

TeachMeet Australia

Strategy Workshop

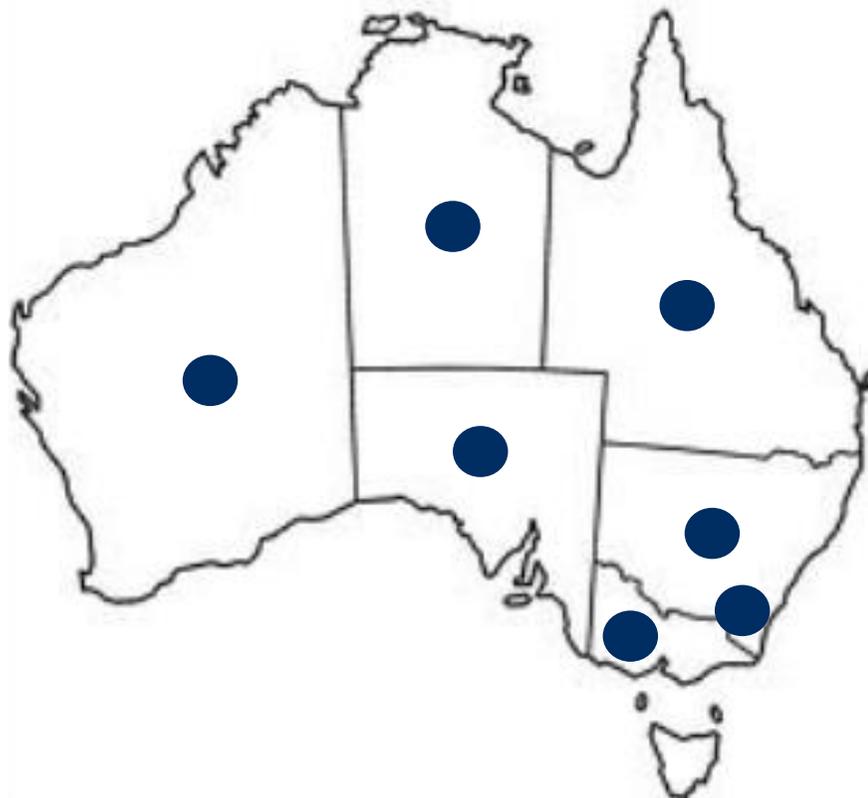
12 June 2014



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TeachMeet began in Australia in 2011 with one group and has since grown to have a presence across multiple states and territories

States and Territories where TeachMeet has a presence



- There are now more than 10 TeachMeet groups operating across the country
- TeachMeet Australia's online presence is also growing
- The TeachMeet wikispace has had up to 350 unique visitors this year and the different facebook pages, together, have more than 1200 members

TeachMeet has grown organically as a decentralised organisation which can be differentiated from a centralised organisation based on certain characteristics

Decentralised organisations are likened to starfish which have a decentralised neural structure allowing them to regenerate



Characteristics of decentralised and centralised organisations

No	Someone in charge	Yes
No	Headquarters	Yes
No	If you thump it on the head, it dies	Yes
No	There's a clear division of roles	Yes
No	If you take out a unit, the whole organisation is harmed	Yes
No	Knowledge and power are concentrated	Yes
No	The organisation is rigid	Yes
No	Units are funded by the organisation	Yes
No	You can count the participants	Yes
Yes	Working groups communicate through intermediaries	No

The analogy of a spider is used for centralised organisations, which in contrast to starfish is dependent on its centralised structure



Source: Brafman. O Beckstrom. A, *The Starfish And the Spider: The Unstoppable Power of Leaderless Organizations*, Penguin (October 5, 2006), hardcover, 230 pages, [ISBN 1-59184-143-7](#)

Context and objectives of the strategy workshop

Workshop overview

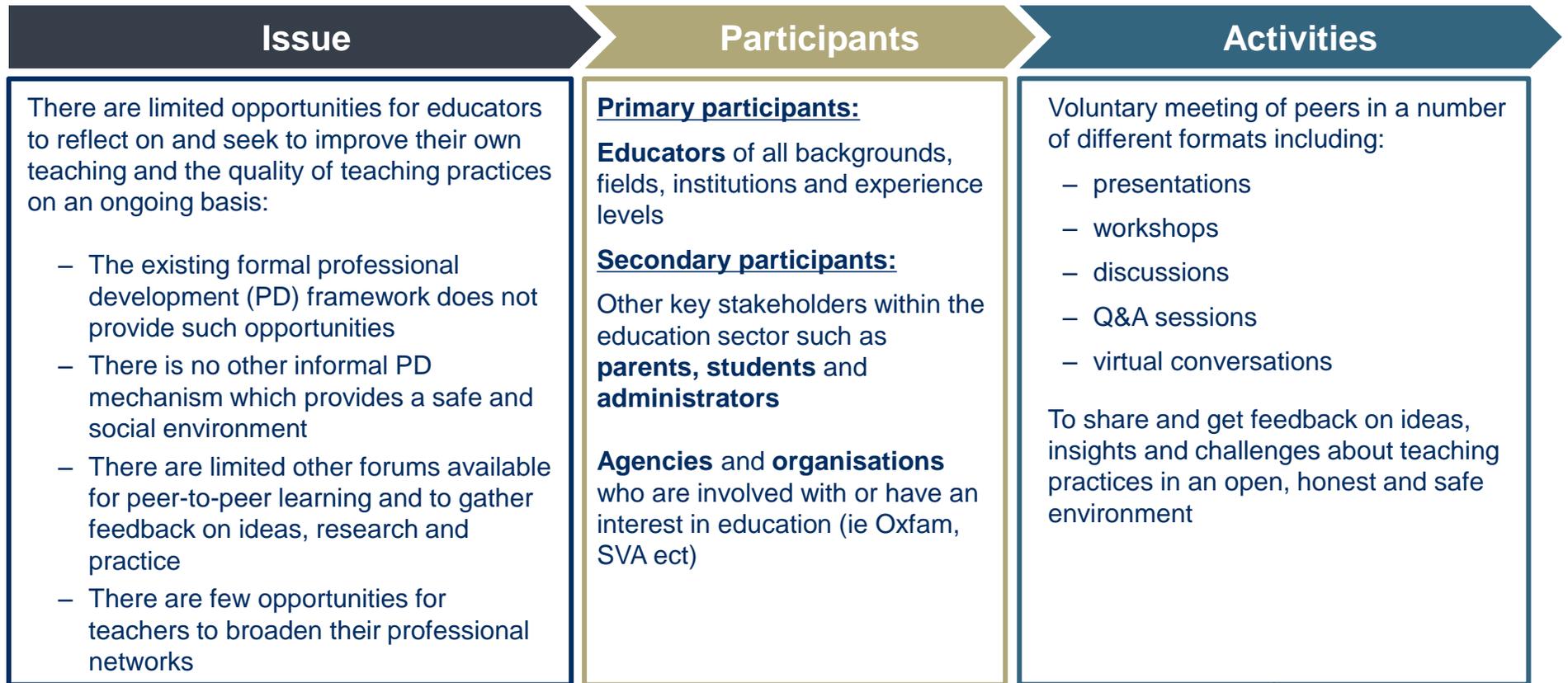
- On Saturday 24th of May a group of approximately 20 TeachMeet participants met to take part in a Strategy workshop facilitated by SVA Consulting
- The Strategy Workshop formed part of a larger and ongoing discussion about how TeachMeet operates and how the community can continue to support others to join
- The Strategy workshop had three key objectives:
 1. Identify common understandings and values of TeachMeets in Australia
 2. Develop guiding principles for how TeachMeet will operate going forward
 3. Develop goals for TeachMeet and identify the actions required to achieve them
- To achieve these objectives the participants drafted the TeachMeet Program Logic; a statement connecting the issue which TeachMeet seeks to address, with the activities it undertakes and the outcomes it hopes to achieve.

A program logic statement connects the issue an organisation seeks to address, with the activities it undertakes and the outcomes it hopes to achieve

Program Logic Model



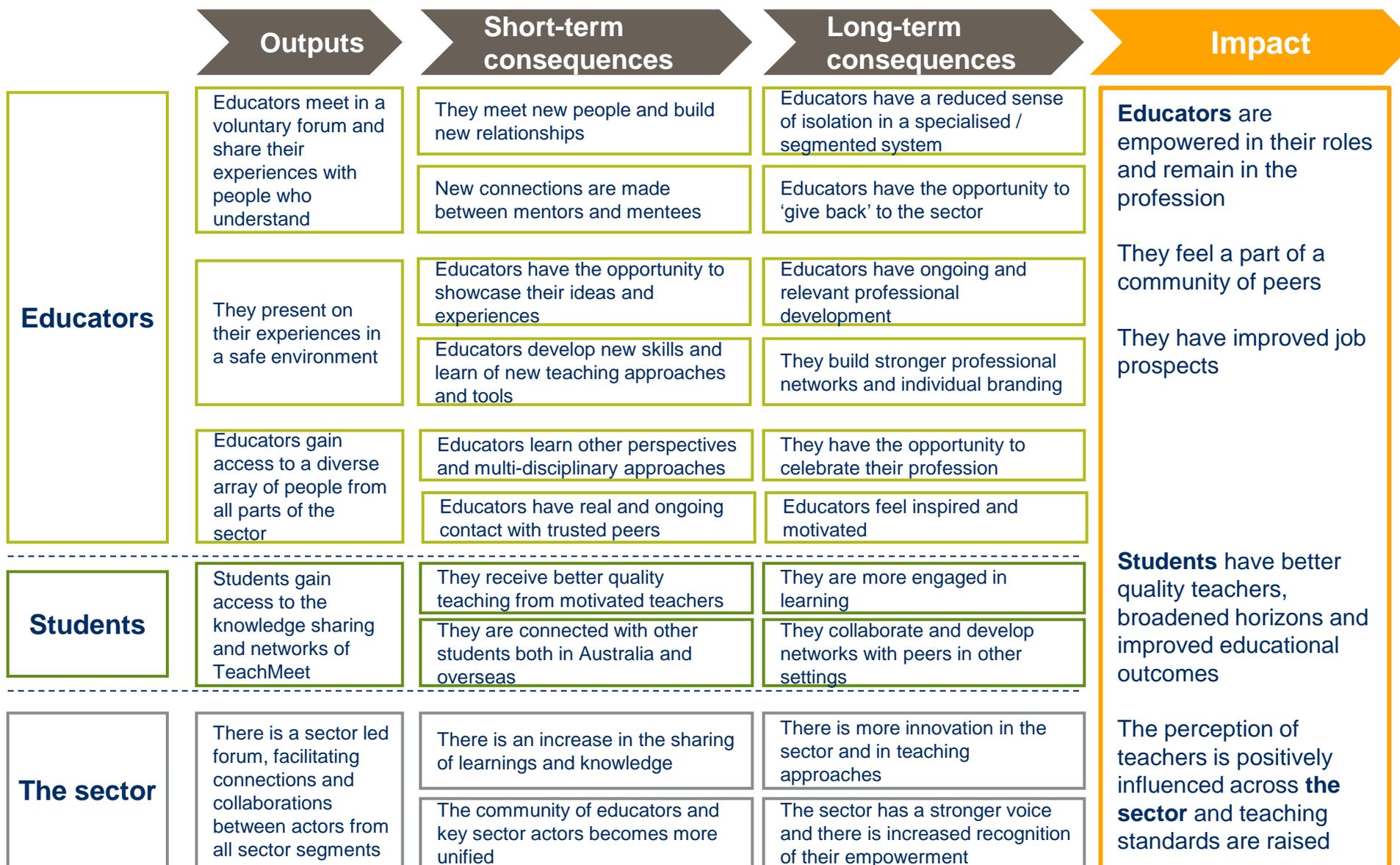
TeachMeet Program Logic (1/2)



Inputs

- Key organising participants provide time and financial resources to promote and support TeachMeet and maintain other infrastructure e.g. WikiSpace and Website
- Organisations and individuals who provide in-kind support

TeachMeet Program Logic (2/2)



Participants agreed upon a set of key principles which describe TeachMeet's 'DNA' – how it will continue to operate going forward

Teach meet is...

-  **A voluntary community**  TeachMeet members attend and participate voluntarily and willingly
-  **Open to all**  TeachMeets are open to anyone within the education sector or those with an interest in it
-  **Free of charge**  There are no mandatory payments to participate in TeachMeet events or to be involved in the community
-  **Multi-disciplinary**  TeachMeets can involve any field of education or level (e.g. Primary, Secondary)
-  **Flexible / 'Open source'**  There is no standard 'TeachMeet', TeachMeets are structured according to the needs of participants
-  **Egalitarian**  Every participant's voice is equal, regardless of experience, field or institution
-  **A safe, positive and fun place**  TeachMeets are an enjoyable forum where ideas can be presented and challenged in a respectful manner
-  **Honest and authentic**  TeachMeet participants engage and learn based on their own experiences and those of their peers

Participants also articulated a number of aspirations for the future of the TeachMeet community

What do we aspire to?

The TeachMeet community continues to grow

- TeachMeet is present in all States / capital cities
- TeachMeet Asia Pacific is established as a brand
- More teachers are aware of TeachMeets and they are empowered to run their own

TeachMeet is accessible to all

- TeachMeet has a professional and well maintained website
- TeachMeets are available as digital video recordings
- The Metro-Rural divide is bridged

TeachMeet is sustainable

- Funding is available for:
 - Annual forums and administration functions
 - Investment in technology

In pursuing these aspirations, TeachMeet needs to weigh up whether they continue as a starfish or employ some aspects of a spider model

How TeachMeet achieves its aspirations will differ under the two models

	Starfish	Spider
The TeachMeet community continues to grow	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Achieves organic growth by maintaining energy, momentum and some alignment (shared DNA) • Growth likely to be slower • Encourage and give permission to run TeachMeet • Provide mentor support to do this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Faster growth driven by staff who ensure momentum and the maintenance of shared DNA • Membership is formalised; member database is developed • Is a registered organisation
TeachMeet is accessible to all	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Basic logistical solutions are employed (skype, google meet, YouTube) • Accessibility issue is improved • TeachMeet is easy to do 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • TeachMeet becomes a form of accredited professional development • Accessibility issues solved by staff • More regulatory oversight
TeachMeet is sustainable	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to rely on a few key organising participants and source donations from participants and ad hoc funding • Find innovative ways to use networks to maintain and develop TeachMeet infrastructure e.g. students manage website as a project 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will be paid • Volunteers led by nominated organiser; position rotated regularly • Sustainable funding sourced from government / sponsorship

There are risks associated with each of these models that must be considered

Risks of pursuing a starfish vs. a spider model

Starfish

- Loss of energy and potential decline
- Loss of catalytic participants
- Dilution and ultimate loss of TeachMeet DNA
- Misappropriation of TeachMeet branding and model by others

Spider

- Loss of the anti-establishment feel of TeachMeet
- Loss of the credibility of the TeachMeet voice
- Loss of educator empowerment
- Risk of TeachMeet being perceived as something it isn't
- Risk of becoming politicised
- TeachMeet becomes something people can take aim at
- Requirement for governance, legal and accounting processes
- Increased accountability and associated administrative burden and stress

SVA reflections

Our observations from the workshop are:

- TeachMeet has grown rapidly and there is nervousness that without a more formal structure, growth and access to TeachMeets will be hampered and the burden of administration will become unsustainable
- TeachMeet is creating a lot of value for Educators and the broader sector
- The TeachMeet community likes the sense of ownership and freedom they have
- By not being a traditional formal organisation TeachMeet is not politicised or held hostage to a broader agenda



- It's OK to be a starfish and we feel that the risks of being a starfish are outweighed by TeachMeet potentially losing its value if it transitioned into a more formalised spider model
- TeachMeet may need to adopt some spider characteristics to be able to achieve its aspirations of growth, accessibility and sustainability, in particular
 - Greater division of labour amongst a (rotating) Committee
 - Occasional 'pass the hat round' amongst participants / optional payment of annual spend