

Questions and Answers

TEACHER REGISTRATION (NORTHERN TERRITORY) AMENDMENT BILL

Why do we have teacher registration?

The objective of the *Teacher Registration (Northern Territory) Act* (the Act) is to ensure that only persons who are fit and proper and who are appropriately qualified are employed as teachers in the Northern Territory. This is achieved by the establishment of the Teacher Registration Board to register persons as teachers and to facilitate teachers' on-going competence.

The current Act was passed and the Board established in late 2004.

Why has the current Act been amended?

There are two overarching reasons:

- to better enable the Board to meet the objectives of the Act; and
- to enable the Northern Territory to bring its registration practices in line with other jurisdictions to promote nationally consistent registration practices.

The amendments enable the Teacher Registration Board to:

- introduce two categories of registration: Provisional Registration and Full Registration
- require teachers to meet registration renewal requirements every five years based on evidence of ongoing competence and good character
- accredit pre-service teacher education courses for delivery in the Northern Territory
- have clearer powers in undertaking disciplinary proceedings and compliance activities
- have better access to information from third parties (and provide protection to those persons who provide the Board with information)

What is Full Registration?

A teacher will be eligible for Full Registration if he/she (a) holds the prescribed qualifications for registration, (b) is a fit and proper person to teach, (c) is competent to teach in accordance with the regulations, (d) has the prescribed professional experience and currency of practice for Full Registration, and (e) meets any other prescribed requirement for registration.

What is Provisional Registration?

A person is eligible for Provisional Registration if the Board is satisfied that the person does not have the prescribed professional experience and currency of practice for Full Registration, but is otherwise eligible for Full Registration as outlined above. These teachers will require a period of supported transition before being eligible for Full Registration. Usually teachers who will be granted Provisional Registration are new graduates in their first years of teaching. In certain circumstances some teachers recruited from overseas, teachers with lapsed registration and teachers returning from extended leave who do not have the currency of practice or current professional experience will be granted provisional registration.

How does a teacher move from Provisional to Full Registration?

A teacher may move from Provisional Registration to Full Registration once they have the required level of professional experience and currency of practice for Full Registration.

The Board is proposing that a provisionally registered teacher will be required to complete 180 days (or the part-time equivalent) of teaching, undertake professional learning and be supported by a mentor teacher. Provisionally registered teachers will have up to three years to meet the requirements for the transition to Full Registration and may be granted a further two year extension if required. During this period, it is proposed that provisionally registered teachers will be required to collect specific evidence against the *Professional Standards for Competent Teachers in the Northern Territory*.

What are the proposed registration renewal requirements?

Registration Renewal is a process whereby registered teachers will be required to demonstrate that they continue to be competent practitioners and are of good character. Currently, once registered, teachers pay an annual registration fee and there are no other requirements.

To maintain registration in the Northern Territory, it is proposed that teachers with Full Registration will be required to renew their registration every five years by demonstrating:

- Currency of practice (180 days of teaching service in the past five years);
- 100 hours of ongoing engagement in professional learning; and
- On-going good character.

It is proposed that teachers with Provisional Registration may renew (extend) their registration for another two years provided they continue to be eligible for Provisional Registration.

This process is separate to paying registration fees.

Why do pre-service teacher education courses need to be accredited?

The Teacher Registration Board will accredit pre-service teacher education programs delivered in the Northern Territory against rigorous program standards that will link course approval processes in the Northern Territory with nationally consistent practices. Graduates from accredited courses will have the prescribed qualifications eligible for teacher registration in the Northern Territory. Currently, the Board liaises with Charles Darwin University and Bachelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education and recommends to the Minister the program as being suitable for teacher registration in the Northern Territory.

Why are changes needed to the disciplinary proceedings (Part 6 of the Act)?

Under the provisions of the Act, the Board must investigate a complaint of serious incompetence, serious misconduct or a complaint that calls into question the continued fitness to teach of a person who is or was a registered teacher or in relation to whom an authorisation is or was in effect.

The provisions of the new Act ensure the Board can undertake investigations in a more timely way and provide indemnity to relevant persons who provide the Board with information.

Why are changes needed to the compliance provisions?

It is an offence for a person to teach without registration, and for an employer to employ a person to teach who is not registered. It is one of the functions of the Board to prosecute offences under the Act, but the Act is silent on how the Board monitors compliance with the Act. The proposed amendments are designed to give the Board more powers in this regard.

Further information will be released in the coming weeks and will be published on the TRB Website. Watch this space!