

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

Referral

1.1 On 11 September 2012 the Senate referred the following matter to the Senate Education Employment and Workplace Relations Committees for inquiry and report:

Teaching and learning - maximising our investment in Australian schools, with particular reference to:

- (a) the effectiveness of current classroom practices in assisting children to realise their potential in Australian schools;
- (b) the structure and governance of school administration - local and central - and its impact on teaching and learning;
- (c) the influence of family members in supporting the rights of children to receive a quality education;
- (d) the adequacy of tools available for teachers to create and maintain an optimal learning environment;
- (e) factors influencing the selection, training, professional development, career progression and retention of teachers in the Australian education system; and
- (f) other related matters.¹

1.2 The Senate initially set the reporting date for 21 March 2013; this was later extended to 14 May 2013.

Conduct of the inquiry

1.3 Notice of the inquiry was posted on the committee's website and advertised in *The Australian* newspaper, calling for submissions by 26 October 2012. This was later extended to 30 January 2013. The committee also wrote to stakeholders to notify them of the inquiry and invite submissions. The committee received a total of 59 submissions, as listed at Appendix 1. This appendix also includes information on answers to questions on notice and documents tabled by the committee during the course of its hearings. A number of submissions were redacted prior to their publication to protect personal details.

1.4 The committee conducted three public hearings: Sydney on 22 February 2013, Melbourne on 4 March 2013 and Canberra on 5 March 2013. A list of witnesses who gave evidence before the committee is at Appendix 2.

1 Journals of the Senate, 2012, pp 2940–2941.

1.5 Copies of the Hansard transcript from the committee's hearings can be accessed online at <http://aph.gov.au/hansard>.

Other inquiries

1.6 A number of witnesses who appeared before the committee were at pains to point out that there have been more than thirty inquiries into education in the past thirty years. The Parliamentary Library has prepared a brief summary of the more significant inquiries at the federal level. This document is at Appendix 3.

Structure of the report

1.7 This report is divided into five chapters. This chapter sets out the administrative arrangements for the inquiry.

1.8 Chapter 2 provides a background to education in Australia.

1.9 Chapter 3 reports the performance of Australian students nationally and internationally, and also examines key factors that impact educational outcomes – particularly for students in non-metropolitan areas, students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students with a disability and recent migrants. Particular attention is also given to parental engagement and behavioural management.

1.10 Chapter 4 examines the selection, training and registration of teachers in Australia.

1.11 Chapter 5 focuses on the professional development, career progression and retention of teachers.

1.12 Chapter 6 provides a conclusion.

Note on references

1.13 References in this report are to the proof Hansard. Page numbers may vary between the proof and the official transcript.

Acknowledgements

1.14 The committee extends its gratitude to the large number of individuals and organisations who made submissions to this inquiry, and to witnesses who offered their time to give evidence at public hearings and provided additional information. Both contributed greatly to shaping the committee's deliberations and report.