



**SUBMISSION OF ALL MEANS ALL
REVIEW OF TEACHER STANDARDS
AITSL**

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INTRODUCTION

1. All Means All – The Australian Alliance for Inclusive Education (**All Means All**) is a nationwide multi-stakeholder organisation working towards the implementation of an inclusive education system and the removal of the legal, structural, and attitudinal barriers that limit the rights of some students, including students with disability, to access an inclusive education in regular classrooms in Australian schools on an equal basis with others.
2. Our work is grounded in the human rights framework established by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons With Disabilities (**CRPD**)¹ and other relevant international human rights treaties and instruments, including Article 24 of the CRPD and *General Comment No. 4 on the right to inclusive education*² (**GC4**).
3. All Means All's members and stakeholders include people with disability and their families, educators, academic and other experts in Australia. All Means All is also the Lead Organisation of the [Australian Coalition for Inclusive Education](#) (**ACIE**), a national coalition of organisations committed to advancing inclusive education across Australian education systems, and a member of Inclusion International, the global federation representing people with intellectual disability and their families.
4. All Means All acknowledges the traditional custodians of the land on which we live and work, and we pay our respects to Elders, past and present,

¹ United Nations General Assembly, *Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities*, 13 December 2006, United Nations, Treaty Series, vol. 2515, p. 3.

² Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, *General Comment No 4 (2016) on the Right to Inclusive Education*, UN Doc CRPD/C/GC/4 (25 November 2016).



across the many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander nations throughout Australia.

5. We welcome the review of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the **Standards**). This submission focuses principally on the Standards as they relate to students with disability and inclusive education.

GENERAL COMMENTS

6. The Standards are an important national lever for inclusive education reform. They shape expectations about what Australian teachers should know and be able to do, from entry to the profession through to the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher career stages, and influence initial teacher education, accreditation and ongoing professional learning.
7. Numerous Commonwealth, state and territory inquiries, including the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability³ (**Disability Royal Commission**), have documented persistent barriers experienced by students with disability in Australian education. These include exclusion and segregation, discrimination, low expectations, inadequate adjustments and supports, insufficient expertise in inclusive practice, and systemic and resourcing barriers. Collectively, these findings demonstrate the need for substantial reform and that Australia does not yet have an education system in which students with disability can be assured access to quality inclusive education on an equal basis with others, consistent with their fundamental human rights.
8. The Standards appropriately set high expectations for the knowledge, skills and professional practice of teachers across all career stages. All Means All supports the maintenance of high professional expectations and considers that the capacity to teach the full diversity of learners, including students with disability, should be understood as integral to those expectations and to quality teaching practice.
9. However, professional standards do not operate in isolation from the systems in which teachers work. Australian teachers work within an education system facing significant workforce, workload and resourcing pressures, including insufficient planning and collaboration time and variable access to high-quality professional learning and specialist support. Teachers may also encounter systemic barriers arising from policy, curriculum, funding,

³ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Final Report: Volume 7 — Inclusive Education, Employment and Housing* (Final Report, September 2023).



infrastructure and other features of education system design. High expectations for teacher capability must therefore be matched by the conditions, resources and system support necessary to meet them. Strengthening teacher capability in inclusive education is essential, but cannot substitute for the broader systemic reforms required to realise inclusive education.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

10. All Means All welcomes the commitment in the Standards to promoting educational excellence and equity and to supporting all young Australians to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, and active and informed citizens. Realising that commitment requires the Standards to equip teachers to teach the full diversity of learners, including students with disability, within inclusive learning environments.
11. Pre and post-qualification education for teachers regarding students with disability and inclusive education remains highly variable. The Standards should establish clear expectations that teachers develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes required to deliver inclusive education across their careers. This should be grounded in a contemporary human rights-based understanding of disability and inclusive education, rather than approaches that locate educational difficulties primarily within individual students or their impairments.
12. In this regard, All Means All strongly supports Recommendation 7.8 of the Disability Royal Commission⁴, which states:
 - a. *The Education Ministers Meeting should commission the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) to review and amend the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (APST) to embed a human rights-based approach to inclusive education for students with disability across teachers' careers; and*
 - b. *To provide guidance for teachers on the revised APST, the Education Ministers Meeting should instruct AITSL to develop an inclusive education capability framework, setting out the knowledge, skills and attitudes to deliver inclusive education.*
13. Australian, state and territory governments accepted Recommendation 7.8

⁴ Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability, *Final Report: Volume 7 — Inclusive Education, Employment and Housing* (Final Report, September 2023) recommendation 7.8



in principle⁵. The current review provides a direct and timely opportunity to progress its implementation.

14. We recommend that a human rights-based approach to inclusive education be embedded across relevant Standards and progressively reflected across the Graduate, Proficient, Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher career stages.
15. While we welcome the existing recognition of students with disability in Focus Area 1.6,⁶ inclusive education should not be confined to a discrete disability-specific descriptor or understood as a specialist area of practice. Students with disability are part of the ordinary diversity of learners, and the capacity to teach diverse learners should be recognised as an integral dimension of quality teaching. Inclusive education capability should therefore be reflected across relevant Standards concerning knowledge of students, curriculum and pedagogy, assessment, classroom environments, communication, participation and professional engagement.
16. Where the Standards refer to learner diversity, including diverse linguistic, cultural, religious and socioeconomic backgrounds, disability should be expressly recognised as a dimension of diversity. The Standards should also recognise intersectionality: students with disability are not a homogeneous group, and disability may intersect with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander identity, race, culture, language, gender, socioeconomic circumstances and other characteristics in ways that shape their educational experiences and the barriers they encounter.
17. We recommend reconsideration of the expression “diagnose barriers to learning” in the description of Professional Practice. “Diagnosis” ordinarily describes a clinical process and risks importing a medicalised understanding into a pedagogical context. More importantly, a human rights-based approach directs attention away from locating educational difficulties within the learner and towards identifying barriers arising from the interaction between learners and educational environments, including curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, communication, attitudes and institutional practices. We recommend replacing “diagnose barriers to learning” with “identify, anticipate and address barriers to learning and participation” or equivalent language.
18. This distinction is particularly important in the context of emerging initiatives

⁵ Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing, *Disability Royal Commission Progress Report 2025: Recommendation 7.8 — Workforce Capabilities, Expertise and Development* (9 December 2025).

⁶ Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, Focus Area 1.6, ‘Strategies to support full participation of students with disability’.



such as Thriving Kids and an increasing policy emphasis on early identification and support. Teachers have an important role in recognising and responding to barriers to learning and participation, but the Standards should not inadvertently extend teachers' professional responsibilities into clinical diagnosis. Supports provided through health, disability or other service systems should complement and support students' access to education, rather than substitute for the responsibility of education systems to provide inclusive education.

19. The Standards should also recognise proactive inclusive design, including universal design for learning, as part of quality teaching practice. Teachers should be equipped to design curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and learning environments from the outset with learner variability in mind, while recognising that universal design does not replace the obligation to provide individual reasonable adjustments where required.⁷
20. Focus Area 2.6, "Information and Communication Technology", and other relevant descriptors should recognise accessible communication and the diverse modes, means and formats of communication used by students with disability, such as Augmentative and Alternative Communication (AAC), Auslan, Braille and accessible digital communication.⁸ Communication access is integral to learning, participation, relationships, student voice and agency, and differences in speech or communication should never be equated with an absence of competence or capacity to learn.
21. References to "inclusion", including in Focus Area 4.1, should be consistent with the right to inclusive education articulated in Article 24 of the CRPD and GC4,⁹ which distinguishes inclusion from 'exclusion', 'segregation' and 'integration'.
22. The revised Standards should therefore reflect an understanding of inclusive education in which learner diversity is anticipated and welcomed; barriers to learning and participation are identified and removed; and curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, communication and learning environments are designed and adjusted to enable all students to participate, learn and progress alongside their peers.
23. Finally, the Standards should recognise the voice and agency of students with disability.¹⁰ Teachers should be equipped to seek, hear and respond to students' views in accessible and inclusive ways, including in decisions

⁷ CRPD, arts 2, 24(2)(c); GC4, particularly [12], [22], [26]–[27]. See also *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) pt 3.

⁸ CRPD, art 24(3)–(4); GC4, particularly [35].

⁹ GC4, [11].

¹⁰ CRPD, art 7(3); see also *Disability Standards for Education 2005* (Cth) ss 3.5–3.6.



concerning their learning, participation, communication, supports and reasonable adjustments.

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