



Education
Standards
Authority

ATTRITION OF NSW GRADUATE TEACHERS

REPORT

March 2020

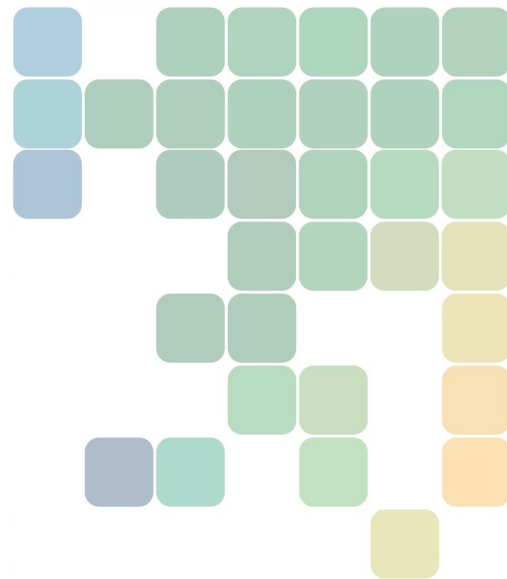




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Executive Summary

Project overview

This project, undertaken by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA), involved data analysis to determine the rate of attrition of recent NSW graduate teachers. The aim of the project was to determine the proportion of NSW graduate teachers who were removed from the accreditation list within six years of gaining initial teacher accreditation.

Key findings

- 10.7% of teachers who gained initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2013 were removed from the accreditation list within six years.
- The number of NSW teachers who achieve initial teacher accreditation each year has remained consistent, at around 7,500 per year (over the last 10 years).
- 43.0% of NSW graduate teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2018 were aged under 25 years of age and 30.1% were aged 25-34 years.
- 75.4% of NSW graduate teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2013 were female.
- Male graduate teachers on average are 1.6 years older than females when they gain initial teacher accreditation.

Of those teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2013, 10.7% were no longer accredited in NSW within six years. The proportion of males who were granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2013 and were removed from the accreditation list within six years was 12.8%, which was higher than that of females at 10.0%.

The proportion of NSW graduate teachers who were removed from the accreditation list within six years of being granted initial teacher accreditation peaked at 13.0% in 2013. 2013 represented a significant increase on the previous four year average (10.0%). Both 2014 and 2015 are already above 12.3%, which would indicate there has been an increase in the rate of graduate teachers leaving the profession in more recent years.



Introduction

The NSW Education Standards Authority

The NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA) is the regulatory body responsible for curriculum, assessment, school registration, and teacher quality in New South Wales.

NESA is an independent statutory authority established under the *Education Standards Authority Act 2013* (NESA Act).

NESA's purpose is to bring about change to improve student learning and wellbeing through:

- supporting the teaching profession to be the best it can be through the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers
- quality assurance of professional learning and development
- developing world class curriculum
- deepening the understanding and practice of assessing student knowledge and capabilities; and
- driving improvement in the quality assurance systems for schools.

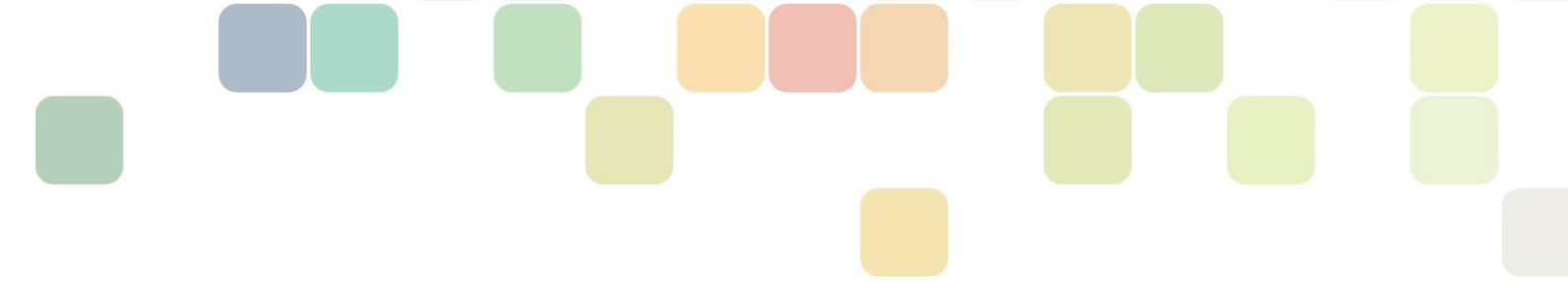
NESA's role is unique by national and international standards in that NESA brings together all four educational pillars – teacher quality, curriculum, assessment and school standards – under the umbrella of a single education authority.

Teacher accreditation

All teachers in NSW are required to be accredited to teach in a NSW registered school or approved early childhood education and care service. The regulatory functions of NESA in relation to teacher accreditation are outlined in the *Teacher Accreditation Act 2004* (the 'TA Act'). One of the functions of NESA under the TA Act is to maintain records of accredited teachers in NSW. This accreditation data is maintained electronically.

For the purpose of this report, we refer to the 'accreditation list' in an active sense. Active teachers are those accredited at any level regardless of whether they are currently teaching. This includes teachers on a "leave of absence". While teachers are on a leave of absence they remain accredited but cannot work as a teacher in a school or early childhood education service. The following reasons may apply to teachers who are removed from the accreditation list:

- the teacher's accreditation ceases because they have not met the Proficient Teacher requirements within the specified time frame
- the teacher has applied to NESA to have their accreditation voluntarily cancelled
- the teacher has had their accreditation suspended or revoked as a result of failure to pay the annual accreditation fee; failure to hold a valid Working With Children Check (WWCC) clearance; disciplinary action resulting from misconduct; or failure to continue to meet the professional teaching standards.



Active teachers have accreditation at either Conditional, Provisional, Proficient, Highly Accomplished, or Lead Teacher level. Early childhood teachers are accredited in NSW and adhere to the same accreditation policies as primary and secondary school teachers.

Initial teacher accreditation is achieved either through conditional or provisional accreditation. Conditional accreditation can be granted if an applicant has successfully completed a bachelor degree and has an offer of employment as a teacher, or is in the final year of an accredited teaching degree. Provisional accreditation is granted if an applicant has successfully completed an approved teaching degree.

All teachers with provisional or conditional accreditation must achieve accreditation at Proficient Teacher within a specified timeframe to remain eligible to teach in NSW.

- Provisionally accredited teachers who are employed on a full-time basis have three years, while part-time and casual teachers have five years
- Conditionally accredited teachers who are employed on a full-time basis have four years, while part-time and casual teachers have six years

Provisionally and conditionally accredited teachers develop their practice and work towards the Proficient Teacher level by participating in a range of professional activities. As teachers develop their practice, they must produce documentary evidence against the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers (the Standards), have their practice observed and have their supervisor submit an observation report as well as the Proficient Teacher Accreditation Report. Teachers, supervisors and principals manage this process through an online platform maintained by NESA called the electronic Teacher Accreditation Management System (eTAMS).

Once accredited at Proficient Teacher, teachers are required to maintain their accreditation every five years if full-time, or seven years if part-time or casual. Maintenance of Proficient Teacher accreditation involves continuing to demonstrate practice at the Standards for Proficient Teacher and completing 100 hours of professional development (PD), at least 50 of which must be NESA Registered. Teachers must also evaluate any NESA Registered PD they complete, continue to pay their annual accreditation fee, and maintain a valid WWCC clearance.

Teachers may wish to voluntarily attain accreditation at one of the higher levels, Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher. To do this, they must demonstrate practice at the Standards for the higher level, submit documentary evidence of their teaching practice and have their teaching practice observed by a trained External Assessor.

Teachers that hold current full teacher registration from another state or territory can apply for Mutual Recognition through NESA. Once the registration is confirmed a teacher will be granted Proficient Teacher accreditation in NSW. Teachers who gain accreditation at Highly Accomplished or Lead Teacher in another state or territory are nationally certified and will be recognised at the same level in NSW.

At the end of 2018, there were 155,048 active teachers on the NESA accreditation list.

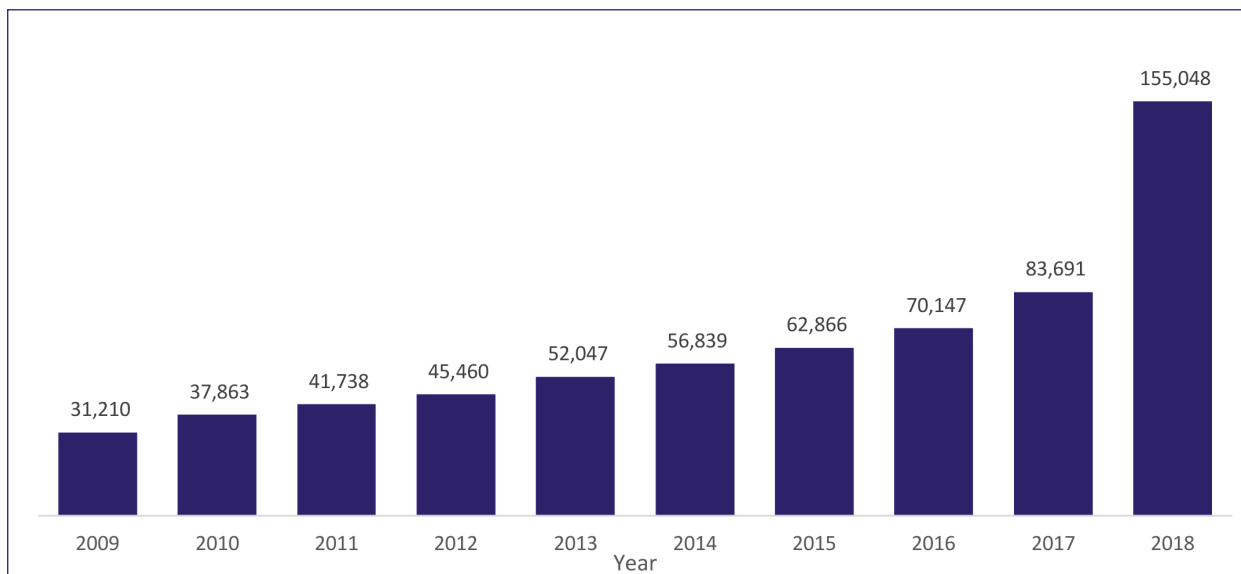


Figure 1 Total number of accredited teachers in New South Wales 2009-2018.

Of the total number of accredited teachers as at 31 December 2018, 21.4% had gained initial teacher accreditation and the remaining 78.6% had gained accreditation at Proficient Teacher level or higher.

Between 2009 and 2017, there was a gradual increase in total teacher numbers each year. The reason for the sharp increase between 2017 and 2018 is due to the change in legislation which made it a requirement for all teachers in NSW to be accredited, commencing 1 January 2018. Prior to this date, established teachers who were practising earlier than 2004 were not required to be accredited in NSW.



Methodology

For this project data was drawn from the accreditation list and analysed to determine the number of NSW graduate teachers who:

- were granted provisional or conditional accreditation between 2009 and 2018, and
- were removed from the accreditation list (both overall figures and a breakdown according to gender; age; initial teacher education provider at which teaching qualification was completed; and accreditation status).

These data have been used to determine the rate of early career attrition for teachers in NSW since 2009.

Attrition

Teacher attrition, and in particular early career attrition, is a much discussed topic among education stakeholders. It is often reported that up to 50% of teachers leave the profession in the first 5 years of their career. A recent publication by Paul Weldon of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) provides a clear account of the history of these claims and the lack of evidence at the heart of them.¹

Definitions of early career attrition vary across publications but generally centre on teachers who leave the profession, or sometimes just leave full-time employment within 5 years of beginning teaching. The recently published Queensland College of Teachers report reviewed data to determine the number of teachers who were removed from their list of registered teachers within 4 years of initial registration.²

As NSW accreditation policies allow teachers up to 6 years to gain Proficient Teacher accreditation this report will look at the proportion of teachers who were removed from the NSW accreditation list within 6 years of initial accreditation.

So, for the purposes of this report 'early career' teachers are those with initial teacher accreditation at either provisional or conditional and 'attrition' means removed from the teacher accreditation list either voluntarily or as a result of the teacher's failure to comply with the accreditation requirements.

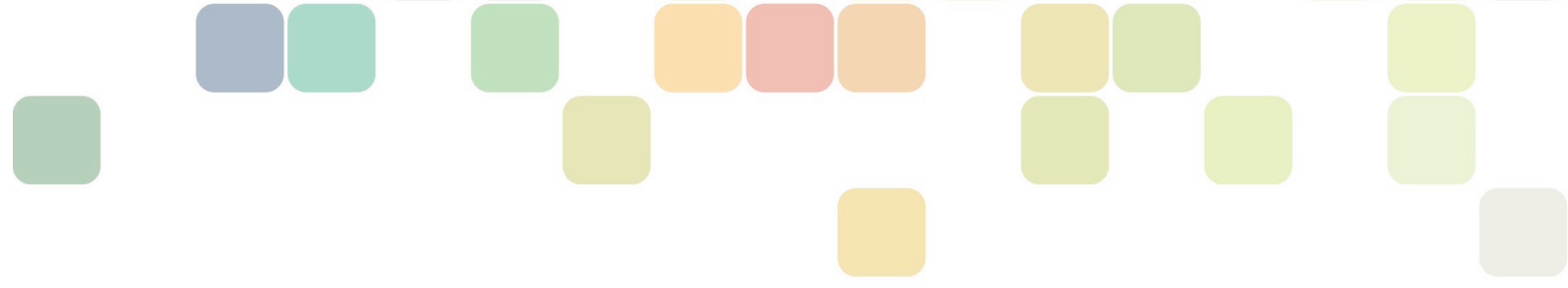
Limitations of data in report

The teacher accreditation list is not a list of teachers currently employed in NSW schools. Based on information contained within the accreditation list, around 36.3% of teachers on the accreditation list in 2018 were not teaching in NSW schools on a permanent or long-term contract basis. Those not in a permanent or long-term position include:

- relief and short-term contract teachers
- teachers employed in other educational institutions (e.g. TAFE or universities)
- teachers who were no longer employed in a school but were employed in education-related positions (e.g. curriculum development; system administration; education programs in cultural institutions)
- teachers teaching interstate or overseas
- teachers in other fields of employment who maintain their accreditation

¹ Weldon, P. Early career teacher attrition in Australia: evidence, definition, classification and measurement, *Australian Journal of Education* 2018, Vol. 62(1) 61–78.

² Queensland College of Teachers, *Queensland Graduate Attrition Report 2018*, <https://www.qct.edu.au/about/research-reports>.



The teacher accreditation list includes all of the teachers employed in any of the roles listed above as well as anyone who has accreditation but is working outside of the education sector in an unrelated role. If these teachers choose to maintain their teacher accreditation, for whatever reason, they will remain on the accreditation list and are not seen as having left the profession.

Teachers leave the teaching profession for a broad range of reasons and at various times throughout their career. Some teachers leave the profession for some time and then re-enter at a later stage. The data presented in this report was drawn for the purpose of providing information about beginning teacher attrition rates and so makes no comment on teachers leaving the profession in later stages of their career.

Importantly, attrition from the NSW accreditation list of teachers does not necessarily equate to attrition from school teaching as some of the NSW graduate teachers who are no longer accredited in NSW may be teaching in a school outside NSW.

The data in the report may not accurately indicate the year a teacher stopped teaching in NSW because teachers may go on a leave of absence, effectively pausing their accreditation for a period of up to five years. Teachers on a leave of absence are not considered to have left the profession even though some may eventually do so when their leave of absence expires.

Findings

Location and employment

At the end of 2018, 96.7% of teachers on the accreditation list had a NSW residential address, 2.4% had an interstate address (over 70% of the teachers with an address outside NSW reside in Queensland or Victoria), and under 1.0% had a residential address located overseas.

Also at the end of 2018, 63.7% of teachers were known to be employed in permanent or long-term temporary teaching positions in NSW schools.

With regard to teachers recorded as having a permanent or long-term temporary teaching position in a NSW school, as indicated in Table 1, 62% were employed in government schools, 38% were in non-government schools.

Sector	(%)
Government	62.0
Independent	20.0
Catholic	18.0

Table 1 Teachers with permanent or long-term temporary teaching positions in 2018, by employment sector.

Age profile and gender

Table 2 shows the average age of accredited teachers in 2018.

Accredited Teachers	Average Age
All accredited teachers	34.2
Proficient teachers	46.8
All accredited teachers	33.8
Male	35.4

Table 2 Average age of teachers, December 2018

Table 3 and Figure 2 show the gender breakdown of teachers by age range. Overall, as at 31 December 2018, over three quarters of teachers were female and 46.2% were aged 45 years or older.

Age group	Proportion of accreditation list (%)	Male (%)	Female (%)
0-24	2.7	18.8	81.2
25-29	12.9	21.0	79.0
30-34	14.2	22.0	78.0
35-39	12.6	22.2	77.8
40-44	11.4	22.0	78.0
45-49	11.8	23.2	76.8
50-54	9.7	23.8	76.1
55-59	8.9	24.5	75.4
Over 60	15.8	29.5	70.5

Table 3 Gender breakdown of teachers by age group, December 2018

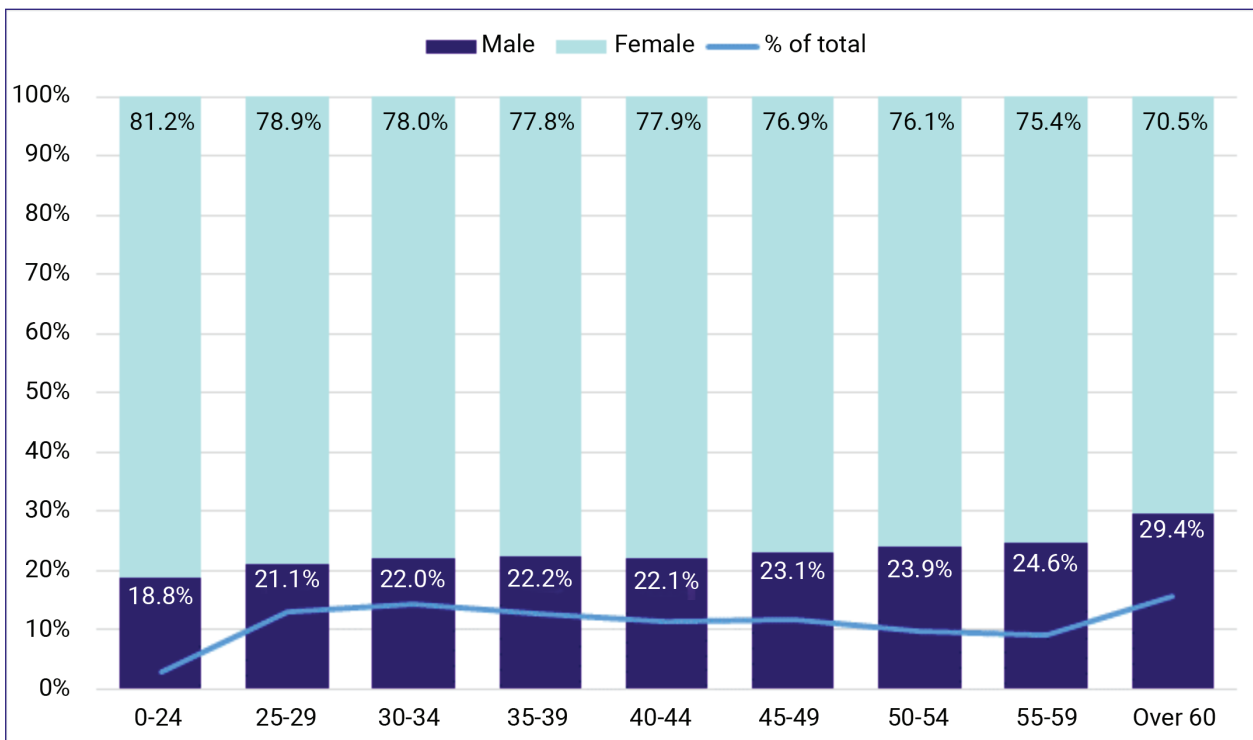


Figure 2 Total number of accredited teachers in NSW 2009-2018

NSW graduate teachers accredited between 2009 and 2017

At the time the data was drawn for this report, only NSW graduate teachers whose initial accreditation date was between 1 January 2009 and 26 July 2013, could have been accredited for more than six years. Those teachers with an initial accreditation date after 27 July 2013 would have been accredited for less than six years.

Table 4, below contains those teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2013. On average, 64.7% of NSW graduates granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013 moved to Proficient Teacher (PT) accreditation within six years.

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted PT accreditation within 6 years	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers granted PT accreditation within 6 years
2009	6,920	4,359	63.0
2010	7,787	5,178	66.5
2011	7,698	4,848	63.0
2012	7,850	5,018	63.9
2013	7,607	5,080	66.8

Table 4 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-2013 and granted Proficient Teacher accreditation within six years

NSW graduate teachers who had an initial accreditation date after 26 July 2013 would have been accredited for less than six years at the time the data was drawn. Therefore, the number of those NSW graduate teachers who progress to Proficient Teacher accreditation in table 5 (below) will continue to increase in the future.

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted PT accreditation as of 26 July 2019	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers granted PT accreditation as of 26 July 2019
2014	7,156	4,294	60.0
2015	10,256	4,621	45.1
2016	8,176	2,600	31.8
2017	8,040	1,113	13.8
2018	7,813	618	7.9

Table 5 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2014-2018 and granted Proficient Teacher accreditation as at 26 July 2019

Table 6 below shows over 73% of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation were under 35 years of age; 43.0% of NSW graduate teachers were under 25 years old; and around 30.1% were aged 25-34 years at the time they were initially accredited.

Age at time initial accreditation was granted	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-18	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-18
Under 25	33,562	43.0
25-34	23,507	30.1
35-44	12,467	16.0
45-54	5,977	7.6
55-64	2,301	2.9
Over 65	317	0.4
Total	78,131	

Table 6 New South Wales graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-2018 by age group

NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list between 2009 and 2018

Table 7 below contains those teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 1 January 2009 and 31 December 2013. Of these teacher's 10.7% were removed from the accreditation list within six years of gaining accreditation.

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years
2009	6,920	518	7.5
2010	7,787	870	11.2
2011	7,698	886	11.5
2012	7,850	775	9.9
2013	7,607	989	13.0
Total	37,862	4,038	10.7

Table 7 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-2013 and removed from the accreditation list within six years

Those graduates who were initially accredited after 26 July 2013 would have been accredited less than six years at the time the data was drawn. Therefore, the number of NSW graduate teachers who are removed from the accreditation list within six years will continue to increase (see Table 8).

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list as of 26 July 2019	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list as of 26 July 2019
2014	7,156	882	12.5
2015	10,256	1,250	12.3
2016	8,176	930	11.5
2017	8,040	725	9.1
2018	7,813	448	5.9
Total	41,441	4,235	10.2

Table 8 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation 2014-2018 and removed from the accreditation list as at 26 July 2019

Males make up around one quarter of the total number of NSW graduate teachers who were granted initial accreditation. The percentage of male graduate teachers who were removed from the accreditation list within six years of being granted initial accreditation is higher than that of females in this category.

Overall, 10.0% of female and 12.8% of male NSW graduate teachers accredited between 2009 and 2013 were removed from the accreditation list within six years (see table 9). Graduates aged 25-34 at the time they were granted initial accreditation represented the highest proportion of people to be removed from the accreditation list within six years, with 41.9% of males and 47.3% of females in this category.

Gender	Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years
Female	2009	5,160	354	6.9
	2010	5,880	624	10.6
	2011	5,865	631	10.8
	2012	5,917	531	9.0
	2013	5,708	701	12.3
Total		28,530	2,841	10.0
Male	2009	1,759	164	9.3
	2010	1,906	246	12.9
	2011	1,832	255	13.9
	2012	1,932	244	12.6
	2013	1,899	288	15.2
Total		9,328	1,197	12.8

Table 9 NSW teachers granted initial accreditation 2009-2013 and removed from the accreditation list within six years by gender

The ages of NSW graduates in Figure 3 represents the ages of NSW graduates at the time they were granted initial accreditation. The percentage of graduates who were removed from the accreditation list within six years of being granted initial accreditation varies according to age group.

Over 45% of teachers removed from the accreditation list within six years of gaining accreditation were aged 25-34 when they gained initial accreditation. NSW does not currently hold enough data on the range of reasons for removal from the accreditation list, but these may include moving interstate or abroad to teach; family priorities; travel; or a decision to leave the profession.

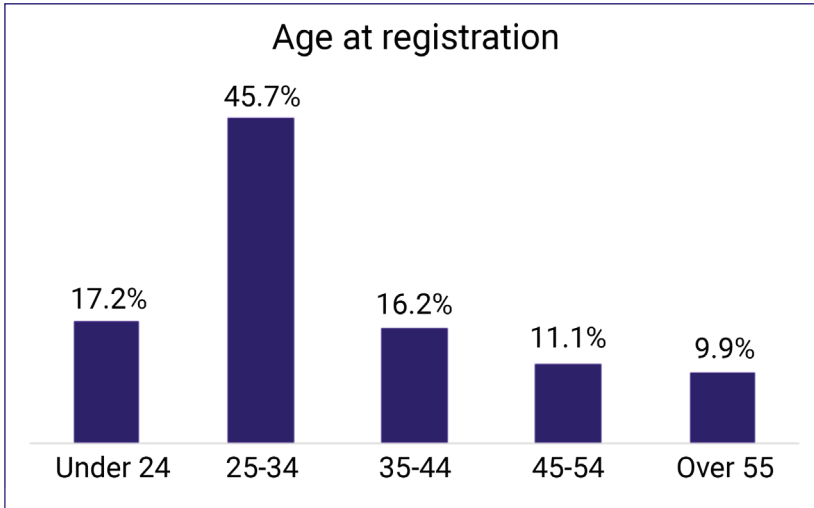


Figure 3 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation in 2009-2013 and removed from the accreditation list within six years, by age when granted initial accreditation.

Of the NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013, a greater percentage of females were removed from the accreditation list for teachers who were 34 or under when they were granted initial accreditation. A larger percentage of male teachers were removed from the accreditation list for teachers who were over 35 when initially accredited, as indicated in Figure 4.

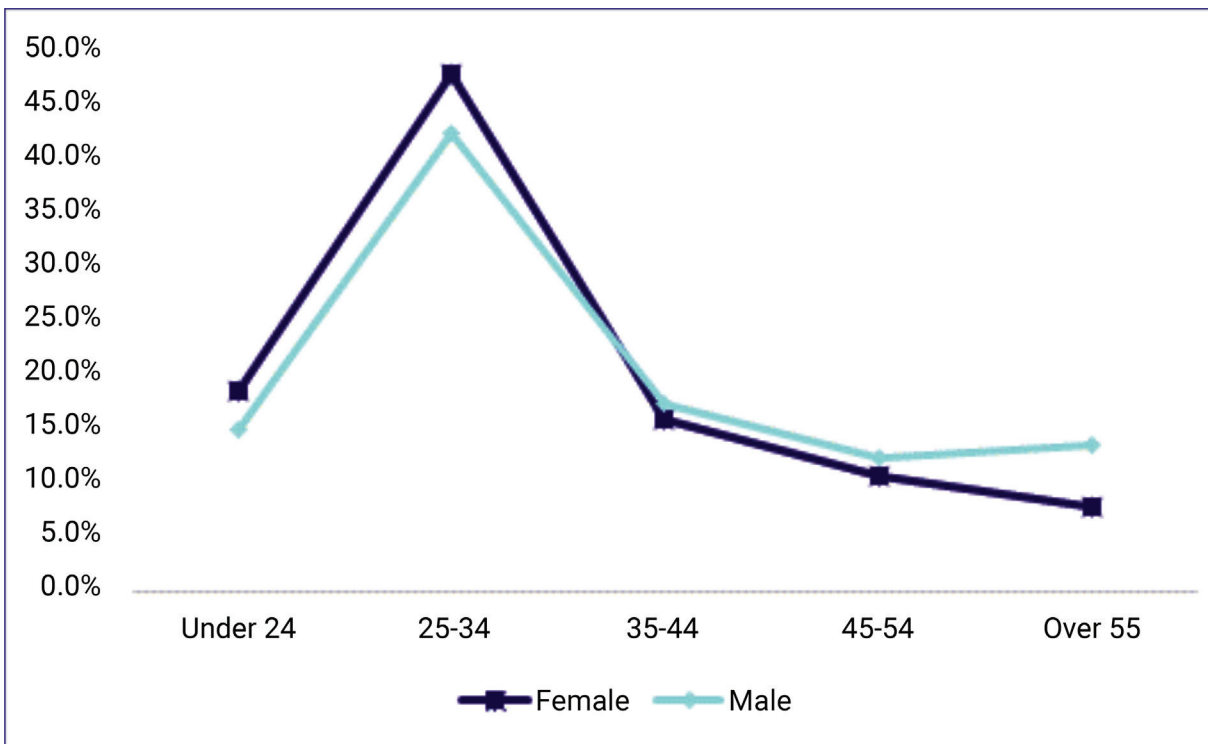


Figure 4 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013 and removed from the accreditation list within six years, by gender and age when granted initial accreditation.

Of the NSW teachers who were granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013 and were removed from the accreditation list within six years, 6.6% of those had achieved Proficient Teacher accreditation prior to being removed, as shown in Table 10. The corollary of this is that 93.4% of the teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years of their initial teacher accreditation during that time period were removed before they completed the requirements to become accredited at Proficient.

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Number of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years	Number of NSW graduate teachers who had PT accreditation at time registration ended	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers who had PT accreditation at time registration ended
2009	6,920	518	29	5.6
2010	7,787	870	66	7.6
2011	7,698	886	43	4.9
2012	7,850	775	27	3.5
2013	7,607	989	103	10.4
Total	37,862	4,038	268	6.6

Table 10 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013 who were removed from the accreditation list within six years and had achieved Proficient Teacher accreditation at the time of removal.

The average age of teachers granted initial teacher accredited between 2005 and 2009 was 30.9 years of age, which is slightly higher than the average age between 2009 and 2013, which was 30.4. For the period 2009-2013, the average age at which males attained initial accreditation was 1.6 years older than the average age of females.

Teachers aged under 24 includes the highest proportion of female teachers receiving initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013, at 37.5%, while for males the 25-34 group has the highest proportion receiving initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013, at 40.6%.

Gender	Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation	Average age at accreditation
Female	2009	5,160	30.4
	2010	5,880	29.9
	2011	5,865	30.0
	2012	5,917	29.7
	2013	5,708	30.1
Total		28,530	30.0
Male	2009	1,759	31.7
	2010	1,906	31.3
	2011	1,832	32.0
	2012	1,932	31.5
	2013	1,899	31.5
Total		9,328	31.6

Table 11 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013, average age at accreditation

Initial teacher education providers

The number of NSW graduates coming from the top 12 universities by number of graduates and granted initial teacher accreditation over the last 10 years is, on average, just under 6,000 per annum. However, not all graduates apply for accreditation in NSW.

The data in Table 13 shows the number of graduates who applied for and were granted initial accreditation, not the number of graduates from each institution. Fluctuating numbers of initial teacher education graduates applying for accreditation may be related to varying levels of enrolment in teacher education programs. The significant increase in NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation in 2015 is due to NESA phasing out the process of teacher employment authorities granting initial accreditation on NESA's advice. As of 2015, NESA became fully responsible for the initial accreditation of NSW teachers. During the end of 2014, there was a period where teachers were delayed in being recorded as initially accredited due to a transition between processes.

Initial Teacher Education Provider	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	Total
Western Sydney University	668	919	836	960	881	821	1,126	823	855	737	8,626
University of Newcastle	760	757	764	744	707	709	871	776	668	666	7,422
Australian Catholic University	420	434	519	633	580	556	877	684	745	698	6,146
University of Sydney	532	634	562	553	507	474	724	617	630	580	5,813
Charles Sturt University	485	707	536	557	540	515	710	551	544	587	5,732
University of New England	497	452	483	496	470	504	687	572	556	533	5,250
Macquarie University	391	437	409	466	469	363	604	501	560	592	4,792
University of Wollongong	315	539	555	536	505	515	485	456	401	403	4,710
University of New South Wales	291	275	321	299	343	284	453	323	308	298	3,195
Southern Cross University	328	363	267	305	283	332	418	249	268	220	3,033
University of Notre Dame, Australia	114	145	176	223	226	253	384	277	264	281	2,343
University of Technology, Sydney	291	273	263	240	230	214	259	195	197	166	2,328
Total	5,092	5,935	5,691	6,012	5,741	5,540	7,598	6,024	5,996	5,761	59,390

Table 13 NSW graduate teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2018, by initial teacher education provider.

Initial accreditation year	Number of NSW graduate teachers granted initial teacher accreditation in 2009 to 2013	Number of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years	Percentage of NSW graduate teachers removed from the accreditation list within 6 years
Western Sydney University	4,264	229	5.37
University of Newcastle	3,732	219	5.87
Australian Catholic University	2,586	146	5.65
University of Sydney	2,788	201	7.21
Charles Sturt University	2,825	201	7.12
University of New England	2,398	159	6.63
Macquarie University	2,172	149	6.86
University of Wollongong	2,450	217	8.86
University of New South Wales	1,529	160	10.46
Southern Cross University	1,546	213	13.78
University of Notre Dame, Australia	884	29	3.28
University of Technology, Sydney	1,297	91	7.02
Total	28,471	2,014	7.07

Table 14 NSW graduate teachers granted initial accreditation between 2009 and 2013 and removed from the accreditation list within six years, by initial teacher education provider.

The percentage of graduate teachers granted initial teacher accreditation between 2009 and 2013 and subsequently removed from the accreditation list within six years is fairly consistent across institutions, as shown in Table 14. When analysing the data in Table 14, consideration should be given to

- the particular demographic characteristics of the graduates at the institution
- the number of teaching positions available in the geographical location of the initial teacher education provider
- the number of graduates who move either interstate or internationally to teacher after graduation



Conclusion

The data provided in this report go some way to providing an answer to questions relating to the percentage of teachers leaving the profession early in their career. In his recent publication Dr Paul Weldon of ACER made the point that:

The attrition rate of early career teachers in Australia is an issue, but not because it is worryingly high or an intractable problem of epidemic proportions. While these claims may be true there is currently no reliable evidence to support them. Therefore, the main issue is that the attrition rate in Australia is, in fact, not well established. It is unknown.

This report, and the Queensland College of Teachers report mentioned above, go some way to providing evidence that the percentage of early career teachers leaving the profession may not be as high as is sometimes reported in the media.

A further investigation of the rate of attrition of early career teachers compared to early career attrition among comparable professions might shine further light on this issue.

In NSW between 2009 and 2013 the percentage of teachers who are removed from the accreditation list within 6 years of their initial accreditation in NSW is around 10%. The data on teachers being removed from the accreditation list in more recent years does indicate a rise in this percentage but it certainly doesn't indicate that up to 50% are leaving the profession as is sometimes reported.