

For Committee Secretary  
Education and Employment Legislation Committee

Thank you for the opportunity for the Australian Council of Deans of Education (ACDE) to respond to your email request of 4th Sep 2020.

Given the short time for response, please accept this summary response as a submission from the President of ACDE, Professor Tania Aspland.

ACDE notes the Government's job-ready/fees proposition and its application to the teaching profession. We are also mindful of officials' recent comments in Estimates that little comprehensive modelling was undertaken in respect of the proposed job ready/fees restructure.

Given the proposition's minimal impact in respect of current fees structure for initial teacher education degrees, ACDE wishes to draw to the EEL Committee's attention some of the more pressing requirements so necessary to significantly improve and enhance measures that directly affect the attraction and retention of quality candidates into the teaching profession.

Fees are a relatively minor issue when weighed up against the future of work and culture in teaching, especially when we see many jurisdictions in Australia experiencing difficulties in recruiting adequate numbers into teaching together with employers having limited capability to grow and develop the existing workforce. These aspects combined with population growth and regional demands will contribute to a general decline in teacher numbers overall nationally.

In considering this matter, ACDE wishes to remind the EEL Committee of the work initiated by Minister Tehan in late 2018 and a study under the oversight of Mr. Andrew Laming MP through a House of Representatives Parliamentary Committee. The Laming study examined in considerable detail the many barriers and constraints which impact on the status of the teaching profession—see details in attached. A lot of work went into responding to this Committee's work including some 80+ submissions and evidence from several Deans of Education and other sector representatives and teachers (including student teachers).

Unfortunately, with no action in respect of the Parliamentary Committee's findings, this has raised serious questions about leadership's commitment to the profession and the well-being/welfare of teachers. On top of this disappointing circumstance, it also contributes to word of mouth problems discouraging quality applicants interested in teaching.

As many of us have observed, throughout the ongoing COVID 19 crisis, we have seen teachers recognised and celebrated as an essential service, demonstrating key skills in adapting flexibly and quickly to online learning while managing the many competing levels of community anxiety and uncertainty being experienced by children and families.

ACDE would argue that the question of job-ready teachers needs to appreciate that there are many other factors at play (and necessary) about raising the status and profile of the profession in Australia should we want to improve the calibre and community standing of teachers more broadly. This is especially relevant to Minister Tehan's concerns about improving education pathway flexibility, especially for regional, rural, and remote communities and the subject of this EEL Committee's agenda.

ACDE would encourage the EEL Committee to note the major (and many) challenges for the teaching profession which have no bearing on, or relationship to university fees and structure, and which were clearly identified in the Laming study.

Key priorities for the profession are as follows:

- Attracting quality candidates to teaching especially in a potential workforce supply shortage
- Gaining more specialist teachers in maths, science, languages, etc
- Getting great teachers into disadvantaged and regional/rural/remote schools-includes cultural competency and First Australians 'priorities
- Creating clearly identified opportunities for career progression through diversification within the structure of the profession
- Investing in programmed ongoing teacher professional development and experience
- Removing non-classroom red tape administrivia and extensive out of hours work which adds to the question, who wants to be a teacher?

Professor Tania Aspland is available to address the Committee.

Thank you

David Templeman

Executive Director/Chief Executive Officer

Australian Council of Deans of Education

President, Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA)