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To: Secretary and Members of the Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training

I wish to make a submission to the Inquiry into Teacher Education.

My submission addresses Items 1, 2, 5 and 10 of the Terms of Reference. As well, I address other matters that I feel are relevant.

I will make my comments in this written submission brief, but in order to support my contentions, I include two disks, formatted for PCs: Disk#1 contains published papers in Microsoft "WORD" text, while Disk#2 contains an annotated copy of my PhD thesis "A model for registering teachers, accrediting teacher education and providing advanced certification: A means for enhancing the status of teaching as an autonomous profession," which is relevant to your inquiry.

1. Criteria for selecting students for teacher education courses, and the extent to which teacher training courses attract high quality students.

Despite claims by academics in teacher education faculties, there has been little real improvement in the levels of academic achievement of

students entering teacher education programs pursuant to their Higher School Certificate years. While UAIs (for example in NSW) appear to have increased, they remain close to the median UAI (in the early 70s) of the exam. That is, many are about the middle of the HSC cohort in capability, which is not good enough for a teacher. This means that at most universities, teacher education courses have the LOWEST criteria for entry. This means also that many entering these courses are incapable of absorbing higher level ideas and implementing them effectively in the classroom. In fact, with such marginal UAIs, many could be expected to drop out of their courses before completion. Furthermore, many teacher education students have poor to appalling literacy skills and sometimes even worse mathematical skills—yet they are expected to teach those subjects to high standards.

There is a need to improve the attractiveness of teacher education programs and teaching as a career for high ability school leavers and capable late career changers.

The above can be done by **INCREASING SALARIES SIGNIFICANTLY**. Salaries are positively linked to occupational status!! This option, however, appears to be unpalatable to state governments because of the cost factors. Another way is to give control

of the profession to practitioners through **autonomous registration bodies**. The bodies established in states, however, appear to be merely bureaucratic showpieces that give only token control over to practitioners while the Minister retains control over standards for entry and practice. Consequently:

Accreditation as a teacher should be mandatory for all teachers in all systems, through a federated NATIONAL system that deals with registration, accreditation of preparation programs, and provision of advanced certification.

I have discussed the matter of such boards being mandatory for all teachers, and being part of a **federated national system of registration** on Disk#2. Constitutional division of powers appears to stand in the way of establishing such a national system of registration, however.

2. Educational philosophy underlying teacher education.

Teacher education in universities still is seen to be preparation for teaching in GOVERNMENT schools. It should be seen as preparation for teaching as an autonomous profession.

That is, courses are perceived merely to be prerequisites for joining a branch of the state public service instead of preparing autonomous

professional educators who can hang their shingles up in whatever professional educational setting they choose to work in!

This is a hangover from the days when teachers were prepared in state teachers' colleges by lecturers who themselves were recruited from the government education systems. This concept is reinforced by lecturers and (particularly old-world left-wing unionists) and teachers in government schools

Teacher education faculties must have their status improved in universities so that they are seen as courses that prepare PROFESSIONALS who might teach in any school in Australia, not just state schools!

3. Attrition rates from the profession of teaching.

The matter of attrition rates is addressed in my thesis (Disk#2). The magnitude of this is well known, particularly for beginning teachers, in their first five years.

Well-planned induction programs would go part of the way to solving the problem. However, many leave the profession prematurely because they have opportunities to earn the same, or sometimes much more, money in jobs that are not so difficult. Many leave because teaching does not live up to any idealistic concept they might have had. Dealing

with classes of 30 or so recalcitrant teenagers with little support from a school or system is not just hard—it can be soul destroying. Many leave because the public does not regard them or what they do as of much value. Raising salaries would help retention.

Raising the status of teaching as a career would also help. Providing funds for more ancillary staff would also help.

Of equal concern is the loss of older, experienced teachers. Many leave before they reach 57-60 years of age (In the state systems, this is when their superannuation entitlements are maximised, and they can see little point in battling on!). Changes in salaries, superannuation and other conditions should be considered to retain valuable, experienced teachers.

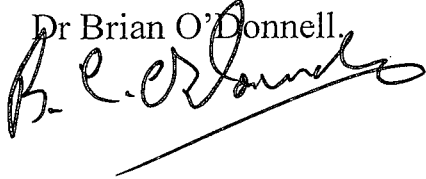
4. Delivery of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

Presently, whatever inservice is available often must largely be paid for by poorly remunerated teachers themselves.

State education ministries must be more generous with costs of inservice if more teachers are to undertake worthwhile ongoing training.

As well, completion of prescribed levels of inservice needs to be mandatory, and linked to progression in salaries.

Dr Brian O'Donnell.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "B. O'Donnell", with a long horizontal stroke underneath.