

**AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT RESPONSE TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES  
STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND VOCATIONAL TRAINING  
TOP OF THE CLASS:  
REPORT ON THE INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION**

**General comments**

The Australian Government welcomes the opportunity to respond to the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training in relation to *Top of the Class: Report on the inquiry into teacher education*.

The inquiry examined the quality and adequacy of teacher education courses and recommended a unified, national approach. It addressed many elements of teacher education including: the effectiveness of teacher education for preparing graduates for the challenges they will face in the classroom; development of a national system of teacher education; entry to courses; practicum and partnerships; teacher induction; on-going professional learning; and funding arrangements.

Teacher quality is the most important school-based influence on student outcomes. Strategies to improve teacher quality and ensure that all students have access to high quality teachers are required to ensure Australia has a world class education system that can achieve universally high standards. Improving teacher training right from the beginning and throughout teaching careers will be a central part of achieving this goal.

We need world-class schools, principals and teachers who can deliver the broader social objectives of schooling in overcoming disadvantage, equipping *all* young people with the skills to participate actively in society. Supporting all young people to achieve their potential is essential if we are to ensure that Australia maintains a competitive economy and secure our long-term productivity and prosperity.

Delivering against this objective requires a significant new reform agenda that recognises and enhances teaching as a profession, and locates teachers at the very centre of communities that foster life-long learning.

All Governments are now working together to improve education and training in Australia, building on past state and territory achievements. The Australian Government is working through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) and the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) to implement education reform. The Productivity Agenda Working Group of COAG has identified quality teaching as a key priority area to address to improve the quality of Australian education and contribute to the productive capacity of Australia. The COAG Reform Agenda and its underpinning commitment to clear goals, genuine partnership between the Commonwealth, states and territories, now provides an opportunity for greater cooperation and collaboration on teacher education and school leader quality issues.

At the 17-18 April 2008 MCEETYA meeting, Education ministers noted the crucial difference which quality teaching makes to the educational outcomes of students. Ministers recommended that the Productivity Agenda Working Group should develop a proposal for a national partnership payment in the area of quality teaching for First Ministers' consideration. Supporting this work, the Commonwealth is providing \$400,000 for research to create a shared evidence base that will inform a possible national partnership focused on developing, rewarding and sustaining quality teachers.

It was further agreed that as a starting point for addressing the issue of the status of the profession, interested jurisdictions will conduct jointly a campaign to raise the status of teaching.

Since coming into office, the Australian Government has already made significant progress towards the implementation of key education initiatives including:

- establishing a new National Curriculum Board, chaired by Professor Barry McGaw;
- establishing Skills Australia as a new advisory body to ensure skills training is directed at the needs of industry;
- the announcement of 20,000 new training places as the first down payment on 450,000 new places over four years, the majority of which will be at Certificate Level III and above; and
- opening applications for the \$2.5 billion Trade Training Centres in Schools.

In addition, the Australian Government is implementing a Digital Education Revolution that aims to contribute sustainable and meaningful change to teaching and learning in Australian schools and create modern, world-class learning environments that will prepare students for further education, training, jobs of the future and to live and work in a digital world. The preparation of future and current teachers in utilising Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in education is fundamental to maximising the effectiveness of this initiative.

The Australian Government is investing a total of \$1.2 billion over five years for the Digital Education Revolution. \$1.1 billion of this investment will be delivered through the National Secondary School Computer Fund (the Fund). The objective of the Fund is to ensure every school in Australia is a digital school, equipped with the education tools of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century. The Fund will allow every Australian student in years 9 to 12 to have access to information and communication technology (ICT) and has the potential to make a significant difference to the nature of education. The other \$100 million will be used to contribute to the deployment of Fibre to the Premises (FTTP) broadband connections to deliver faster internet speeds to all Australian schools or an alternative technology to those remote areas where fibre is not possible.

Other key elements of the Digital Education Revolution policy include:

- online curriculum content that will support the national curriculum and conferencing facilities for specialist subjects such as languages;
- working with states and territories and the Deans of Education to ensure that new and continuing teachers have access to training in the use of ICT that enables them to enrich student learning; and
- web portals which will enable parents to participate in their child's education.

We have agreed with Education Ministers to establish a new Teaching for the Digital Age Schools Advisory Group under the auspices of MCEETYA, with members drawn from the government and non-government school sectors and the Commonwealth, to provide expert advice to MCEETYA through the Australian Information and Communications Technology in Education Committee (AICTEC). This expert group will provide advice on the development of a strategic implementation plan to equip teachers with the ICT skills required for effective teaching.

The Australian Government has also committed additional funds to supporting workshops on the use of ICT in teaching Mathematics, English and the Sciences and to develop on-line professional learning resources, in National curriculum subject areas. We will also work with teacher professional associations to incorporate Information and Communications Technology (ICT) into subject specific teaching standards.

In *Getting the Basics Right*, the Australian Government's National Action Plan on Literacy and Numeracy, the Government will also work with school systems, principals and professional associations to develop plans to improve the quality of teaching in literacy and numeracy through high quality professional development, whole school planning, curriculum development and assessment. Establishing effective support for teachers to achieve excellent classroom practice will be a major focus of the plan.

**Response to the recommendations in the report**

The Committee tabled its report on the inquiry in the House of Representatives on 26 February 2007. The 12 recommendations cover:

- a sound research base for teacher education;
- a national system for accrediting pre-service teacher education courses;
- entry to teacher education;
- practicum and partnerships in teacher education;
- induction to the teaching profession;
- support for career-long, on-going professional learning; and
- funding of teacher education.

In responding to the recommendations, the Australian Government's approach anticipates that state and territory education authorities, the non-government sector and higher education providers (HEPs) who deliver teacher education courses, will also be guided by the report to take action in areas which apply to their responsibilities.

Traditionally, the Commonwealth's influence in relation to teacher quality has come through aspects of schools funding, funding for teacher education, and planning for teacher supply via provision of teacher education places in universities. Therefore, the Australian Government plays a role in fostering the quality of teacher education and through that the provision of adequate teacher supply. States and territories have direct responsibility for teaching career structures, recruitment and remuneration, as well as funding and direction setting for ongoing teacher development.

The Australian Government is committed to providing additional support to improve teacher quality and school leadership, and to working collaboratively with states and territories to achieve genuine reform. We recognise that improving school outcomes for all children will require significant and systemic change over a number of years. The current organisational models of schooling do not necessarily service all forms of student need, nor are the current forms of bureaucratic co-ordination and planning necessarily going to achieve a systemic approach to school provision that focuses on the whole community.

The Australian Government's response to each of the reports' recommendations is set out below.

<b>Recommendations in Summary</b>	<b>Response</b>
<p>1. The Australian Government commission a comprehensive longitudinal study into the effectiveness of different models of teacher education across Australia.</p>	<p>The Australian Government has funded, through the auspices of Teaching Australia, the University of Western Australia to undertake a major study over the next two years into the distinctive features of programs that produce high quality teacher graduates.</p>

<p>2. The Australian Government establishes a specific Educational Research Fund.</p>	<p>High-quality research relating to education is currently funded under the Australian Research Council's National Competitive Grants Program.</p>
<p>3. The Australian Government continues to support the work of Teaching Australia in developing a national system of accreditation.</p>	<p>The Australian Government is working with the state and territory governments through MCEETYA processes, and key stakeholders to reach agreement on a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, based on a set of graduate and program standards.</p>
<p>4. The Australian Government establish a Teacher Education Diversity Fund of \$20 million per annum.</p>	<p>Funding to support access to higher education for disadvantaged and under-represented groups is already provided through a number of mechanisms and existing programs.</p> <p>As part of the Australian Government's Education Revolution, the <i>Scholarships for a Competitive Future</i> initiative aims by 2012 to double the number of Commonwealth Scholarships from 44,000 to 88,000. Two new scholarship categories will also be introduced in 2009, National Priority Scholarships and National Accommodation Scholarships.</p> <p>A Discussion Paper was issued to the higher education sector and other key stakeholders inviting comment on the implementation of the two scholarships types by 1 May 2008. Sixty seven submissions were received and the Department is currently finalising the synthesis of the submissions with the aim of issuing draft amended guidelines to the sector for comment.</p>
<p>5. Align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet identified teacher shortages.</p>	<p>The Australian Government agrees that, as much as possible, higher education places should be aligned with specific workforce needs.</p> <p>The Australian Government has already committed to providing additional places in early childhood education and is consulting with state and territory governments on the allocation of these places to ensure they align with workforce needs.</p>

	<p>The Australian Government has also responded to shortages of mathematics and science teachers. From 2009, the Australian Government will reduce the maximum annual student contribution amount for new science and mathematics students from \$7,260 to the lowest 'national priority' rate of \$4,077 (2008 prices). The compulsory HECS-HELP repayments will also be reduced (by around half on average) for up to five years for eligible maths and science graduates who take up related occupations including teaching of these subjects. This will apply to people who graduate from second semester 2008 onwards.</p> <p>At the 17-18 April MCEETYA meeting incentives to address inadequate supply of teachers in specialised areas were identified as a key objective. In addition, collaborative work, involving the Australian Government, is underway in relation to education workforce planning.</p> <p>To effectively address teacher shortages, the Australian Government believes a comprehensive approach is required, which focuses not only on supply of new teachers but also on improving the attractiveness and status of the profession. Improving the status of the profession was also noted as a key objective at the 17-18 April MCEETYA meeting.</p>
<p>6. The Australian Government establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund.</p>	<p>To improve the effectiveness of schools the Australian Government is working in partnership with state and territory governments and the non-government sector through the <i>Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP)</i>. This program provides support to a range of measures aimed at improving teacher quality. These measures have made, and will continue to make, a sustained and substantial contribution to the quality of teaching in all Australian schools.</p> <p>The Australian Government has also allocated an additional \$18.02 million in 2008 to HEPs under the <i>Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education</i> program. In light of a shortfall in funding</p>

	<p>allocated to this program by the previous government, we have, in consultation with the Australian Council of Deans of Education, made amendments to the program guidelines in order to refocus the program this year on improving the quality, rather than the quantity of professional experience days undertaken by teacher education students. This additional funding will enable providers to strengthen partnerships with school communities.</p> <p>A consultation process will be undertaken over the coming months canvassing a number of options and issues in relation to teacher preparation. These consultations will inform future policy development in this area.</p>
<p>7. Establish a National Teacher Induction Program based on the General Teaching Council for Scotland/Scottish Executive Education Department model for teacher induction.</p>	<p>The Australian Government is working in partnership with state and territory governments and the non-government sector to improve the effectiveness of schools.</p> <p>Support for beginning teachers is amongst a range of policy options to improve teacher quality, in particular the retention of teachers in the first few years, which will be considered by the Government in the context of COAG.</p>
<p>8. Participation in on-going professional learning to be a condition for the renewal of teacher registration and progression through higher levels of registration that are reflected in teacher remuneration.</p>	<p>In line with the COAG commitment to progress policies that improve teacher and school leader quality, the Australian Government accepts this recommendation and will work through MCEETYA and COAG on these issues.</p>
<p>9. Establishment of a National Clearing House for Education Research.</p>	<p>Monash University is currently undertaking research to evaluate the proposals for a National Clearing House, and is expected to report later this year.</p> <p>The Government will consider the need for a National Clearing House for Education Research in the context of this report and our broader policies for improving teacher and school leader quality.</p>

<p>10. That universities be required to acquit Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) funds against each funding cluster.</p>	<p>Universities report on the number of places actually delivered in each funding cluster. The Australian Government considers that this balances accountability with flexibility for universities to respond to student demand.</p> <p>Future arrangements will be considered in the context of the Review of Australian Higher Education that was announced on 13 March 2008 and the development of arrangements for funding compacts with universities.</p>
<p>11. The Australian Government (a) commission an evaluation of the impact of identifying education as a National Priority Area, (b) increase the Commonwealth Contribution Amount for an Equivalent Full-Time Student Load in the Education cluster; and (c) review the mechanism for determining the level of funding for student places and develop an alternative mechanism.</p>	<p>The Australian Government envisages that the role of the National Priority Areas and funding issues will be considered in the Review of Australian Higher Education.</p>
<p>12. The Australian Government (a) examines the cost of the practicum and increases the loading for practicum; (b) calculates funding for the practicum on the basis of the quantum of placement; and (c) pays for and requires acquittal of the practicum separately as part of universities financial reporting requirements.</p>	<p>Additional funding of \$18.02 million has been allocated to HEPs in 2008 under the <i>Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education</i> program.</p> <p>Conditions of Grant require HEPs to acquit this funding in a separate financial report.</p>

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

### ***A SOUND RESEARCH BASE FOR TEACHER EDUCATION***

#### **Recommendation 1**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government commission a comprehensive longitudinal study into the effectiveness of different models of teacher education across Australia. The longitudinal study should follow cohorts of students from selection into courses, through pre-service preparation, the first five years of service and through their careers.

The Australian Government agrees that education policy should be based on evidence. It also supports the underlying argument behind the recommendation that research is needed to further inform teacher education approaches and to ensure that quality teacher education outcomes are delivered.

To this end, the Australian Government has funded, through the auspices of Teaching Australia, the University of Western Australia to undertake a two year study into the effectiveness of different approaches to preparing teachers. The study will carry out a detailed examination of the distinctive features of programs that produce high quality teacher graduates. The objectives of this study are to provide an empirical evidence base about the characteristics of effective teacher education programs and provide evidence about the comparative effects of different teacher education practices on teaching performance. A report is expected to be completed by mid 2010.

In addition, the Australian Government is commissioning a project to investigate employment outcomes and pathways of university graduates who completed requirements for a bachelor degree qualification in the calendar year 2002. This project will survey graduates including teacher education graduates.

#### **Recommendation 2**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establishes a specific Educational Research Fund to be distributed on a similar model to the National Health and Medical Research Council.

The Australian Government supports further research into the nature of the work involved in successful teaching practices including pedagogical knowledge and skills, and encourages suitably qualified educational bodies/authorities to seek funding under existing mechanisms and frameworks to undertake work of this nature.

The Australian Government is providing funding support for educational research on a competitive basis through the National Competitive Grants Program (NCGP) administered by the Australian Research Council (ARC).

The published figures on NCGP funding for which there is a breakdown by Research Fields, Courses and Disciplines indicate that in the field of education more than \$8.1 million was provided for research projects commencing in 2007.

Additional funding for educational research includes the National Projects element of the Literacy, Numeracy and Special Learning Needs program. This program will provide an estimated \$19 million in 2008 for national projects and initiatives. The National Projects element supports projects aimed at improving the educational outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students, including improved literacy and numeracy outcomes.



## ***A NATIONAL SYSTEM OF TEACHER EDUCATION***

### **Recommendation 3**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government continue to support the work of Teaching Australia in developing a national system of accreditation. The establishment of a high quality system will take some time and the cooperation of state and territory registration authorities. The Australian Government should ensure that sufficient resources are committed to allow for the time needed to reach agreement. Once the national system of accreditation has been established, the Australian Government should require universities in receipt of Commonwealth funding to have their teacher education courses accredited by the national accreditation body.

The Australian Government supports the development of national teacher training and registration standards to raise the overall quality of education delivery to school students throughout Australia.

The Australian Government is working with the state and territory governments through the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) processes, and with teacher registration bodies, the Australian Council of Deans of Education and Teaching Australia to reach agreement on a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses, based on graduate and program standards.

The Australian Government has offered to fund an independent organisation to develop a proposal for the governance, processes, accountability and quality assurance mechanisms for the national accreditation system. As a part of this process a business case to support the proposed arrangements addressing commensurate resourcing, timetabling, effectiveness and efficiency issues will also be developed.

## ***ENTRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION***

### **Recommendation 4**

The committee recommends that:

- (a) the Australian Government establish a Teacher Education Diversity Fund of \$20 million per annum for universities to access, possibly in partnership with other bodies, to develop and implement innovative programmes in order to increase the number of applicants and entrants to teacher education from under-represented groups;
- (b) the granting of funding from the Teacher Education Diversity Fund for programmes targeting disadvantaged groups be conditional on the use of diagnostic testing of students with a view to identifying their individual needs so that they can be provided with the support necessary to succeed; and
- (c) the Australian Government monitors closely the impact of the Teacher Education Diversity Fund on the enrolment of students from under-represented groups in teacher education across Australia.

The Australian Government funds eligible higher education providers (HEPs) under the *Higher Education Equity Support Program* to assist in removing barriers to access for disadvantaged students. In 2007, \$11.25 million was distributed amongst 39 providers for initiatives aimed at students from low socio-economic backgrounds, rural and isolated areas, non-English speaking backgrounds and students with a disability, as well as to address educational disadvantage associated with gender. In addition, \$6.74 million is available under the Australian Government's *Higher Education Disability Support Program* and \$31.65 million under the

*Indigenous Support Program* for measures to assist students with a disability and Indigenous students respectively.

Under the *Higher Education Equity Support Program*, providers have flexibility to target funds to address specific needs, as appropriate to the demographics of their student population and catchment area. Providers may identify a need to increase the number of students from under-represented groups in teacher education courses.

Under the Commonwealth Scholarships Program (formerly the Commonwealth Learning Scholarships), the Australian Government provides assistance to students from low socio-economic backgrounds, especially those from rural and regional areas and Indigenous students, with costs associated with higher education. The program has two key components. *Commonwealth Education Costs Scholarships* assist with general education costs and in 2008 are valued at \$2,162 a year for up to four years. *Commonwealth Accommodation Scholarships* assist with accommodation costs for students from rural and regional areas who have to move to attend higher education and incur accommodation costs, and in 2008 provide support of \$4,324 a year for up to four years. Both scholarships are indexed annually.

As part of the Australian Government's Education Revolution, the *Scholarships for a Competitive Future* initiative aims to double the number of Commonwealth Scholarships from 44,000 to 88,000 by 2012. The Government is moving to introduce two new scholarship categories in 2009:

- National Priority Scholarships targeting undergraduate students enrolling in priority disciplines; and
- National Accommodation Scholarships for students relocating interstate to study specialist courses not available near their home.

The Australian Government proposes that the new National Priority Scholarships be offered to students undertaking undergraduate studies in nursing, teaching, medicine, dentistry, allied health, science, engineering and mathematics. The Government has commenced consultation on the new scholarships which will include consideration of the disciplines that may be covered under the new National Priority Scholarships and other aspects of the initiative.

A Discussion Paper was issued to the higher education sector and other key stakeholders inviting comment on the implementation of the two scholarships types by 1 May 2008. Sixty seven submissions were received and the Department is currently finalising the synthesis of the submissions with the aim of issuing draft amended guidelines to the sector for comment.

In the 2007-08 Budget, the previous Government introduced the new Indigenous Access Scholarship program. The Indigenous Access Scholarships will assist up to 1,000 Indigenous higher education students annually, particularly those who wish to relocate from rural or remote regions of Australia, to take up an undergraduate or enabling course at university. This initiative comprises provision of \$4,080 to eligible Indigenous students to assist them with the costs associated with relocating to attend university.

In addition, individual universities provide a wide variety and number of equity scholarships, including scholarships targeted specifically at students from rural and isolated areas.

The Australian Government funds the *What Works* program which amongst other things is working with universities to assist them to incorporate Indigenous elements into teaching training and education courses. This program is expected to deliver more teachers into the school system who have the capacity to improve outcomes for Indigenous students.

In addition, the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Council (IHEAC) recognises the significant under-representation of Indigenous people in higher education and one of the Council's priorities is to ensure that government policies encourage Australian universities to build stronger relationships with schools and TAFE institutions to improve Indigenous student enrolments, success, retention and completions in higher education.

The IHEAC is committed to a national evidence-based approach to the development of policies and programs for Indigenous higher education. All programs for Indigenous higher education require key performance indicators, and thorough performance evaluation against the program's objectives.

The IHEAC has outlined several priorities in its Strategic Plan 2006 – 2008. At Priority 2, the IHEAC is calling for the development of a concerted strategy to improve the level of Indigenous undergraduate enrolment. IHEAC focuses on increasing Indigenous participation especially in the higher status institutions and specific fields of study. Specifically, IHEAC supports the establishment of national Indigenous undergraduate enrolment targets, indexed to population growth trends.

IHEAC proposes that universities set specific targets for increasing Indigenous enrolments in professional fields of study and that these be monitored by universities annually reporting on their strategies for recruiting and selecting Indigenous students for courses in high demand at Australian universities. Within the wider higher education context these would include more Indigenous enrolments in the fields of science, teaching, health, commerce and those professional disciplines where Indigenous participation has been, and remains, minimal.

MCEETYA is committed to increasing the number of Indigenous teachers. A group of representatives from education systems and the Australian Government are currently investigating strategies to achieve this commitment. Strategies being considered include the setting of targets at the jurisdictional level; the development of career pathways, innovative training programs and support for existing Indigenous staff, particularly in regional and remote communities to move into teaching positions; strategies to attract mature age Community Development Employment Program participants into teaching; and the development of clear structured pathways into teaching for students at Year 10.

The Australian Government will consider opportunities to better promote this range of policies that support the participation of under-represented groups in teacher education.

#### **Recommendation 5**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in making its final decision on the allocation of teacher education places, should align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet the teacher shortages identified during the consultations on workforce priorities.

The Australian Government agrees to the extent that, as much as possible, higher education places should be aligned with specific workforce needs.

The Australian Government has already taken action by committing to providing additional places in early childhood education – 500 to commence in each of 2009, 2010 and 2011, a total of 1,500 new ongoing places after 3 years. The Australian Government is consulting with state and territory governments on the allocation of these places to ensure the places align with workforce needs in each jurisdiction.

The Australian Government has also responded to shortages of mathematics and science teachers. From 2009 the Australian Government will reduce the maximum annual student

contribution amount for new science and mathematics students from \$7,260 to the lowest 'national priority' rate of \$4,077 (2008 prices). The compulsory HECS-HELP repayments will also be reduced (by around half on average) for up to five years for eligible maths and science graduates who take up related occupations including teaching of these subjects. This will apply to people who graduate from second semester 2008 onwards.

Workforce shortages and the alignment of new higher education places need to be considered in the context of likely student demand. While the allocation of new places can respond to some characteristics of teacher workforce needs where they are related to distinct courses, (such as for early childhood education teachers), some teaching specialties depend on students' subject choices within courses and this cannot be reflected in the allocation of places to broad course types.

At the 17-18 April MCEETYA meeting incentives to address inadequate supply of teachers in specialised areas were identified as a key objective. In addition, collaborative work, involving the Australian Government, is underway in relation to education workforce planning.

The Australian Government believes teacher shortages need to be addressed through a comprehensive approach that focuses not only on the supply of new teachers, but also on improving the attractiveness of teaching as a career path, and retention of experienced teachers in the profession. This recognises that many early career teachers are leaving the profession; and that many individuals who are qualified to teach decide not to enter or remain in the profession.

Strategies to address teacher shortages should also be evidenced based, and focus on areas of need. These areas were highlighted in the recent Australian Government funded Staff in Australia's Schools report (2008), which surveyed over 13,000 teachers and school leaders from all states, territories and sectors. The report confirmed teacher shortages in the subject areas of maths, science and Languages other than English; and noted a significant proportion of school principals reported moderate difficulties in attracting teachers to rural and remote locations. The report also suggested strong consensus among respondents that strategies to retain teachers in the profession should include building a supportive working environment, and boosting the public image of teaching.

To effectively address teacher shortages, the Australian Government believes a comprehensive approach is required, which focuses not only on supply of new teachers but also on improving the attractiveness and status of the profession. Improving the status of the profession was also noted as a key objective at the 17-18 April MCEETYA meeting.

The Australian Government intends to work closely with state and territory education authorities to strengthen the teaching workforce and ensure effective attraction and retention strategies are in place. For example, collaborative work has begun to develop a national framework for education workforce planning, which will inform the COAG commitment to progress policies that improve teacher quality.

## ***PRACTICUM AND PARTNERSHIPS IN HIGHER EDUCATION***

### **Recommendation 6**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government establish a National Teacher Education Partnership Fund, for the purpose of establishing collaborative approaches to practicum, research, induction and professional development, which should distribute up to \$20 million per annum for three years with subsequent funding levels being determined on the basis of the first three years' achievements.

To improve the effectiveness of schools, the Australian Government is working in partnership with state and territory governments and the non-government sector through the *Australian Government Quality Teacher Program (AGQTP)*. This program provides support to a range of measures aimed at improving teacher quality. These measures have made, and will continue to make, a sustained and substantial contribution to the quality of teaching in all Australian schools.

In announcing the \$77 million *Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education (IPCTE)* program, the previous government stated that funding available for 2008 of \$18.020 million would translate to \$450 per Equivalent Full-Time Student Load (EFTSL). To qualify for funding under the IPCTE program, HEPs were required to offer to all students undertaking a three or four year pre-service teacher education course a minimum of 120 professional experience days, and students undertaking one or two year courses a minimum of 60 days of professional experience. This represented a significant increase in practicum days for a number of teacher education courses around the country.

The amount allocated for the calendar year 2008 in the 2007/08 budget was, however, insufficient to allow for the full amount per EFTSL to be paid to providers. The 2008 targeted load data received from HEPs translates to only \$394 per EFTSL in 2008.

In light of the funding shortfall, the Government has, in consultation with the sector, made amendments to the program guidelines to refocus the program on improving the quality, rather than the quantity, of professional experience days undertaken by teacher education students.

Providers can use this new funding to address problems with professional experience issues identified by the Committee, including:

- the management and organisation of placements;
- building partnerships and relationships with schools and other professional placement settings;
- the student experiences while on placement and the connections between school and campus-based study;
- support for students undertaking placements in rural and remote Australia, Indigenous communities or difficult to staff schools;
- flexibility and support for students undertaking placements who have family, carer or employment commitments; and
- consultation with state and territory governments and the non-government school sectors to align pre-service teacher education programs (including professional experience) with workforce planning needs.

In allocating additional funding to universities, the Australian Government is seeking quality enhancements to the provision of professional experience for pre-service teacher education students. The Australian Government recognises that a key requirement for a quality professional experience is the existence of good partnerships and relationships between HEPs and the schools providing supervised places. Also important are the partnerships between providers, state governments and other employing bodies and school stakeholders. A consultation process will be undertaken over the coming months canvassing a number of options and issues in relation to teacher preparation. These consultations will inform future policy development in the area.

## **INDUCTION TO THE TEACHING PROFESSION**

### **Recommendation 7**

The committee believes that the Teacher Induction Scheme administered by the General Teaching Council for Scotland in partnership with the Scottish Executive Education Department be the model of induction that should be followed in Australia.

The committee recommends that the Australian Government should lead by:

1. investing a sum equivalent to 10 per cent of a beginning teacher's salary towards the cost of a twelve month induction programme for that teacher. The funds should be provided to interested employing authorities or schools for each beginning teacher for whom they provide an induction programme that meets the following criteria:
  - a year long structured induction programme (not necessarily spent at one school and extended for beginning teachers employed on a part-time basis);
  - a 20 per cent reduction in a beginning teacher's face-to-face teaching load to enable time to undertake professional development, reflection, observing other classes and meeting with mentors;
  - the allocation of a mentor who would be trained for the role, who would be given appropriate time to perform the role and who could expect to receive recognition for undertaking the role; and
  - access to a structured and tailored programme of professional development.

The Australian Government would expect a co-contribution by participating employing authorities and beginning teachers. The programme should be implemented at the start of the school year in 2008 and reviewed at the end of 2013.

2. ensuring that there is a close match between the number of teacher education places that the Australian Government funds in teacher education courses and specific teaching workforce needs.

To improve the effectiveness of schools the Australian Government is working in partnership with state and territory governments and the non-government sector. Under existing arrangements, probation for and induction of newly graduating teachers is the responsibility of the employer. Teacher employers set the conditions that newly graduating teachers must meet to gain employment and ensure that graduates are well supported when they commence work as teachers.

Teaching Australia, through the AGQTP, selected Victoria University to undertake research into effective and sustainable partnerships between universities and schools across Australia, including how schools and universities can work together to deliver high quality teacher preparation courses. The study will identify effective existing university-school partnerships, analyse what makes them successful, and provide advice about encouraging their wider implementation. Vibrant partnerships between schools and universities enhance teacher preparation courses and provide an avenue for ongoing professional development. They also encourage collaboration in educational research between schools and universities. In examining these partnerships, information will be sought from principals, school systems and professional associations.

Support for beginning teachers is amongst a range of policy options to improve teacher quality, in particular the retention of teachers in the first few years, which will be considered by the Government in the context of COAG.

## **SUPPORTING CAREER-LONG, ON-GOING PROFESSIONAL LEARNING**

### **Recommendation 8**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- works through MCEETYA to encourage all registration authorities to require participation in on-going professional learning as a condition for the renewal of registration;
- encourages education authorities to work with registration authorities and teacher education providers to develop processes for recognising the value of on-going professional learning linked to higher levels of registration and provides some funding to assist in developing these processes; and
- works through MCEETYA to encourage employing authorities to recognise higher levels of registration in salary structures.

In line with the COAG commitment to progress policies that improve teacher and school leader quality, the Australian Government accepts this recommendation and will work through MCEETYA and COAG on these issues.

The Australian Government believes that ongoing professional learning and development are essential to teaching quality, and should be supported and encouraged through teacher employment arrangements and career paths. We need to develop world class teachers and provide career paths that encourage those excellent teachers who wish to, to stay in front of the classroom. We also need to develop world class school leaders who are not only excellent teachers, but are supported to develop the leadership skills that will help them foster the skills of their staff, to help them become highly skilled and effective teachers.

We are also committed to a system in which teachers are recognised and rewarded for their skills. The Australian Government is working with our state and territory colleagues through COAG to develop a possible national partnership on quality teaching, including effective ways to reward teachers. To inform this work, the Commonwealth is providing \$400,000 for research to create a shared evidence base.

The Australian Government welcomes the broad debate on how we remunerate teachers and how we use standards to ensure that all teachers achieve a quality of work that meets our community's expectations.

In any system that recognises differing levels of skill attainment, teacher standards are a fundamental first step. They provide a national framework for recognising excellent teachers and, importantly, against which individual teachers' development priorities can be established. This will enable school leaders to tailor professional development to individual needs, ensuring that funding is best targeted to building a highly capable teaching workforce.

The Australian Government has a long record of funding professional learning. We currently fund professional learning through the AGQTP, in order to equip teachers with the skills and knowledge they require to be effective teachers, provide national leadership in high priority areas of teacher professional learning and improve the professional calibre of teachers and leaders.

**Recommendation 9**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government supports Teaching Australia's proposal to conduct a feasibility study into the establishment of a National Clearing House for Education Research. Should the study find that a National Clearing House for Educational Research would be of substantial value, then the Australian Government should fund its establishment. The value of the National Clearing House for Educational Research would depend on a number of factors including how aware teachers are of it. The level of funding should be sufficient to allow for input from stakeholders into its development as well as for the promotion of its use in informal and formal on-going professional learning.

Monash University is undertaking research into the feasibility of establishing a National Centre for Pedagogy and a National Clearing House for education research. The report on the research is expected to be finalised in mid 2008. The Government will consider the need for a Centre for Pedagogy and National Clearing House for education research in the context of its policies for improving teacher and school leader quality.

**FUNDING OF TEACHER EDUCATION****Recommendation 10**

The committee recommends, in order to provide greater transparency and accountability, that universities be required to acquit Commonwealth Grant Scheme (CGS) funds against each funding cluster by providing a table of expenditure corresponding to the table in the funding agreement that sets out the initial allocation of funds.

The Australian Government provides funding for Commonwealth supported places at eligible HEPs through the CGS. Funding rates under the CGS are used to calculate the overall CGS block grant for each university and universities are able to allocate this funding, and their other sources of revenue, between faculties and courses, having regard to their own cost structures.

Universities report on the number of places actually delivered in each funding cluster. Requiring universities to acquit their expenditure against each funding cluster would increase the reporting burden on universities and could reduce their flexibility. Future arrangements will be considered in the context of the Review of Australian Higher Education that was announced on 13 March 2008 and the development of arrangements for funding compacts with universities.

**Recommendation 11**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- (a) commission an evaluation of the impact on teacher education courses of fixing the student contribution rate at 2004 levels (indexed) to determine whether this measure, as part of its strategy of identifying education as a National Priority Area, has met its stated objective of responding "to current and emerging national needs, such as shortages in particular areas of the labour market, and the education of students from low income backgrounds and indigenous students";
- (b) from 2008, increase the Commonwealth Contribution Amount for an Equivalent Full-Time Student Load in the Education cluster from \$7,251 to \$9,037, the same level as that applying to the Foreign Languages, Visual and Performing Arts cluster; and
- (c) review the mechanism for determining the level of funding that the Australian Government contributes towards student places in different disciplines and develop an alternative mechanism which more accurately reflects the real costs of delivering those places.



Funding under the CGS for education units of study was increased by 1.3% (over and above indexation) in 2008. Any further increases to funding, changes to the funding mechanism or the role of the National Priority Areas will be considered as part of the Review of Australian Higher Education.

**Recommendation 12**

The committee recommends that the Australian Government:

- a) commission an examination of the cost of providing practicum and increase the amount of the loading for practicum to fully reflect its costs;
- b) calculate the amount of funding for the practicum component on the basis of the quantum of placement rather than taught load; and
- c) pay the practicum component separately to universities and require them to acquit it separately as part of their financial reporting requirements.

In 2008 the Australian Government will provide \$18.02 million to eligible HEPs under the *Improving the Practical Component of Teacher Education* program. As a Condition of Grant HEPs are required to provide the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations with a financial report acquitting how this additional funding has been used to improve the quality of the professional experience undertaken by teacher education students. The Australian Government is committed to increasing the practical component of teacher education, providing a better outcome for pre-service teachers to ensure they are classroom ready on graduation.

Funding to universities to support the practicum is also provided through the funding cluster rate for education units of study under the CGS. In 2008, this equates to \$731 for each equivalent full-time education unit of study. Providing this practicum funding separately and requiring universities to acquit it would increase the reporting burden on universities and reduce universities' flexibility on how best to use that funding.