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**HOUSE OF
REPRESENTATIVES**

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL
TRAINING

Reference: Teacher education

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING
Thursday, 14 September 2006

Members: Mr Hartsuyker (*Chair*), Mr Sawford (*Deputy Chair*), Mr Bartlett, Ms Bird, Ms Corcoran, Mr Fawcett, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Henry, Ms Livermore and Mrs Markus

Members in attendance: Mr Fawcett, Mr Michael Ferguson, Mr Hartsuyker, Mrs Markus and Mr Sawford

Terms of reference for the inquiry:

To inquire into and report on:

The scope, suitability, organisation, resourcing and delivery of teacher training courses in Australia's public and private universities. To examine the preparedness of graduates to meet the current and future demands of teaching in Australia's schools.

Specifically, the Inquiry should:

1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training courses.
2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.
3. Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.
4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.
5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.
6. Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.
7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:
 - (i) teach literacy and numeracy;
 - (ii) teach vocational education courses;
 - (iii) effectively manage classrooms;
 - (iv) successfully use information technology;
 - (v) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families;
 - (vi) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities;
 - (vii) achieve accreditation; and
 - (viii) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.
8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.
9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.
10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.
11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

The Inquiry should make reference to current research, to developments and practices from other countries as well as to the practices of other professions in preparing and training people to enter their profession.

WITNESSES

HINTON, Ms Frances Merrill, Chief Executive, Teaching Australia 1
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RAMSEY, Dr Gregor Allen, Chair, Teaching Australia..... 1

Committee met at 9.45 am**HINTON, Ms Frances Merrill, Chief Executive, Teaching Australia****LEE DOW, Professor Kwong, Deputy Chair, Board of Directors, Teaching Australia****RAMSEY, Dr Gregor Allen, Chair, Teaching Australia**

CHAIR (Mr Hartsuyker)—I declare open this public hearing of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training inquiry into teacher education. The inquiry has examined a broad range of issues which impact on how well we are preparing teachers for their complex, demanding and critical role in educating our children. It has generated significant interest across Australia; to date we have received over 170 submissions and we continue to receive more. We have now completed our schedule of public hearings, having visited Victoria, Queensland, the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia. We have also held several hearings in the ACT.

I welcome representatives from Teaching Australia. I remind you that public hearings are recorded by Hansard and that a record is made available to the public through the parliament's website. Although the committee does not require you to give evidence under oath, I should advise you that the hearings are legal proceedings of the parliament and warrant the same respect as proceedings of the House itself. The giving of false or misleading evidence is a serious matter and may be regarded as a contempt of the parliament. I now invite you to make some introductory remarks.

Dr Ramsey—Thank you. It was about 12 months ago that we met with you informally and had a very good conversation. Since then, we have been established as Teaching Australia—having been NIQTSL, that awkward acronym we had when we came to see you last—and we have, I think it is fair to say, been very busy establishing ourselves as the professional body for teachers across Australia.

We appreciated your accepting our submission, which was a bit late. We thought we needed to square ourselves and where we were going before we submitted it to you, and I hope that it was helpful. I have been very pleased and impressed with the way our organisation has been accepted by the profession of teaching. I think we have made a significant contribution in the time that we have had available to us. In establishing Teaching Australia, the government has filled the considerable vacancy for a body to represent the whole teaching profession. One of the things that makes teaching maybe a little less attractive than some other professions is the fact that there is not a body that has been strong enough to represent them—and this gives us that opportunity.

We are, as I am sure you know, a company limited by guarantee under the Corporations Act. We have a role to support and advance the quality of teaching and school leadership, to strengthen and advance the profession and to develop as a national body. These are big challenges. You would obviously be aware that we have eight state and territory government education systems and, in addition to that, an increasing range of employers that employ teachers. There are in any given state at least 40 separate organisations that you could say are

professionally directed at the needs of teachers. Just to pull that all together, we think there are in excess of 30 national bodies that have a fairly important set of things to say about education.

We have tried to develop ourselves first of all by putting out for review a charter for the profession. A profession should define its responsibilities, how it deals with its clients and those kinds of things. We have moved on from that. We have a paper that is to go out very soon that will outline some principles and also an approach to how we might achieve national accreditation of our courses in teacher preparation.

We have done considerable work in the area of standards for advanced competence for teachers and also for principals. There is a range of other things that my colleagues could add to at the appropriate time. But that is probably enough by way of introduction—and to reassure you that, since we last met, our organisation is now a legal entity, has a clear view of where it is going and has done quite a few things that I think are in the interests of your committee. We did track through a number of the public submissions that mentioned us and, to the extent that we could see, they were generally quite positive and our body was seen as something that will be important to the profession.

CHAIR—In taking evidence, there are a number of themes that have come through repeatedly. In your submission you touched on the lion's share of them. Partnerships is a very important one—partnerships between schools and universities. I would be interested if you would expand on the various roles of the different stakeholders and the ways in which we could perhaps strengthen the partnership between schools and universities. Perhaps you could give us a 10-point plan for a stronger partnership between schools and universities.

Dr Ramsey—I would like my colleagues to comment on that. It seems to me that there are two things. The basis of a profession is the quality of the training of the new entrants. That is where it all begins. The most significant component of that, if you have a kind of baseline of knowledge that a teacher would need to undertake the teaching that they are going to do, is the experience that they get in the so-called real world of teaching. We think that our schools have not seen it as one of their responsibilities to prepare the next generation of teachers, and probably one of the reasons for that is they have not seen themselves as having a professional responsibility that could be organised. We did look at providing some opportunities to pilot good practice in the relationship between universities and schools and, whilst I do not think we have actually let anything yet, it is something that we think ought to happen. Until you have some examples of good practice, you cannot say, 'This is how it ought to be in all parts of teaching.'

I think there is now a genuine understanding that the relationship between schools and universities has slipped over time and that we do need to redress that. If we were to do a 10-point plan, I would like to go away and think about it. On the other hand, and indeed I think the Australian Council of Deans of Education said this in a submission to you, one way to assist in that would be to provide money for action research—relatively small, short-term things—where the universities and the schools can work together to see how they can better cooperate.

Prof. Lee Dow—I think what you have said about partnerships resonates with me, though the notion was really central to the review of teaching and teacher education that I led a few years ago. I think the idea of partnerships between universities and schools actually has to be unpacked a bit in today's world. In earlier times it seemed that it was possible to have simpler relationships

but now with the universities you have to look at the role of faculties of education, embedded as they are within an institutional structure. The extent to which it is the faculty and its staff that can do those partnerships and the extent to which the institution plays a part is an issue. We are playing it out in the health field in much the same way at the moment, between hospitals and universities.

At the school level, many schools feel that they are not free to enter into partnerships in the way that, say, a totally independent school can if the school is linked into either the Catholic or the government sector. There are a lot of relationships and complexities that not so much stand in the way of partnerships but make the whole thing complicated. I suppose the other thing that I would emphasise is that there is a big issue from the school end about who has time to invest in forming those relationships.

I think one of the issues that is raised from time to time is, because the initial training of teachers needs to be done both in schools and in universities: what about the UK approach of saying, 'Let's vest the whole thing in schools'? My sense is that around the world, and in this country as well, that notion is not getting legs. The reason is that, with a few notable exceptions, schools are so flat out with their own students that to take more responsibility for training the next generation you actually have to put that down as a real thing and resource it and put time into it and so forth. The partnership notion is central and we have to crack it, but we must not let ourselves think that it is simple and straightforward.

CHAIR—Certainly one of the things that the committee does not want to happen is that we go away and we write this wonderful little report that says, 'We need to improve partnerships in schools,' for want of stating the obvious. We really need in this report to set out some key ways of doing that. A far more active engagement with the employer organisations, being the state governments, is vital to make that happen. We do not want to get into an argument about cost shifting. There is the actual philosophical approach and commitment to it as much as who is going to pay for it. Looking at the ways in which we could perhaps engage state governments as employer organisations, as a stakeholder in this, what do you think the employer organisations could do that they are not doing now to make this happen, rather than leaving it to the schools to actually negotiate individually with the universities?

Dr Ramsey—I would just make this point. One of the things that no school has as part of its core business statement is a responsibility to educate the next generation of professionals. Schools are places where people learn. Unfortunately, too many teachers there think, 'Well, the only people who are learning here are the students,' whereas the teachers themselves are learning. Also, they ought to be places where the next generation of professionals learn. If that is part of the core business of what that set of buildings and people and so on called a school does then those who own them have to see that that is part of what they have money to do. If you start there, of course other things will follow. But that is not an easy thing to achieve, because it is very easy to say that training teachers is the universities' business and it will be an add-on wherever it goes out in the schools.

Ms Hinton—I was going to say that I think it is helpful, for me anyway, to think about the partnerships at different levels. In trying to invest the degree of importance that you are talking about in the partnerships there is value in thinking about how the partnerships apply at a national level, how the partnerships might apply at the level of employers, and how they might apply at

the local level. Part of the philosophical difficulties with the partnership arrangement to date has been insufficient valuing of the expertise that resides in schools. We believe that the sorts of processes that we are planning to implement around accreditation of university courses will start to change that balance of power and provide for a more respectful and balanced approach to looking at the content of courses. That is one process around that.

The consultation paper that the chair referred to has a set of propositions in it, a couple of which go to the issue of partnerships and also go to the issue of managing a system of accreditation with a standards council that would have members of the profession, universities and, indeed, employers as well. That would be one approach to partnerships at that national level.

Dr Ramsey—We are happy to make that paper to the secretariat. It has not yet had final sign-off from our board, which will happen next week, but we are happy to give it to you in advance on the understanding that we would tell you that it has been signed off or that there was an amendment to it. I think you would find that a useful document.

Ms Hinton—Similarly, at the national level, our plans in relation to standards for teaching involve collaborative work between the profession and universities and a body to manage the validation of standards in particular areas and the endorsement of them, which would again bring the profession and people from the universities together. I think these issues are quite important at that level. Also, our proposal for a centre for pedagogy would be another mechanism at the national level by which we could bring universities and schools closer together. So that is again at the national level.

Then there is the level of the relationships between employers and universities. I do not really want to attempt a 10-point plan, but I think that there is merit in considering the notion of professional development schools, for want of a better term. It is never going to be possible, with the numbers of people who are doing teacher preparation programs, that they could all do all of their practical experience in professional development schools. Nonetheless I think that recognising the benefit in some expertise in the schools contributing to the university courses is a very valuable thing to do. That is at the employer level, and it gives a mechanism for those sorts of conversations and partnerships.

Then, at the third level, I think we also need to pursue the issue of those more local partnerships between schools and the universities in their regions. And, in those areas, as the chair said, we believe that the constraints that have applied to both universities and schools, the pressure of work and the lack of time for planning, mean that if we want to make something happen at that level then some resources need to be freed up, at least in some pilot processes, for looking at the planning arrangements that might apply. I think that is not a bad way of mud-mapping it.

CHAIR—Do you think that we are, perhaps, looking at it in a silo sense? Are we looking at the cost of providing greater supervision by schools, or greater involvement by the stakeholders, by the employer bodies, in teacher training, without necessarily trying to quantify that against savings that we would make downstream in relation to improved teacher performance or improved student performance—that being the yardstick? Are we looking at the cost of those

better partnerships, on the one hand, but not offsetting that against the value of improved educational outcomes and a reduced need for remedial work on the other hand?

Dr Ramsey—I think that is right, and I think that there have not been sufficient, if any, studies that have shown what the real costs are of teacher training and preparation. We know what they are, at least in terms of what the universities pay for it, but what happens out in the schools? What happens when teachers have to give time, particularly time to support a student teacher who is having some trouble? I think there is a whole raft of research that could go on around this, and I think one of the reasons that it has not happened is that we have not had a centre for pedagogy. There has not been a focus on how people teach. We have had all sorts of other focuses, like on curriculum, research into students and all of those things, but we have not focused on pedagogy.

We have an institution, ACER, that has a high responsibility for research into education. We have got the Curriculum Corporation, which does a lot of work in curriculum, and each of the states has curriculum bodies of varying kinds, but nowhere do we have a focus on the practice of how you teach a curriculum, and that is a professional business. What the curriculum should be—and I have said this on a number of occasions—is the business of government and state and people and communities, and all of that. But once the curriculum has been decided, how you teach it is a responsibility of the profession. The profession can advise whether you can teach differential calculus to kids at year 9; the profession will let you know if you are reaching out too far with your curriculum. Decisions about what the curriculum should be is a business for parents and communities et cetera. But how to teach it is the business of the profession, and we have been let down in that area.

CHAIR—Could you expand a little on where you are at with the national centre for pedagogy?

Dr Ramsey—We are at the stage of having a commitment to the idea from the directors, the board, and we have agreed that we will undertake a feasibility study, but we have not yet determined who will do that job because it is not something that you can just pluck someone off any old shelf to do. We want to get the right person, and it is going to cost us some money. So we have to put those two things together. If your inquiry could give some push to this being a good idea and to the idea of a feasibility study being done quite soon, that would be good. That is where we are going to start.

Ms Hinton—There is a related activity that we are also interested in, which is the establishment of a national clearing house into educational research. This has the dimensions of both pulling the research together and making it accessible. We are conscious that in other fields, such as the health area, there are recognised, accredited and reputable internet sites where you, either as a consumer or as a professional, can gain information about what is happening in the medical field. There is nothing comparable in the education area. Particularly in the field of education, where we have teachers—and parents—working in schools right across the country in a wide range of regional and remote areas, we think there is considerable value in an investment in a very easy to use national clearing house that does not require skills in interrogating databases. A lot of that work would be the intellectual work of reading the research, pulling out what this means and giving the key points about that.

Dr Ramsey—We are desperately trying to build in education an evidence based approach to pedagogy. Without a centre for pedagogy, it will not happen. I have been very interested in evidence based medicine, and there have been some significant reports recently about evidence based medicine and how it is relatively easy to test whether a particular pill or drug works, because you can have a placebo or not. But when you get into the operational area—to surgery and so on—a lot of people are not terribly keen to have the hole cut but not have the job done. This was of great interest to me because I had both my knees done by a process that was described the other night on the *Health Report*. The improvement is the same whether you have real surgery or fake surgery. I feel like someone has paid a lot of money for that and it has not helped me one bit.

This whole concept of an evidence based approach to pedagogy is not one that comes naturally, even to doctors, as these reports show, but particularly at this stage to teachers. That clearing house is a very important component. Once you have an evidence base, teacher training institutions know what it is important to teach teachers about. At the moment there are a wide range of views regarding what works and what does not work, and we have to start building that.

Prof. Lee Dow—If I could put a footnote to that, I think what it all comes down to is that we are saying that we actually need a national centre for the study of the practice of teaching. That is what it means. It does not have to be huge, but it will only be successful if it is continued by successive governments or groups over an extended time. Part of the value of a place like ACER and its international standing is because it has been going for 70-odd years. We really need something like this as a long-term investment. It does not have to start big, but it needs to take time to mature. That is really what we are on about.

Ms Hinton—We think that it needs to focus not just on the practice of teaching in schools but also on the practice of preparing teachers. There is an equally large, or perhaps even greater, vacuum of evidence about the most effective ways of preparing teachers to teach.

CHAIR—I have many more questions, but I will defer to some of my committee members.

Mr SAWFORD—I do not want to ask any questions on specifics, but we are three weeks away from examining a draft report, so we are in the final stages. I suppose my questions are general questions in terms of how this submission was put together, how you felt about it and whether, in terms of how you did this, it will give us some hints. I think paragraphs 78 and 79 in your submission are very good advice, and I think you will be pleased that we will take that advice on hand. I am sure that will focus the report and it will be to the point. We acknowledge what you are saying in paragraph 79. When I read through your submission, the thing that came across to me first of all was that it was not written in educational code; it was easy to follow. I think even non-educational people could follow this quite logically. Then I thought this was a trap for us as well. I am thinking not so much in terms of your submission but of how you are dealing with same areas that we are. I then looked at it and asked, ‘Was your schema for putting the submission together an analysis approach or a synthesis approach?’ It seems to be synthesis, does it not?

Dr Ramsey—I have two points. The first point that you make about language is something that I personally feel very strongly about. There is no language of the profession of teaching at the moment. There is bureaucratic language, there is employer language and there is union

language, but there is no professional language. Professional language has to be—and I hope that our submission is an example of it—simple, clear, to the point and instructive. As to how we put it together, I will ask the chief executive. A lot of this came out of the deliberations of the board—both the NIQTSL board and the new board—and the issues that came out at various conferences when we had our stakeholders together and so on. We tried to address some of the issues that were important to us, and to you, and then come up with what take we had on those. Fran has more to say on that.

Ms Hinton—In a sense, I am probably going to—

Dr Ramsey—She is going to say she wrote it.

Ms Hinton—No. In a sense, I am going to avoid coming down one way or the other, because I think that, although it is quite a short submission, it was underpinned by quite a lot of analysis of what had happened in the area of education over a long period, and it tried to take from that analysis the experience—the successes and the failures—of what had happened in education and in reports of education. A lot of this was done on the run, despite the fact that I am calling it analysis. We had the benefit of some research which we had commissioned to try and get a scan of what was happening and what the research was telling us. Then we attempted to synthesise from that what really were the important things that might make a difference in the longer term and, by synthesising it, find solutions that addressed a number of the issues.

That is one of the reasons why we are so keen on a national accreditation for teacher education courses. Not only does it address the issue of the quality of teacher preparation but also it addresses the questions about what it is that we want graduating teachers to be able to do and know. It addresses issues of partnerships between universities, schools, employers and the profession. That is how we did it. However, I am pleased that it found some favour, because it did take us a little bit of thinking time. We also worked very closely on the language, even on our charter for the teaching profession—the back page of that, which you have probably seen. On that we made a concerted effort that we would, wherever possible, not use adjectives or adverbs, which is an unusual approach in the education field.

Mr SAWFORD—I will ask just one more question, otherwise I will get carried away with the other stuff. I do not know if I have come to this conclusion because we have been so deeply involved in this for the last 12 months but—and it may be a very unfair thing to say—there is something that concerns me for when we put our report together. The language in this is very straightforward, but there is something missing. I read this a second time. There is an educational vagueness in this language. There is a spirit there but it is not there. I do not know whether I am saying that maybe we need to take the style in which this has been put together into consideration when we are putting our report together. Do you know what I am saying?

Dr Ramsey—Yes, I do know what you are saying, and I think that part of it is because that has been the nature of the profession.

Mr SAWFORD—Yes, I know.

Dr Ramsey—We know that is a problem. We have not yet got it straight for ourselves. We hope that—

Mr SAWFORD—Do you have any hints for us?

Dr Ramsey—I would suggest that you do take a punt, in a sense. In other words, take it beyond where it is now in a way that you think the evidence has led you and say it firmly. I think that is what is needed. If education as a profession does not pick up now, then what is going to be the next one that does and how far away and how much time are we going to lose? It really does concern me. We see this as a very important opportunity. Your recommendations have to be acceptable to governments, they really do. And it will require money; we have to remind people of that. In my view, the Australian economy is in a good state for us to be able to put some good solid money into this. If you read the press, there is no doubt in my mind that education is a topic of considerable debate these days. A lot of it is ill-informed, but there is a huge amount of it going on.

There are some who say to us, ‘Why haven’t you come out and attacked this and that?’ That is not the way we particularly want to work. What we want to do is educate people. In other words, let the people out there know what the evidence is to date that we have, that there are unknowns, that the whole fact of teaching is a lot more difficult than most people give it time for. You only have to say, ‘How would you like 20 children all day’ to remind people, who may have a child or two of their own, just how tough it is as a task. We are trying to walk down the path of educating the wider community, but first of all we have to educate our own profession.

Prof. Lee Dow—On the writing point, the clue is really in the things the Chair has been saying about it being evidence based. The problem with a lot of the writing is that in order to keep the flow, the principles as stated read as a touch abstract. Those of us in the know know what we are actually making reference to, but it is not always put there. This is the issue about the length of a text, isn’t it? Some of it you do need to unpack to the point of giving a very concrete specific example or two. Whether you do that in the flow of the text or whether you have it as a footnote or end of chapter reference is something that has to be judged at each point. That is probably what you are on, that some of this appears a bit abstract.

Mr SAWFORD—Unless this is written in a style with a bit of imagination and a bit of risk taking, it will just be another dust gatherer.

Dr Ramsey—That is right.

Ms Hinton—The chair started with a comment on the complexity and demanding nature of teachers’ work, and that might well be another approach in terms of your report making some comments about that. We have not gone into that issue here, but we know it is one of the real challenges for us when we are looking at issues to do with the standards for advanced teaching—that it is the complexity and the demanding nature of teaching and the combination of the art as well as the science of teaching. If you can capture that in some way in your report, then there is a lot to be said for that.

Mr SAWFORD—That is not a bad line.

Dr Ramsey—What we have handed out here is the draft that will go to our board next week. It is how we are proposing to go about national accreditation. If you go to the last three pages, you will see 10 propositions. I do not think they are beating about the bush. In other words, they

are saying what we believe the core components of teacher accreditation are. I can assure you right now that they are not overwhelmingly all supported by the deans of education, for example, because it puts them under considerable pressure as that is how we are proposing that it happens. Take proposition 4, which is the one creating considerable contention amongst the deans. It says that 'An Australia-wide system will accredit programs at different levels.' In other words, we are going to say, 'This is our proposal, that we will make judgments about the quality of the programs that are out there.' That has not been done before, and you can understand why universities are not sure about this.

CHAIR—Would you be comfortable with us receiving this as a draft document?

Dr Ramsey—Yes, we are quite comfortable for you to receive it as a draft document. We will also undertake to give it to you in the form that the board approves next week. I am confident that it will be somewhat like this because it has been through the board a few times.

CHAIR—In receiving it as a draft, it can basically still be a public document received as a draft?

Dr Ramsey—Yes, that is fine.

Mrs MARKUS—I was very interested to hear what you had to say about the partnerships, Frances, particularly focusing on the various levels. I would particularly like to ask some questions relating to the local level. You referred to the partnership between the university and the schools. If there was to be a national program that would involve pilots, is that something that is already happening between universities and schools that you would put forward maybe a best practice model? Do you already have some ideas about what that model would look like?

Ms Hinton—There are examples of good practice. I do not think we in Teaching Australia would pretend to have a complete picture across the country of that—we are a pretty small organisation—but we do know that there are some good models around. However, without exception, those models have been driven by the universities—and all credit to the universities for the work that they have put into that. I believe they often take their strength from the individual at the university—the individual has a passion about the approach and working with the schools or school—and if that person moves on, then the program disappears.

What I would like to see in any pilot process is a much more systematic and systemic approach to what might make partnerships effective. I would like to see more valuing of the schools' contribution to it and the schools having a great deal more influence over the work that gets done between the two bodies. One of the ways that could happen would be through some allocation of resources at the school level for planning.

The focus of the partnership needs to be thought through. From our end, with very limited resources, we thought one of the focal points could be around the assistance to trainee, student teachers. For example, someone within a school has a particular responsibility for working with the university, and possibly within a cluster of schools as well, to have a close monitoring and supervision of the quality of the supervision and placements of the students in the schools, which teachers are supporting them and how that work goes. So that is one model.

Another focus could be around the partnership being caught up with the ongoing professional learning of the teachers in the school and the university lecturers and staff. It has often been one-way from the university to the school, but, if I use one area as an example—that is, the use of information communication technologies for teaching—there is some outstanding practice in schools, really outstanding. University staff could learn a lot from the practice that is in schools. That is another process by which that can happen, but it needs someone to plan that work so that it is helping student teachers, helping ongoing professional learning of teachers within the schools and also the ongoing professional learning of the teacher educators as well.

CHAIR—As a general rule, do you feel that there is insufficient absorption by the teacher universities of leading-edge practice developed in schools?

Ms Hinton—I think it is a generality that is absolutely the case. And there are reasons for that, Chair. The universities, and particularly education, faculties have been subject to quite significant resource constraints. I am conscious of that when I look at some of the figures that are around about that, and that has implications for the time that they have available to do things. In a lot of universities there is a bit of a disjunction between that and the quality of the practice in schools. At the moment, we are trialling in quite a small way a series of master classes using award winners from the National Awards for Quality Schooling. We have had one in Ballarat, one in Wollongong, there is one in Toowoomba next week and one in Launceston. We have taken the national best teacher of the year and principal of the year and had them conduct small master classes. I have been pleased to see in a couple of those that some members of the education faculties have come to those master classes being conducted by expert practitioners in the school sector.

Dr Ramsey—There are two other things I would like to add to that. I remember the first occasion in which, when I was a teacher, I had to supervise student teachers. I had no idea what to do with them. You do need to be prepared properly to know how to work with the student teacher when they are out in the school, and that needs money and resources. No university would deny that that is a requirement, but they do not have the resources to do it. So that is an important issue.

The second thing I want to say is that if we only identified in the way that the medical profession identifies—I keep mentioning my own medical practitioner, but I go to a particular doctor and when you front up to his reception he has a sign with ‘Associate Professor in whatever it is at the University of New South Wales’ on display. You go out to the Royal North Shore Hospital and door after door has got Professor Nerk, professor at the university of wherever. Where in Australia do we acknowledge one teacher—yes, there is one and that is Jim Davies, the principal of the science and maths school in Adelaide, at Flinders University. Now just a bit of recognition like that would go a long way. In other words, we are all members of our profession, and what we are doing out in schools is as important to the business of preparing the next generation as what goes on in the university. That is demonstrated in the medical profession, not that we can necessarily follow the medical profession and nor would we want to. This is an important thing; I do not think we recognise our good teachers sufficiently.

Mrs MARKUS—Frances, can I come back to the model? You listed a number of different models. Could those models be incorporated in one?

Ms Hinton—Yes, they could.

Mrs MARKUS—So in a sense you had all those outcomes that you wanted to achieve.

Ms Hinton—Yes.

Mrs MARKUS—Based on what you have said, would you agree that there need to be some resources spent on developing that model and identifying and planning and researching what is the best model? What would be some options before something was rolled out?

Ms Hinton—I think so. When we were thinking about doing this, we thought about doing maybe three or four different pilot projects in different areas to have a look at some different approaches to do that. The state of our knowledge about what actually makes for sustainable partnerships at this level is not well developed, so it would be really important to do some serious evaluative work alongside those models.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—The comments you were making, Doctor, were leading up to the question I was going to ask anyway. Your comments demonstrate that teachers are, in a political sense, still at the bottom of the food chain. Even in the conversations that we have been having around this table, we tend to default back to defining them by who employs them. Have you noticed that?

Dr Ramsey—Yes, I think that is right.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—And then when we talked about—

Dr Ramsey—And teachers do it themselves.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—Perhaps, and this has become the mainstream way of thinking about it. But even when we talk about partnerships, it continues to be a discussion about partnerships between institutions like universities and employer bodies—whether it is a state system or a Catholic system or an independent school. It seems to me that we keep talking about teaching as a profession, and yet we continue to see teachers defined by what school they work at. I am wondering if it is a fair comment to say that in Australia today there still is not a professional body for teachers, notwithstanding the role that Teaching Australia plays.

Dr Ramsey—You are right; there is not. We are hoping, and I think it is the ambition of the government, that we become that body. It is a long haul, and I think one of the reasons why teaching is not as attractive to some young people as it might be is that there is not something that you call a profession where all of us, irrespective of our employment, are mixed up. One of the strengths of what we do is that we do not have a meeting, we do not have a group brought together, unless all sectors, all states, to the extent that we can, are represented there. And the conversation becomes very different: you are not getting back to the miserable way you are treated by your employer; you are talking about the positive things that relate to how you undertake the job that you are doing.

That is why we are spending quite a lot of our energies at the moment on standards for teachers. We are looking particularly at standards for accomplished teachers, so that teachers

have some idea of what they are aspiring to as they move up the profession, and standards for school leaders and, particularly, principals. Again, we have been told that too few people are thinking about becoming principals; they do not like the idea of being principals. But that is a whole process of transition that you actually have to educate for. The engineers do that very well. They have whole sets of programs for converting people from engineers to managers; we just suddenly need a principal and try and find one, rather than having this become a natural career progression. We also think that the leadership that happens on a curriculum or in a pedagogical way—about how you teach—is not recognised sufficiently. The teachers go up their scale and then hit the top, and there is not the recognition that there should be.

Ms Hinton—I think one of the strengths of Teaching Australia is that it encompasses the practice of teaching, irrespective of setting, jurisdiction or sector of education. Just this year we started the first couple of programs of a high-profile professional development program for school principals, which we call Leading Australia's Schools. That brings together in each program principals from independent, Catholic and government schools, primary and secondary. And, almost without exception, the principals who attended the first of those said that one of the really major benefits was coming together as a profession without regard to who their employers were.

Mr MICHAEL FERGUSON—I wonder how much of our conversation would be different, and how the direction of a recommendation of this committee might be different, if the paradigm was this idealised notion of having a professional body with some rigour, where a teacher felt that they were actually connected into a professional body, like the royal college for GPs. They are not connected through the Medicare system, they are connected through their royal college, and there is more of a sense of status and also a sense of mission as members of a profession. When we talk about partnerships to prac, or professional development for teachers who are in practice, and when we talk about the future of the profession—in terms of mentoring, and being self-generating and renewing your own profession—should we, in our recommendation, take this chance to really push for that to occur within the profession as such, rather than within particular constructs like state schools or Catholic schools?

Dr Ramsey—We think that there are significant advantages to that. When I look back over the history of the development of a whole range of professions—like engineering, the two accounting bodies, and so on—I think that, if we had started 30 years ago like they did, and had focused ourselves as a profession, irrespective of employer, we would now have a much stronger profession, or a profession that would be identifying itself as under a single umbrella. One of the things that we are trying desperately to do is to bring this highly disparate profession, with professional bodies of all shapes and sizes and kinds, under one umbrella or network so that we can speak for that and draw from it those people who have the information. As Teaching Australia we do not have all the information about the whole profession, but you draw out what you need from the profession itself.

Ms Hinton—This is one of our processes. We were incorporated on 30 November last year, so we have not had a lot of time, but we have put together this booklet, *Welcome to the Teaching Profession*, which goes to some of the heart of what you are saying about saying to people completing their teacher preparation programs, 'You are joining a profession.' We are distributing this through the universities, so that is a partnership between us and—

CHAIR—We have a copy of that.

Ms Hinton—You have got that, yes. But, with a message in there from the principals associations—it is not just Teaching Australia; it is one profession. We did get all of the heads of the principals associations to write one message, and we thought that was some achievement. Likewise, there is a statement in here about relationships with parents. We worked with the Australian Parents Council, from non-government schools, and the Australian Council of State School Organisations, and they wrote that bit for us. Again, they are small things but they are about having visible demonstrations of one profession.

Dr Ramsey—If we were to try and look forward five years—this is if we keep the momentum going—I hope and I think we will have a national or Australia wide system—I would hope you would support it—accreditation of the preparation of teachers, a charter for the profession, a set of standards for accomplished teachers and for principals, a process in train whereby the profession is integrated under one umbrella. I use the word ‘umbrella’ because I do not know what other word to use. And I hope that, increasingly, the members of the profession look to us for professional support. I would also like to tuck into that that the first beginnings of a pedagogical institute of some kind, a teaching centre, would have been underway. If we can achieve that over the next five years, then I think you would look back on it and say, ‘Well, that’s where it all began.’

Mr FAWCETT—This inquiry, like many that we have, has people coming with great dreams and visions of what could be. One of the best quotes I have ever heard is ‘Vision without dollars is hallucination.’ That is really where the rubber hits the road in this whole discussion, because we talk about partnerships and the fact that we need better placements in schools, and perhaps that needs more resources so the teachers have the time and know what to do, et cetera. With the whole thing you are talking about with Teaching Australia—professional body and professional development—someone has got to pay for it. I would be interested in your comments, because we have had a variety of views put to the committee. As with other professional bodies, should that be a levy on the members, on the taxpayers of Australia, on the parents through the independent school sector or on the state governments through the state sector? How should we recommend that these great dreams and initiatives be funded?

Dr Ramsey—Coming back to the fact that I think we need a body like Teaching Australia to do the kinds of things that cannot be done by anybody else, the question is right. My answer to that is that you cannot at this moment expect all the teachers of Australia to put their hands in their pockets again for various reasons to pay for membership—and I do not think I need to go into those. But I do compliment the current government for seeing the enterprise of education as something that needs support and help, that probably the most important thing that you could do for it would be to set us up as a professional body to cross sectors and jurisdictions. I did not add this in the things I said we ought to be doing, but we are as a group totally mindful of the fact that, if some time down the track—10 years, I do not know—this organisation is not supported by members of the profession who see that they get from it those things that are important to them, then we will have failed too.

I think there will be various sources. I think governments will have to support it for a long time. I would hope that the states can see this as useful to them and they will be providing support in some way or another, but I think we will also have to walk down the path of finding a

way to get support from our teachers as part of the profession. Whether that comes through an association of professional bodies, like the maths teachers association, that affiliate with us, or whether there is direct membership are not things that we have got to the point of grappling with, other than knowing that they exist, but all of that has to be open.

We also think that we will eventually be able to charge for services that we offer and various things of that kind. But, if I ask for nothing else from this government and other governments, I do ask that we are given enough time—in other words, that we are not told, ‘You have to be self-sufficient in three years,’ or something like that. That would be a disaster and it would break up all of the good work that we have been doing and endeavouring to achieve. Whilst it might not be a very direct answer, we are well aware of the importance of the question. We are endeavouring to grapple with the depth of it, and we are very appreciative of the government giving us the opportunity to see where we can go with it.

Mr FAWCETT—I have a second question but it may not be quite so comfortable. You—and a lot of people—talk about the concept of best practice. It is a wonderful term. By definition, it means that there is practice that is not best practice: average practice, poor practice, bad practice or whatever. You seem very comfortable in identifying the fact that some of your staff or teachers have best practice—therefore, others do not. We talk about excellence in teaching and excellence in other things and yet, as a body, the teaching profession seems to have rejected the notion that students can have best practice or excellence. There seems to be quite a concerted effort to make sure that we do not allow the reward of an individual lest it make other people feel bad.

As you now couple a generation which has grown up under that with reports about teachers who do not know how to spell, are not expert in their field et cetera, would you care to comment on whether we have actually lost the plot a bit in terms of the culture of how we are teaching teachers to teach. Should we actually be going back to things like streaming in classes et cetera, so that we recognise, reward and encourage those who are good academically, as well as those who have strengths in other areas, whether it is sport, VET or other things? Do we move away from what has appeared to be a dominant culture in the last decade or two that we do not allow recognition and reward of an individual or a group of individuals compared to their peers?

Dr Ramsey—I will let my two colleagues have a think about it. I would prefer to let it go through to the keeper, because tucked away in it all is a whole bunch of, ‘Is it like this or isn’t it?’ We really do not know, and that is why we need a whole lot more research. In fact, I know a whole lot of teachers who I think would feel mildly insulted if people thought that they were not trying to achieve excellence among their students and that they, as teachers, were not endeavouring to achieve excellence. The whole issue of best practice—I do not use the term particularly—is that I do not think you can actually be best at everything that relates to teaching. I think you can have best practice at this or that.

The weakness in teaching is that the high level of skill of a particular teacher is not shared around the school as well as it should be. In other words, you do have some very good teachers, and they ought to be made available in the best possible way to the students in the whole school. But I think that the fact that you have those views, or that those views are expressed more widely in the general public, relates to the fact that we have not had a profession. In other words, these kinds of ideas have been able to be generated, and they get a push in the press and all of that. I

was very interested the other day to hear one or other of the ministers saying, ‘You shouldn’t do anything that lowers the morale of our troops out in East Timor,’ or wherever they are. But if you see where some of the teachers are—acting as troops in Western Sydney and Aboriginal communities—I would not want to do anything to destroy their morale either. That, to me, is a very important issue. We actually have to talk it around the other way. Do not pick on those few teachers who may exhibit the view that you have expressed, but celebrate those—and they are being celebrated increasingly—who actually teach with vigour and imply success amongst their students in excellence and all of those things.

Another initiative that I think has been a very important one, and we have used it in all sorts of ways ourselves, is the national awards for quality teachers and quality principals. The teachers are loving it. They are really enjoying that opportunity and the master classes that we have set up where these teachers are going out and showing other teachers what can be done. I think that is all part of it. Again, the criticism is one of those I would have liked to have had a go at, because every time I see it in the *Australian*, which I think is one of the more negative papers about teaching, I feel like writing, but you know that is not going to do anything. All that is going to do is start a conversation of ‘tis/’tishn’t. What we need is a set of research that will answer the question once and for all.

Ms Hinton—I understand the point you make in terms of students—

Mr FAWCETT—To set the context, it was meant to be a bit of a hand grenade.

Dr Ramsey—I agree. I realised that.

Ms Hinton—What I was going to say is that it does not resonate at all with me in any of the schools I go into. When I go into schools—and I have over the last 10 years—what I see is individual students being constantly rewarded and recognised for the excellence that they achieve in a whole range of areas: their excellence in academic achievements; their excellence in winning the history competition, or the essay competition or the Anzac competition; their excellence in sporting prowess. I think there is an enormous recognition of achievement at school level: someone who has won the French prize or the Indonesian prize—those are there. I think there is a great deal of recognition. That recognition comes also in the roles that students are encouraged to perform within the school. That is also a recognition of them. I was in a school the day before yesterday and was taken on a tour of the school by two kindergarten children. It is some recognition of the children as well that they were given the task of taking me around and talking to me about the school. I think there is a great deal of recognition of achievement within schools all the time.

In terms of the national awards, I think there has been a culture within teaching of a reluctance to recognise individual teaching performance and to see it as a collaborative endeavour, and there is no doubt teaching is a collaborative endeavour. We have been quite successful with the national awards, as the chair has said, in starting to portray those awards as representative of the expertise of the profession. Since we have taken this on, the language we have used is that a person who allows their name to go forward to be nominated for excellence is actually promoting the profession as a whole, and I think there has been some resonance around that.

In terms of the best practice issue, it is challenging in teaching because as parents we know that we want the best possible teacher for our class. We are not interested in the average teacher or the teacher who is going okay. Whilst I might be quite happy with Kwong teaching my child, if Gregor turns up in the next classroom to teach, I suddenly want my child moved from Kwong's class into Gregor's class—

Mr FAWCETT—How are you feeling about this at the moment, Gregor?

Ms Hinton—Within schools there is a constant upward pressure from the parent communities and students on the sort of skills they want to have in front of the children.

Dr Ramsey—I am not sure we apply the skills we have as well as they might be applied. That is another issue. It is an issue for the profession and it is something that needs to be dealt with.

Prof. Lee Dow—I am aligning very much with what the chair and the CEO have said, but I have great respect for the position and the perspective that you are bringing, for this reason: around the world—and this country is a good example—the recent generations of young people have stayed through the whole period of secondary education, and high proportions of them have gone on to tertiary education. It was not all that long ago that a lot of these problems were not in existence because kids left school after primary or the early years of secondary education. There has been this pervasive new enterprise going on, picking up larger and larger numbers. It is a changing world and there are changing needs. It is a bit like saying to the medicos: 'Look at this obesity. Look at all these young people taking drugs. You guys have failed.'

There are parallels in this. Listening to this conversation this morning, I am struck by how much your current inquiry is at a slice in time, and all that we are doing is something on a road where the development takes time. What Teaching Australia is pleading for—whether it is with you, a minister or whomever—is: can we actually have time to get something that is on its way, settled and established and really going? That is how we will make these improvements. They cannot be done by suddenly just throwing lots of money and expecting that within two years it will all be different. It is not like that.

Dr Ramsey—I will just make an analogy. There have been a number of cases of people who have let companies down with all sorts of malfeasance and things of that kind. If we judge all accountants on that basis, we would have a pretty poor community, and I think the same is true of teachers. If we judge the whole of the teaching profession on the same basis as those few, it will be very unfortunate.

Mr SAWFORD—On that and the report! If it is going to be highly focused, should these recommendations concentrate on aiming at government, should they aim at the teacher educators or should there be a combination thereof? Because, once you start spreading it out, the focus gets dissipated a bit. I remember when I was at Fulham Gardens Primary School we set up some specialists in art and craft and curriculum and this young man—who was, I thought, just a run-of-the-mill teacher; he was only young, a couple of years out of college—volunteered to do the phys ed. The phys ed curriculum in 1980 was pretty ordinary. He said, 'I can't do this; this is rubbish,' and I actually agreed with him. We sat down and, in 10 minutes, I gave him a curriculum that he developed. I did not do it. I said, 'We need to get the kids fit.' I said, 'You need to teach them how to dance—modern, country and folk. You need to teach them some

gymnastics. You teach them one team sport each term and you teach them how to run, throw, jump, kick and all the rest of it.' That was the curricula.

He developed that over the year into something that was fantastic and turned himself into an outstanding teacher. This is the point you were making: how much of the slice should be forward and how much of it should be now in terms of the government? Do you have any ideas of how we get that balance?

Dr Ramsey—I understand the problem only too well, having done a few of these. I grappled with it. I think a few big strong ones for government are important, not too many, but a few—three, four. I do not know. Then you have the opportunity to say some things that people will come back to over time—that is, these are directions that universities ought to go in, or these are directions that schools ought to go in and that becomes a point of departure into the future. I think you have to do both—you absolutely do. But I think if you put 50-odd recommendations in, which it is very difficult—

Mr SAWFORD—No, we are not going to do that.

Dr Ramsey—I am sure you are not going to do that, so I would make a few big ones and then a set of directions or proposals and, if you can focus where they ought to be directed, that is actually very helpful as well. For example, it is good to say universities ought to consider this and that, and then a good follow-up question a year or two later is whether they have. But someone else can do that. That is the advice I give. I do not know what my colleagues would say. I am glad you are over there and we are here.

Prof. Lee Dow—I think you are absolutely right in that, in total, you have to have a small number of recommendations. Some of those have got to be immediate, they have to bite and they have to actually address those points that David was making unambiguously. You have to bring them upfront on the table overtly. But you must also, I hope, do something that recognises that, as with all professions, there are longer term developments and that they have to be encouraged, acknowledged and supported and, once you have done those things, you have gone about as far as it is possible for any group to go.

Dr Ramsey—Mr Chairman, if I could make a plea regarding the morale of teachers generally. They feel as though they are assailed on all sides, that people do not know what goes on in classrooms. The strongest critics have never walked the class. If there is something you can do to make teachers feel, 'Gee, that committee understood what we are on about. They understood the difficulties of our job and they really have made some recommendations to improve who we are in the eyes of the community', you will have made a really big step forward and the rest of it will just take its course. I think that is incredibly important.

CHAIR—That is good advice.

Ms Hinton—I think there are also some similarities in relation to teacher educators, who are getting to be quite maligned. When I look at the way in which Australian teachers are sought after internationally for the quality of the work that they do then it is very clear that the teacher educators are doing some good things.

CHAIR—Thank you for appearing before the committee today. It has been a most informative session. We may contact you for further information. The secretariat will send you a proof copy of your evidence as soon as it is available. The transcript will also be placed upon the parliamentary website.

Dr Ramsey—Thank you for giving us the time.

CHAIR—Is it the wish of the committee to receive the document from Teaching Australia with regard to accreditation as an exhibit? There being no objection, it is so ordered.

Resolved (on motion by **Mr Sawford**):

That this committee authorises publication of the transcript of the evidence given before it at public hearing this day.

Committee adjourned at 10.56 am