the end of their career and who have chosen to remain provisionally registered.

On balance, a deeming process provides a pragmatic solution and was proposed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership in its submission to the Review. Under this approach, experienced teachers who meet clearly defined eligibility criteria would be deemed fully registered without undergoing the standard provisional to full registration process, instead undertaking a robust stream-lined process. This includes experienced teachers in non-school settings

such as the Early Childhood Education and Care sector. The process would need to be completed at the latest within three years and this would help to spread the workload for schools and the Board. This solution seeks to strike a balance between managing regulatory burden and ensuring teachers meet expected standards.

Professional standards

All states and territories, with the exception of Tasmania, have legislated minimum requirements for continuous professional learning as part of teacher registration renewal. These requirements typically include 100 days of professional practice and 100 hours of professional learning over a five-year period, consistent with the Framework for Teacher Registration in Australia.

Currently, teachers working in non-school settings are not required to complete any mandatory professional learning related to the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers or specifically targeted to the teaching profession.

While employers and teachers are responsible for ensuring teachers have the skills needed to undertake their role, legislating minimum requirements for professional learning brings Tasmania into line with all other jurisdictions and agreed national frameworks.

This Bill requires teachers to complete professional learning as a condition of registration renewal. This will be set at 100 hours within each five-year registration cycle. This is in line with the Framework for Teacher Registration in Australia. Most teachers already fulfill this obligation through their normal course of employment and teaching duties, including by attending employer mandated compulsory professional learning days. A wide range of activities will be able to be counted towards professional learning, providing flexibility for teachers working across a range of contexts and settings. Mandating this requirement ensures Tasmanian teachers maintain contemporary professional knowledge to inform their teaching practice and brings Tasmania into line with other jurisdictions.

The Commission of Inquiry recommended the completion of child safeguarding training for all teachers as a condition of registration and renewal. Such training is

mandated in the Bill for each registered teacher and alternative authorisation to teach holder.

Modern regulatory practices

Honourable Speaker, the Bill also includes a range of provisions that reflect modern regulatory practice.

This includes an Objects clause that sets out the purpose of teacher registration in Tasmania. Such a clause assists regulators to regulate in accordance with the Act, it creates clarity about the purpose of the Act and assists in interpreting provisions where there is uncertainty or ambiguity.

The Bill also includes a Principles clause, which sets expectations as to how functions or powers will be exercised. It consolidates the principles that apply to the regulation of teacher registration in Tasmania, which are currently spread across two Acts. These Principles have been tested with children and young people and received extensive support in consultation.

Amendments have also been made to a number of provisions in the current Act to ensure clarity or to tidy up issues that have arisen in day-to-day operations. This includes, for example, a new provision that enables a teacher to voluntarily relinquish their registration.

Implementation

Honourable Speaker, the reforms set out in the Bill will deliver a modern, nationally aligned and responsive teacher registration framework for Tasmania.

A range of issues were raised during consultation that relate to implementation and these will be managed during that process.

Successful implementation will take time. Registration of teachers will need to continue while the Teachers Registration Board develops new systems and processes and works with stakeholders to ensure they are ready.

It is anticipated that the legislative reforms in the Bill will commence by proclamation, and sections of the legislation coming online when the system is

ready to manage new requirements, while ensuring the ongoing operation of the Teachers Registration Board.

Honourable Speaker, all Tasmanian students are entitled to an education of a quality that will enable them to reach their potential and maximise their achievements and contribution to the community.

The reforms proposed in the Bill will support this outcome that:

- Children are safe while they learn.
- Teachers, including those in early childhood education and care settings, are high quality and meet professional standards, and
- The legislative framework reflects modern regulatory practice and is fit-for-purpose.

Honourable Speaker, I commend the Bill to the House.