

MEDIA RELEASE

6 January 2019

EDUCATION DEANS AGAINST BIG STICK APPROACH TO ATAR ENTRY

The universities that educate Australia's future teachers understand Tanya Plibersek's enthusiasm to raise the status of teaching but do not agree with the over-emphasis on the ATAR levels of teaching students.

Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) President, Professor Tania Aspland, says: 'There is no way that teacher education providers will let teaching students loose in classrooms unless they have passed a number of difficult hurdles during their years of study.'¹

'The hurdles, which must be cleared prior to graduation, include a literacy and numeracy test and rigorous means of demonstrating that teaching students meet robust national teacher professional standards,' Professor Aspland says.

'A threat to mandate a cap on ATARs of 80 may sound like a quick fix but, in reality, fewer than one-in-four students are chosen on the basis of their ATAR alone

'There is no evidence to show that those with higher ATARS become better teachers as non-academic traits are also vitally important in teaching quality.

'Finally, the statistics about low ATARs fail to contextualise the outliers allowed in on lower scores,' Professor Aspland says.

Reasons for accepting teacher education students with lower ATARs include:

- Gaining further experience and qualifications that supersede their ATAR, as their ATAR may have been acquired years before their university entry
- Being given special consideration due to personal circumstances (such as the death of a parent) if their low ATAR doesn't reflect prior academic performance
- As a member of a disadvantaged group, being granted access to a pathway course during which they would have to prove they're capable of undertaking teacher education.

'Teacher education has undergone huge reforms since the TEMAG Report² was released in 2015 – it's about time these were taken into account in the public discourse about teaching standards,' Professor Aspland says.

'Focusing solely on ATAR scores demoralises teaching students and current teachers, as it implies they are not good enough,' she says.

'Instead, we should be encouraging more potential teachers if we are to stem significant drops in teacher student applications and curtail teacher shortages beyond traditionally hard-to-fill places areas.'

Further Information: Leslie Falkiner-Rose, ACDE Strategy and Communications. 0418995240

¹ Most teacher education programs are four-year undergraduate degrees or and two-years Masters.

² <https://www.education.gov.au/teacher-education-ministerial-advisory-group>