

Spotlight

Improving induction: Part 1 – early career teachers

November 2025



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Key messages:

- ⚡ Early career teachers who participate in effective induction programs often experience greater job satisfaction, are more likely to remain long-term in the profession, and see improved learning outcomes for their students.
- ⚡ Effective induction programs are those contextualised to the needs of the early career teacher and school community. Programs support, for example, the development of evidence-based teaching practices, classroom management, and professional relationships while nurturing wellbeing.
- ⚡ Effective induction programs in Australia's regional and remote educational settings help teachers develop a sense of belonging through community understanding and connectedness.
- ⚡ A focus on cultural responsiveness in teacher induction programs supports early career teachers to first engage with community to incorporate local knowledges and community contexts in their professional practice.

- ⚡ Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers need a culturally safe workplace to support their induction.
- ⚡ The recently released *Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia* outline evidence-based practices and ways to improve teacher induction programs.

The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands, sea countries, and waterways from across Australia. We pay our respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and living cultures; and to Elders past and present.

Introduction

Participating in induction programs at pivotal stages helps guide teachers in their continued development of effective educational practices and confidence. This Spotlight is the first in a two-part series that highlight evidence, guidelines and resources for the induction of early career teachers (Part 1) and school leaders (Part 2).

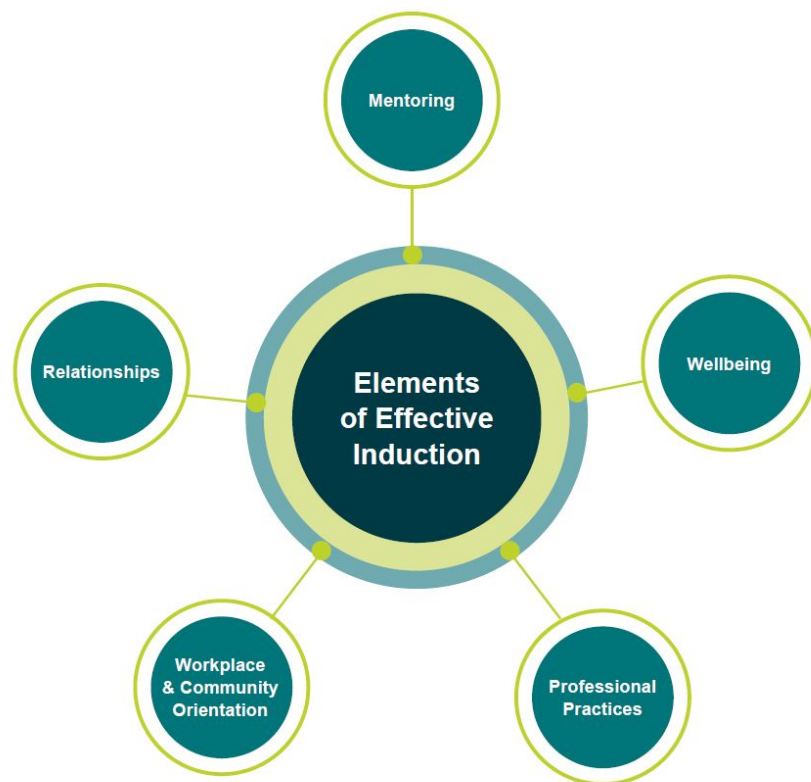
A teacher's career begins with initial teacher education (ITE), progresses through an induction phase in the early years of professional practice, and continues with ongoing professional learning. Induction programs build on ITE to support provisionally registered graduate teachers as they transition into their professional roles and work toward becoming fully registered, proficient teachers. The teacher registration system recognises that new teachers require further professional development after graduation.

“With ongoing induction and support, the beginning teachers of today can become the expert teachers of tomorrow.”

–Edmund Misson in Henebery, 2019, p1

The *Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia* (the guidelines) help newly qualified teachers transition into their professional roles. They offer evidence-based practices and practical advice as a foundation for the implementation and evaluation of induction programs, and outline the key elements that underpin their effectiveness (Figure 1). Also included in the guidelines are considerations for teaching specific groups (e.g. students with disability) and teaching in regional and remote educational settings across Australia.

Figure 1 Elements of effective induction programs are outlined in the guidelines.



Global research shows that early career teachers who participate in effective induction programs see improved pedagogical outcomes, experience greater job satisfaction, and are more likely to remain in the profession (UNESCO, 2023; Keese et al., 2023; Courtney et al., 2023). Moreover, at least one in three graduate teachers in Australia report feeling somewhat underprepared for classroom practice, subject pedagogy, or both (OECD, 2021), underscoring the need for induction programs to support their transition into teaching.

Induction programs for early career teachers^[1] form a solid base to develop proficient teachers. They can help inexperienced teachers with pedagogical practice, classroom management, establishing supportive networks, understanding responsibilities and accountabilities, and adapting to the specific educational context and community in which they are working. These programs nurture the development of teachers' professional identities and promote overall wellbeing, leading to a more effective and sustainable workforce.

So as not to duplicate information in the guidelines, this Spotlight provides an in-depth look at early career teachers and relocating teachers commencing in regional and remote schools, and in communities with high proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Nearly a third of all registered teachers work in these settings, where experiences are nuanced to educational and local community demographics (ATWD, 2025b; Downes & Roberts, 2018). Effective induction programs are needed to increase teacher retention in regional and remote Australian schools, which continues to represent an ongoing challenge.

Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia

Development of induction guidelines

In 2015, AITSL published a set of national teacher induction guidelines^[2] — the first of its kind in Australia. The publication advocated for induction to be considered an important, distinctive phase in a teacher's career. Using a thorough research process and stakeholder consultation to identify evidence-based induction practices, the 2015 guidelines were aimed at supporting teachers in their first two years of professional practice. For many teachers, this aligns with the timing of the transition from 'provisional' to 'full' teacher registration (referred to as teacher accreditation in New South Wales) (AITSL, 2015, 2018, 2023b).

Supporting early career teachers in the Graduate career stage to move to the Proficient career stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers remains an essential part of teacher induction. However, the main emphasis of the newly released guidelines is not only on achieving the Proficient stage; rather, the Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia go deeper into effective induction practices and the roles of individuals and organisations in managing high-quality induction programs^[3]. Recommendations are for comprehensive induction programs contextualised to the educational setting and community. Such a focus can help address early career teachers' individual professional learning and wellbeing needs.

“The programs must always be organised based on the local context and the needs of the teachers involved. In other words, a teacher induction program must always be developed within the context of local creative thinking.”

—Frederiksen, 2020, p68

Evidence-based induction practices

The guidelines are intended as a resource for improving the planning and implementation of context-specific induction programs. They do not recommend a standardised program but instead outline evidence-based practices that comprise interrelated characteristics of what constitutes effective induction. Ideally, induction programs incorporate a variety of mechanisms to support teachers in launching successful careers. Several recently published reviews have also explored what constitutes effective induction experiences (Keese et al., 2023; Courtney et al., 2023; Reeves et al., 2022; Frederiksen, 2020).

The evidence-based induction activities drawn from the research are described within AITSL's national induction guidelines and include:

- **Mentoring:** Experienced teachers play important roles in mentoring early career teachers, helping navigate new educational settings and supporting a successful transition into the profession. By sharing expertise and practical insights, mentors help early career teachers develop contextualised and effective pedagogical practice and classroom management strategies. Mentorship should aim to establish a culture of continued professional learning and wellbeing support, establishing a solid foundation for successful careers.

- **Collaboration:** Collaborative opportunities enable early career teachers to learn from peers, share experiences, and collectively address challenges within their educational setting. By collaborating, early career teachers can gain diverse perspectives to enhance their teaching practice, confidence and resilience. A shared learning environment promotes a positive culture that values teamwork and collective improvement.
- **Observations:** Both observing and being observed by experienced teachers help early career teachers gain valuable insights into effective teaching practices and classroom management strategies.
- **Reduced teaching workload:** Adjusting workloads for early career teachers and their mentors allows time for engaging in induction activities without the full pressures of regular teaching schedules. Reducing face-to-face teaching time is one way to lessen the workload for early career teachers, giving them time and space to transition more comfortably into challenging professional roles and responsibilities. School leaders who prioritise induction by reducing teaching workloads provide a clear message of its importance.
- **Teacher assessment and evaluation:** Structured formative assessments inform early career teacher progression, identify strengths and pinpoint areas for improvement. Within a supportive process, evaluations can help early career teachers refine and enhance pedagogical practice and build confidence for long-term professional success.
- **Networks:** Establishing professional networks allows early career teachers to connect with peers within and beyond their educational setting. These networks offer access to a broad range of resources, guidance, and shared experiences, empowering early career teachers to navigate the complexities and challenges of the profession.
- **Continuing professional learning:** Ongoing training and development enable teachers to continually enhance their skills, deepen their knowledge of evidence-based practices, and stay updated with the latest educational advancements. These opportunities help teachers meet the evolving needs of their students and education communities.

“There is no single best practice for adequately supporting novice teachers in their work, but providing them access to a broad pallet [sic] of options can positively impact their feelings of being supported, their likelihood to retain, and ultimately their work with students.”

–Keese et al., 2023, p16

Reflections from experienced, successful mentors in Australian schools

Stewart Smith, Head of Science Faculty, MacKillop College, Port Macquarie

"The most effective induction occurs when early career teachers feel supported and reassured throughout the process. Newer teachers often feel overwhelmed by the demands of the job as they are expected to quickly assimilate and practise complex functions across many domains simultaneously. Mentors, therefore, must respond to the individual experience and needs of the teacher they are guiding. This may include adjusting the sequence and pace of the induction and gradually introducing new elements once others are embedded. Most early career teachers need to be constantly reassured that it takes time to develop into an effective educator.

The best mentors are those who build on the pre-existing strengths of the early career teacher while providing them with concrete strategies to trial within their own classrooms. Every teacher develops their own toolbox of strategies to fit the school context, the needs of the students, and their own personality. Mentors can play a critical role in assisting newer teachers to select these elements and ensure that they are effective and evidence-based. The mentor is there to assist the teacher to reflect on and evaluate each element as it is trialled within the classroom. It is a fine balance between drawing on the significant experience of the mentor while creating opportunities for the new career teacher to experiment with different approaches."

Beginning Teacher Team: Connie Medley (Deputy Principal – Senior Schooling), Shane Rossi (Head of Department), and Elizabeth Kuhn (Lead Beginning Teacher Mentor), Innisfail State College, Innisfail

"We are committed to excellence in teaching and learning, starting with how we support early career teachers. Our Beginning Teacher Program aligns with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers and is structured into key phases that build capacity and confidence.

Before Phase 1 begins, all new teachers undergo school orientation, including work health and safety and staff wellbeing, Innisfail State College Universals (based on Positive Behaviour for Learning), and the Staff Operational Handbook. This covers key workplace processes, including alarms, security, the employee assistance program, mandatory training, a code of conduct, and a dress code.

Our Beginning Teacher Program phases include:

- **Term 1: Establish My Practice** – weekly meetings and school/community orientation, formalised lesson observations and feedback aligned to probation and performance expectations.
- **Term 2: Deepen Your Practice**
- **Term 3: Strengthen Your Practice** – goal setting, peer observation, regular coaching, and mentor observations and feedback sessions.
- **Term 4: Celebrate Success** – reflection of practice, celebration of progress, and preparation for the next phase of teaching through regular mentoring observations and feedback sessions.

Throughout, we support teachers in gathering evidence for transitioning from provisional to full teacher registration. Wellbeing is embedded – teachers take turns providing afternoon tea and debriefing together, sharing positive experiences and challenges, reinforcing a culture of professional trust and support."

A global perspective on what constitutes effective induction experiences

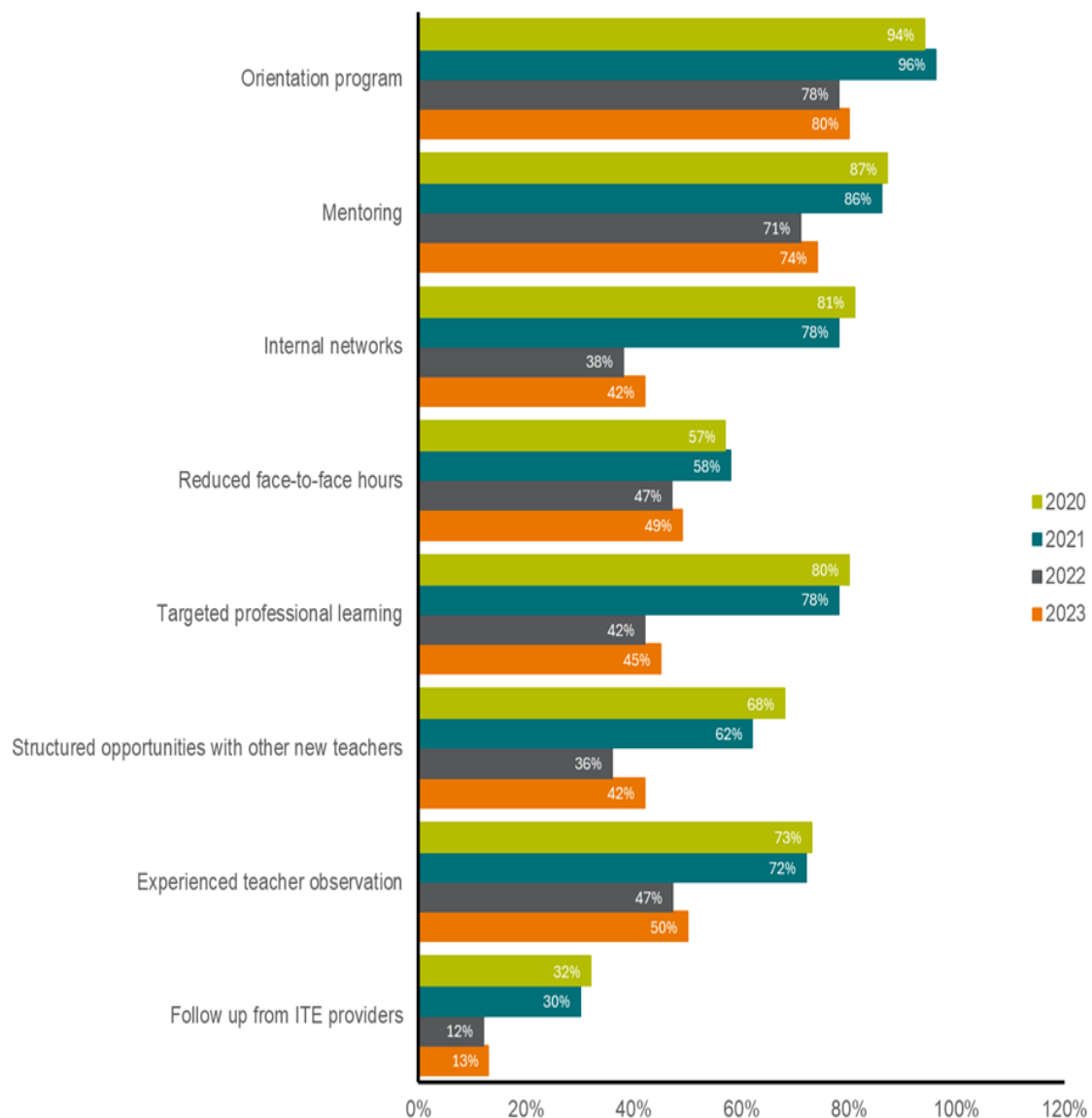
A comprehensive review of international comparative studies, including those focused on the Australian context, identified several common themes associated with high-quality teacher induction programs (Courtney et al., 2023).

- Providing beginning teachers with a mandatory induction program covering at least 12 months
- Training and support for mentors
- Providing beginning teachers with a reduced teaching load
- Opportunities for beginning teachers to observe their mentor and other effective teachers
- Opportunities for beginning teachers to be observed by their mentor, supervisors, and peers (with feedback during follow-up interviews)
- Connecting initial teacher education, induction, and professional learning to create a more coherent learning and development system for teachers

A decline in teacher induction and potential impact

The Australian Teacher Workforce Data (ATWD) initiative collects valuable information on the induction experiences of early career teachers (ATWD, 2025a, 2025b). These data reveal a decline between 2020 and 2022 in both the proportion of early career teachers who received formal induction (58% to 54%) and the quality of induction experiences provided, particularly for those with one to two years of professional experience (Figure 2). The 2023 data (latest available) on induction experiences showed marginal improvement with slightly higher percentages, though still consistently lower than baseline data from 2020 (Figure 2). A little over half (55%) of early career teachers reported they had received formal induction in 2023 (ATWD, 2025b).

Figure 2. Induction experiences of early career teachers during their first or second years of teaching.



For types of induction practices, the most notable declines were seen with ‘internal networking’, ‘targeted professional learning’ and ‘structured opportunities with other new teachers’ (down 39, 35 and 26 percentage points between 2020 and 2023, respectively).

The overall decline reported in induction experiences during this period likely reflects and manifests from broader issues within the teaching workforce (e.g. strained resources) enduring from the COVID-19 pandemic. If this lack of support for early career teachers continues, it poses a risk to the sustainability of the Australian teaching profession, especially amid current and projected teacher shortages ^[4].

“Initial teacher training with an adequate in-school experience, followed by induction and mentoring in the novice years, are key elements retaining teachers.”

–UNESCO, 2023, p23

The Australian Government is committed to addressing the challenges facing the teaching profession to ensure a sustainable and thriving workforce. The National Teacher Workforce Action Plan, endorsed by the federal, state and territory Education Ministers in December 2022, outlines a continuing path for transformative change to attract, support, and retain teachers (Australian

Government, 2022). In the plan, improving induction for early career teachers is presented as a critical strategy to enhance teacher retention, helping to ensure the long-term sustainability of the Australian teaching workforce.

Q. Do half of all new Australian teachers really leave within the first 5 years?

Australian media and some scholarly articles often claim that up to 50% of new teachers leave the profession within their first five years (Weldon, 2018). However, data in the ATWD Initiative show that, on average, 1.3% of teachers who register the year after graduating from an ITE program discontinue their registration each year (ATWD, 2024b). This suggests that early career teacher attrition in Australia is closer to 5% over the first five years.

Nevertheless, if Australia's overall decline in induction experiences for early career teachers continues or worsens, this comparatively low attrition rate may increase.

Resource list 1: Early career teacher induction resources

Improved beginning teacher induction | AITSL

This AITSL webpage focuses on improving the induction of beginning teachers. It links to the guidelines and supporting materials, including the underpinning research, commissioned reports, innovative case studies and research presentations on the following topics:

- *Attrition of Recent Queensland Graduate Teachers*, Queensland College of Teachers, with Deanne Cummins.
- *Early Career Teachers: Stories of Resilience*, University of South Australia, with Rosie Le Cornu and Judy Peters.
- *Lessons from Beginning Teachers: Challenges for School Leaders*, NZ Council for Educational Research, with Marie Cameron.

The webpage also covers how effective induction should enable beginning teachers to collect compelling evidence on their professional practice for the teacher registration process. A portfolio of evidence supports beginning teachers in charting their knowledge, growth, and impact and demonstrating achievement of the Proficient career stage of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers to gain full registration.

 [Improved beginning teacher induction](#)

My Induction App | AITSL

The AITSL My Induction App provides beginning teachers with easy access to videos, tips, simulations, quizzes, challenges and a question bank to support their daily work and professional growth. My Induction App features include:

- Access to curated resources.
- A tracker to monitor your professional wellbeing, including your enthusiasm, self-efficacy, stress levels and support.
- Advice from Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers (HALTs).
- Calming videos to de-stress.
- The ability to share and save your favourite resources.

[!\[\]\(e462f608b89f421f9d905728e26f6429_img.jpg\) Visit the My Induction App](#)

Mentoring Guidelines | AITSL

The AITSL Mentoring Guidelines provide a structured framework to support both pre-service and early career teachers. These guidelines are designed to enhance the professional experience and induction processes by articulating the skills and knowledge required of mentors and advice on how to implement an effective mentoring program.

[!\[\]\(9ea682cef02bbbdc0191f78cdae1d433_img.jpg\) Download Mentoring Guidelines](#)

Spotlight: High-Quality Professional Learning for Australian school teachers and school leaders | AITSL

This AITSL Spotlight explores the professional learning landscape across Australian schools in 2022, capturing firsthand experiences from teachers and school leaders. It emphasises the need for professional learning to be evidence-based, collaborative, and aligned with professional standards. Various resources, including toolkits, guidelines and evidence-based frameworks, are provided in the Spotlight to help teachers and school leaders identify and engage in effective professional learning opportunities.

[!\[\]\(4d25d87d94191bbe34f0046ad604e903_img.jpg\) Read more](#)

The Remote Teacher

The Remote Teacher website provides networking opportunities, courses and other resources (including blogs and podcasts) for pre-service and graduate teachers to support their outback teaching and learning journeys. Networking options include:

- Teachers in Remote Communities Facebook group.
- Teachers in Remote Communities Instagram page.

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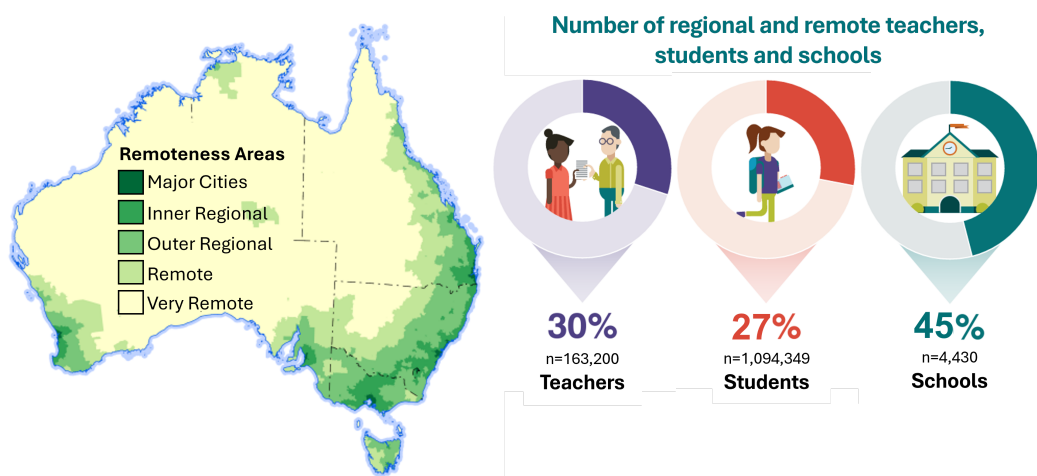
Teacher induction in regional and remote schools

Commencing teaching in regional and remote education settings provides teachers with a rich and rewarding experience. Alongside this, can be the presence of unique challenges. As is the case for any teaching role, there is complexity in navigating community social and cultural dynamics and establishing new relationships. Professional isolation (e.g. limited resources and professional learning opportunities) and geographical isolation (e.g. from health services) can be heightened in regional and remote areas (Downes & Roberts, 2018; Willis & Louth, 2024).

Induction programs in regional and remote settings should explicitly incorporate contextualised ongoing professional learning and wellbeing support for beginning and relocating teachers. These programs should aim to address the unique challenges of the educational setting and reinforce the opportunities and benefits of the location.

Figure 3. Regional and remote Australian schools (data from ATWD, 2024c; ABS, 2024; ACARA, 2024, respectively)

The term 'regional and remote' encompasses all areas outside Australia's major cities. The Australian Bureau of Statistics groups these areas as either Inner Regional, Outer Regional, Remote or Very Remote (Figure 3).



“Understanding teacher wellbeing is not only important for teacher education and the stability of the remote workforce, but it is just as important for bolstering student wellbeing in remote places.”

–Willis & Gainger, 2020, p19

Teaching beyond major cities: Opportunities and benefits in regional and remote communities

Teachers choose to live and work in regional and remote educational settings for various reasons, including interest in teaching in these areas, an appreciation of the lifestyle and community, opportunities for professional growth, smaller class sizes, and incentives

such as career advancement and financial benefits (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Downes & Roberts, 2018).

Teachers can be drawn to the unique situations provided by regional and remote settings. Making a meaningful impact within these schools and communities can further enhance the appeal, offering teachers a profound sense of purpose and connection. Through these experiences, regional and remote teaching positions shape rewarding careers and contribute to the vitality and sustainability of vested communities (Downes & Roberts, 2018).

While extrinsic incentive schemes, such as financial benefits, can influence teacher attraction to regional and remote settings, intrinsic motivators (e.g. purpose and enjoyment) play a more significant factor in teacher retention (Ashiedu & Scott-Ladd, 2012; Kelly & Fogarty, 2015).

Research consistently highlights the importance of teachers building strong relationships with and being actively immersed in the community. Important to the success of induction programs in regional and remote educational settings is for commencing teachers to develop an understanding of rurality, their role and identity working in the locational context, and the importance placed on the connectedness between school and the broader community (Downes & Roberts, 2018; Hudson & Hudson, 2019; Hazel & McCallum, 2016; Macdonald et al., 2025).

Below are some considerations for planning and implementing induction programs in regional and remote settings:

- **Understanding rurality:** Beginning and relocating teachers need opportunities to learn about the cultural, economic, and environmental contexts^[5] in which regional and remote schools operate, along with strategies to establish meaningful relationships in such settings (Downes & Roberts, 2018). Effective relationship-building requires active participation in the community, while sometimes blurring the lines between professional and personal life.
- **Place-based education:** Teachers can embrace place-based education, adapting pedagogical practices and curriculum resources to cultivate greater connectivity with local contexts (e.g. cultural and environments) (Yemini et al., 2023). Place-based education emphasises teaching and learning in ways that connect students directly to their own lives and environments.
- **Professional identity:** Teachers can develop a strong sense of professional identity in regional and remote settings, often assuming multifaceted roles as both educators and integral community members (Hazel & McCallum, 2016). Roles can include mentoring, organising or participating in extracurricular activities or local events, community advocates, and informal counsellors, all of which can strengthen community connections and enhance a sense of purpose.
- **Rural consciousness:** Reflecting on their own “rural consciousness” can help teachers understand the emotions, values, and attitudes they bring to teaching and living in regional and remote areas (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015; Willis & Louth, 2024). For teachers with limited experience or negative preconceptions about working in these schools and communities, additional support may be necessary to better align their dispositions with the realities of

working in these unique environments. For instance, “prior knowledge may contradict rural values” (Willis & Louth, 2024, p2).

To help retain teachers in regional and remote schools, induction programs should focus on teachers developing their professional identity and sense of belonging (Hazel & McCallum, 2016; Hudson & Hudson, 2019).

“Many of the challenges identified by rural teachers relate to connectedness with the community and understanding and adapting to rurality, both in a professional and personal context”

–Downes & Roberts, 2018, p32

Reflections from experienced, successful mentors in Australian schools

Stewart Smith, Head of Science Faculty, MacKillop College, Port Macquarie

“Early career teachers in regional and remote schools can feel ‘alone’ during the induction process. Smaller, more remote schools may have fewer staff, meaning young teachers have more limited options to form professional relationships. Their relative inexperience compared to other teaching staff can also result in them making unfair comparisons of their effectiveness. Providing opportunities for early career teachers to connect with peers at a similar career stage, either physically or online, can assist them to share experiences and provide reassurance. This can also create an important forum to ask questions they may otherwise feel would make them vulnerable to judgment or criticism from more experienced teachers.

Observation of effective teaching practice within the classroom is undoubtedly one of the most valuable elements of the induction process. Provision of regular classroom observation opportunities can be problematic in regional and remote schools where staffing and resourcing may already be under pressure. This means that early career teachers in these schools may receive less exposure to examples of effective teaching practice within their own context. In addition, higher staff turnover in these schools may mean there is significantly less cumulative experience to draw on from within the teaching cohort.”

Beginning Teacher Team, Innisfail State College, Innisfail

“We recognise the unique needs of early career teachers working in regional and remote settings. Our Beginning Teacher Program is flexible, structured, and responsive, supporting both our staff and those from neighbouring small schools in our cluster.

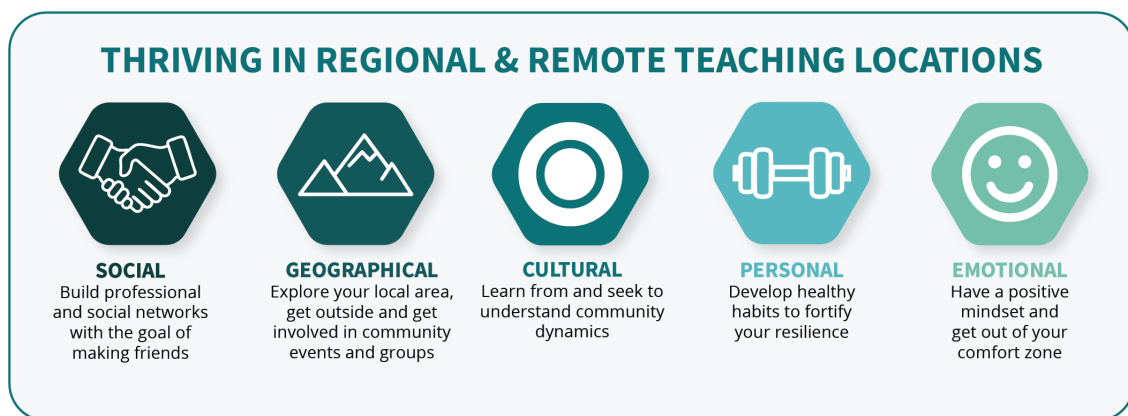
Our phased induction program offers a scaffolded journey that addresses both the teaching craft and the regional context. Lesson observations are built into the schedule to ensure early feedback and support during the probation period. Mentors also help beginning teachers collect and collate evidence for their transition to full registration.

Staff wellbeing remains a top priority, with formalised social initiatives like car rallies, barefoot bowls, and cooking competitions creating a strong sense of community and resilience. In our regional context, this holistic and people-centred approach helps attract and retain high-quality teachers. Emphasis is placed on developing capacity and confidence within and across local school communities.“

Early career teachers thriving in regional and remote areas

Drawing from the experiences of 32 early career teachers in regional and remote teaching positions across Queensland, a recent study identified five provisions for teachers' thriving in such locations (Figure 4) (Willis & Louth, 2024). These five provisions align strongly with the ideologies that underpin understanding rurality (Downes & Roberts, 2018) and rural consciousness (Kelly & Fogarty, 2015).

Figure 4. Thriving in regional and remote teaching locations (adapted from Willis & Louth, 2024)



More than 95% of the 32 early career teachers recommend a regional or remote teaching position to beginning teachers and describe the experience as rewarding, challenging and professionally developing. A consistent challenge remains, however, with retaining early career teachers in such areas. Only one-third of these teachers planned to stay in a rural and remote location for more than five years, consistent with broader trends of “transience”, highlighting the challenges of teacher retention and high staff turnover in some of these settings (Willis & Louth, 2024; Downes & Roberts, 2018).

“We suggest that teachers who are place-connected, considering themselves not just geographically situated in a place but intrinsically connected to the people and culture of that place, are far more likely to achieve a sense of fulfilment and commitment in their roles as rural educators.”

—Macdonald et al., 2025, p1.

Induction programs in regional and remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are represented in the student body across all of Australia. The Australian Bureau of Statistics data show a high proportion attend remote and very remote schools (ABS, 2024) ^[6]. Schools in the Northern Territory have the highest number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, accounting for 39.4% of enrolments (ABS, 2024).

Often in contrast to the student demographic with which teachers interact, the teaching workforce in many regional and remote areas is predominantly middle-class and Anglo-Australian (Brasche & Harrington, 2012; Young et al., 2018). Initial teacher education programs offer pre-service teachers courses in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, and in collaboration with partner schools, facilitate valuable professional experience placement opportunities in regional and remote regions (Cuervo & Acquaro, 2018; Young et al., 2018).

“The factors that contribute to improved outcomes—particularly those defined from a community perspective—are focussed on parent and community involvement, attention to health, safety and wellbeing, local employment, appropriate curriculum and pedagogies and strategies that build engagement in learning.”

—Guenther et al., 2019, p29

Teachers beginning in, or relocating to, regional and remote schools which may have higher proportions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, often require more support during induction to build capabilities. Without adequate support, schools risk these teachers becoming part of the "revolving door" phenomenon, where high turnover disrupts educational continuity and undermines community aspirations (Lowe et al., 2019, p21; Morley et al., 2023; Hall, 2012).

Although this section focuses on the context of regional and remote areas, all teacher induction programs, regardless of location, need to consider the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. Below are some considerations for planning and implementing induction programs with inclusion for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander student needs at the centre.

- **Cultural responsiveness training.** Teachers can develop awareness and understanding of their own personal attitudes, assumptions, beliefs, and biases regarding Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, which might negatively impact their teaching practice and student outcomes (AITSL, 2022). When teachers critically consider and address their ethnocentrism ^[7], rejecting any racial biases and stereotypes (e.g. deficit ideologies), they can better provide supportive education that embraces intercultural understanding and equity (Morrison et al., 2019).
- **Culturally responsive pedagogy.** Teachers need to value the diverse cultural identities and knowledges we have in Australia and use these as educational resources to enrich learning and counter deficit viewpoints in every classroom (CRESI, 2024; Morrison et al., 2019). Culturally appropriate pedagogy emphasises integrating local knowledges, values, and language into the curriculum, allowing students to connect learning with their families and communities (CRESI, 2024; Morrison et al., 2019).
- **Co-created induction programs.** Induction programs in schools on all Countries of Australia should be developed collaboratively with local Elders or leaders through respectful partnerships (Morley et al., 2023; Macdonald et al., 2025). This approach helps beginning

and relocating teachers deepen their understanding of community, and to promote collaboration and their capacity to deliver culturally responsive education.

Reflections from experienced, successful mentors in Australian schools

Beginning Teacher Team, Innisfail State College, Innisfail

“We proudly support a diverse community with strong Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander representation. Our Beginning Teacher Program is culturally responsive and includes meaningful engagement with Elders and community from the start. New teachers are formally welcomed into our Elder Program and given the opportunity to go ‘On Country’, learning firsthand about local culture, histories, and perspectives. These powerful experiences foster deeper cultural understanding and enrich classroom practice.

We also provide guidance around professional conduct in community, recognising that teachers in regional areas often participate in sport and social events alongside students and parents. Understanding these dynamics helps beginning teachers build respectful and appropriate community relationships.

Cultural learning is embedded across the induction phases, with particular emphasis in Term 1 and Term 2, when beginning teachers connect with our Community Education Counsellor and mentors to learn how to embed First Nations perspectives in their classroom practice. By Term 3 and 4, our beginning teachers are supported to document their practice in alignment with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers, ensuring cultural capability is demonstrated in their transition to full registration. Our approach ensures early career teachers feel confident, connected, and culturally informed in their teaching journey.”

Resource list 2: Indigenous cultural responsiveness professional learning resources

Building a culturally responsive Australian teaching workforce: toolkit | AITSL

This AITSL toolkit provides teachers and leaders with resources to critically reflect on and enhance their cultural responsiveness, empowering them to refine their practice to create inclusive, culturally respectful learning environments that aim to meet the needs of all students. There are three embedded digital resources:

- **Indigenous cultural responsiveness self-reflection tool:** Use this tool to reflect on your self-awareness of worldviews, assumptions, attitudes, beliefs, and biases in relation to personal identity and culture.
- **Indigenous cultural responsiveness continuum:** The continuum provides a shared language and understanding of the non-linear process of building cultural

responsiveness

- **Indigenous cultural responsiveness capability framework:** Learn more about your current stage of cultural responsiveness and find recommended actions to support your ongoing learning, so that you can improve your teaching practice.

🔗 [Access the toolkit and report](#)

Culturally responsive pedagogy: web-based resource | CRESI

The Centre for Research in Educational and Social Inclusion (CRESI) at the University of South Australia provides a web-based resource for educators interested in culturally responsive pedagogies. The website provides information on key concepts, resources, case studies and links to keynote presentations to help teachers and leaders “actively value and mobilise as resources the cultural repertoires and intelligences that students bring to the learning relationship” (CRESI, 2025, p1)

🔗 <https://culturallyresponsivepedagogy.com.au>

Narragunnawali program and online platform | Reconciliation Australia

The Narragunnawali program and online platform provide a suite of tools and resources designed to facilitate reconciliation efforts between non-First Nations Australians and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples within educational settings. These include Reconciliation Action Plans, professional learning, curriculum resources, webinars, and workshops to support schools and early learning services in taking the next steps towards driving reconciliation in the classroom, around the school, and with the community.

🔗 <https://www.narragunnawali.org.au/>

CORE: Culturally responsive teaching | AIATSIS

The Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies (AIATSIS) provide an e-learning course to develop teachers’ understanding of engaging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students through culturally responsive teaching, and strengthen teachers’ ability to teach Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander histories and cultures in a way that promotes reconciliation. This seven-hour course is aligned with the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.

🔗 <https://aiatsis.gov.au/education/core/culturally-responsive-teaching>

Induction for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander

teachers

The ATWD initiative provides national data on the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher workforce (ATWD, 2024c). In 2020, there were an estimated 6,577 registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers across Australia, with 48% working in regional or remote areas (compared to 34% for all teachers).



[📄 In Focus: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Teachers](#)

The Northern Territory had the highest within-state proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers in the workforce (4.6%) ^[8], followed by New South Wales (2.0%) and Queensland (1.3%). These figures do not include Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators ^[9] or assistant teachers, who likewise play a crucial role in supporting students, particularly in remote areas (AITSL, 2021).

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers are integral to their communities including those employed in regional and remote educational settings. As many of these regions grapple with high teacher turnover, all teachers and educators have a role to play in providing continuity of learning, with inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher and educators cultural, linguistical and community knowledge (Hall, 2012; AITSL, 2021).

Challenges with attracting and retaining Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers

In 2020, almost two-thirds of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers reported that they intended to leave (29%) or were uncertain of whether they would remain (35%) in the profession (ATWD, 2024c, 2025a). Furthermore, the numbers of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who commence and complete initial teacher education have continually declined since 2015 (down 21% and 25% by 2019, respectively) (ATWD, 2024c).

There is considerable scope for current and emerging Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers to be retained in the profession through targeted, evidence-based retention strategies including, and especially, comprehensive induction programs.

In 2020, 56% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early career teachers reported receiving formal induction within their first five years, compared to 63% of early career teachers in the wider workforce (ATWD, 2024c). While both figures are sub-optimal, the lower proportion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers receiving induction needs addressing. These teachers are already underrepresented in the teacher workforce, and uncertainty exists around their future retention and supply (ATWD, 2024c). Comprehensive induction programs are necessary for all early career teachers, contributing to a more effective, satisfied and sustainable workforce.

Below are some further considerations for planning and implementing induction programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander early career teachers:

- **Culturally safe workplaces:** Induction programs should be embedded in a culture where all workers feel supported and respected and where professional and cultural identities are recognised and valued. However, recent research found that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers experience racism in myriad ways, including inequitable treatment by colleagues and supervisors, overt and covert instances of racism and systemic barriers to career advancement (AEU, 2023). Beginning Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers can enter the profession with a wealth of educational and cultural knowledge to inform practice, placing them “in a position of epistemological privilege^[10] that should be recognised and acknowledged” (Woodroffe, 2020, p.148; Hall, 2018).
- **Reducing teaching and cultural workloads:** In 2020, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander classroom teachers reported having significantly more face-to-face teaching hours per week than other teachers, with 60% exceeding 25 hours compared to 48% of their peers (ATWD, 2024c). This amount – 25 hours per week – exceeds the allotted hours set out in enterprise bargaining agreements. Additionally, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers often carry extra responsibilities, referred to as *colonial load*, related to their ‘Aboriginality’. Colonial load is a burden frequently placed on teachers from cultural minorities (Hall, 2018). Adjusting expectations for teaching and cultural workloads is essential for the sustainability of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teacher workforce.

Conclusion

As the Australian education system faces teacher workforce shortages, particularly in regional and remote locations, induction programs should be grounded in evidence-based practices to provide early career teachers with the support needed to launch successful, long-term careers.

The AITSL [*Guidelines for the Induction of Early Career Teachers in Australia*](#) offer practical, evidence-based advice for those responsible for providing early career teachers with structured, purposeful induction. Elaborating on these guidelines, this Spotlight provides resource lists to further help schools and leaders plan and implement effective teacher induction for beginning teachers.

Regional and remote Australian educational settings often experience more teacher turnover than schools in major cities. While some attrition in any workforce is both healthy and necessary, high teacher turnover can negatively impact educational outcomes, teacher and student wellbeing, and community educational aspirations. More isolated settings may need to emphasise collaboration with other schools and draw more on community strengths for induction needs.

Creating meaningful induction experiences supports teacher wellbeing and retention and contributes to positive educational outcomes for all communities.

Some final reflections from experienced, successful mentors in Australian schools

Stewart Smith, Head of Science Faculty, MacKillop College, Port Macquarie

“Induction is such a critical area for the future of our profession, and I feel it does not get the attention it deserves. In my opinion, coordinating/mentoring the induction is a specialist role that should involve carefully selected individuals. Hopefully, we see more investment in this space, like these guidelines, in the future.”

Beginning Teacher Team, Innisfail State College, Innisfail

“We are proud of the culture we have created – one of care, collaboration, and continual growth. With a leadership team dedicated to supporting beginning teachers, we ensure every educator has the confidence and capability to thrive. Our Beginning Teacher Program is grounded in research, strengthened by regional networks, and responsive to community needs, ensuring the best outcomes for teachers and, ultimately, for students.

Teaching in a regional or remote school can be an unbelievable experience, enriched by a strong culture of care, collaboration, and growth. Our program supports early career teachers across the region with mentoring, wellbeing initiatives, and community connections, ensuring that beginning teachers thrive both professionally and personally.”

Footnotes

1. The term ‘early career teacher’ refers to early childhood and school teachers in the first two years of their teaching careers. AITSL recognises that many teachers will still identify as early career teachers beyond two years or until they are fully registered. Early career teachers are sometimes referred to as ‘beginning teachers’ or ‘new teachers’.
2. The original national guidelines were titled, Graduate to Proficient: Australian guidelines for teacher induction into the profession.
3. The newly released guidelines were published in response to the *National Teacher Workforce Action Plan* (Australian Government, 2022) agreed by all Education Ministers.

AITSL was tasked with developing national induction and mentoring guidelines to support early career teachers and new school leaders, supporting the objective of improving retention and enhancing career pathways.

4. Teacher shortages across Australia are expected to persist in the near term, driven by an ageing teacher workforce nearing retirement (ATWD, 2024c), rising numbers of teachers intending to leave the profession (AITSL, 2023), and declining commencement and completion rates in national ITE programs (ATWD, 2024b).
5. Contexts include recognising specific challenges and opportunities in these communities, such as access to resources, close-knit social structures, local activities and the importance of the natural environment.
6. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), almost half of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population resides in inner or outer regional areas (24.8% and 19.0%, respectively), while a smaller proportion live in remote or very remote areas (6.0% and 9.4%, respectively) (ABS, 2022). In contrast, only a quarter of the non-Indigenous population resides in inner or outer regional areas (17.5% and 7.7%, respectively), with even fewer living in remote or very remote areas (1.0% and 0.4%, respectively) (ABS, 2022). These demographic patterns are reflected in Australian educational settings.
7. Ethnocentrism in education refers to the tendency of teachers to evaluate or approach diverse cultural practices, values, and ways of learning through the lens of their own cultural norms and assumptions. This perspective can unintentionally marginalise students from different cultural backgrounds, particularly in multicultural or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander contexts, by prioritising one culture's standards over others. Culturally responsive teaching seeks to address this by fostering an inclusive and respectful learning environment that values all cultural perspectives (Morrison et al., 2019).
8. These proportions likely reflect that there are more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the Northern Territory's working-age population relative to other states and territories. 26.7% of the working-age population in the Northern Territory identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander in 2021. Nevertheless, over half (55%) of all registered Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers worked in New South Wales (n=3,609), with a further 22% in Queensland (n=1,437) (ATWD, 2024c).
9. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander educators or assistant teachers are not registered as teachers. Australian states and territories use different terminology for the category. For example, these educators are called Assistant Teachers in the Northern Territory (NT), Aboriginal and Islander Education Officers (AIEOs) in Western Australia (WA), Community Education Counsellors (CECs) in Queensland (QLD), Koorie Engagement Support Officers (KESOs), and Aboriginal Community Education Officers (ACEOs) in South Australia (SA) (AITSL, 2021). This list is not exhaustive
10. Epistemological privilege in education refers to the recognition and value placed on the unique knowledge systems, perspectives, and lived experiences that individuals or groups bring to educational contexts. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, this concept highlights their distinct ability to bridge Western educational systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander ways of knowing, being, and doing. By valuing the epistemological privilege of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander teachers, Australian education systems can promote equity, enhance cross-cultural understanding, and improve outcomes for all students (Hall, 2018; Woodroffe, 2020).

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