

CHAPTER 2 TAKING TEACHING SERIOUSLY

The terms of reference of the Committee's Inquiry into the Status of Teachers elicited a broad response, bringing to the Committee's attention a range of issues and concerns across the education spectrum. This has enabled the Committee to produce a comprehensive account of teaching in Australia towards the end of the twentieth century.

The Committee was struck by the extraordinary unanimity of views about the key issues, revealed in over 300 submissions and in the oral evidence presented at public hearings across all States and Territories. The complexities of contemporary schooling, whether in curriculum, technology, school based management or student welfare, mean that demands on teachers' skills, time and energy are at an all time high. Teachers continue to respond to those demands, but in an environment where they are constantly asked to do more with less, where their efforts are frequently undermined by ill-informed or gratuitous criticism, where opportunities for professional development have been severely eroded, and where career progression is largely non-existent.

Teachers are alarmed by what they perceive as governments' retreat from education, which combined with the unseemly brawls between Commonwealth and State Ministers over funding, does nothing to persuade teachers that they are valued or that they are engaged in one of society's most important tasks. The result is a serious crisis of morale amongst teachers. The Committee recognises that education is not the only area to be adversely affected by budgetary constraints and withdrawal of government involvement, and that similar trends are evident overseas. But it regards the impact on education as little short of desperate, and one which demands a concerted effort by governments to fund schools at a level more commensurate with the demands placed upon them, and to place quality teaching at the heart of a quality education provision.

The Committee has thought long and hard about the profession of teaching itself – whether indeed it can be described as a profession; what attributes of teachers and teacher organisations contribute to their level of professional status; how the relationship of teachers to their students, to school communities and to their own employers affects their professional role. This has necessarily involved reflecting on the

connection between the professional and the industrial concerns of teacher organisations, on the question of politicisation, and on the relationship between governments and the teaching profession.

It has also involved paying close attention to such matters as; the pre-service training of teachers and their subsequent professional development; the impacts of changes in education policy on the organisation of schools and school systems; the relationships between schools and their communities, and how these are influenced by the media. The range and depth of the evidence placed before the Committee has enabled it to formulate recommendations which take into account the needs and perspectives of all the key interest groups and which are likely to elicit a broad cross section of support.

The Committee is in no doubt that teaching must be regarded as a profession, with all that this implies for the standards, accountability, status and autonomy that a community expects of a profession. In the Committee's view, the vast majority of Australia's schools employ teachers who are deeply committed, well qualified, and dedicated to the educational and personal wellbeing of their students. There is no major crisis of quality in Australia's teaching force, and generally our schools are the safest environments in which young people gather. It is important that we acknowledge the achievements of Australia's school systems and celebrate the efforts of our teachers, students and administrators in creating schools which have met the challenges of learning in the latter half of the twentieth century.

However, there is something of a crisis of confidence emerging in the private and public discourses about teaching and education in this country. Many teachers feel undervalued, that their work is unappreciated, their schools under-resourced and their role is not properly understood. They are perplexed and feel demoralised when their efforts are considered by others, such as government ministers, their employers, media commentators and society at large to be inadequate or worse. There is a vivid contradiction between how teachers value the work that they do and how many in the community value that work. Indeed, it is the way teachers *feel* about their work and how they perceive that work to be regarded by others, which animated much of the evidence brought before the Committee during its Inquiry.

In the Committee's view, a society which seeks to be democratic, vigorous, tolerant, and economically successful must have a wholehearted commitment to good education. A fundamental premise, which must inform all deliberations about education, is that good teachers lie at the heart of successful learning. In terms of student achievement, *the teacher is a more significant factor than any other kind of school resource.*¹ This crucial premise must provide the basis for all decision-making by policy makers and education authorities. This "does not mean endorsing and celebrating everything that teachers think, say and do. But it does mean taking teachers' perceptions and perspectives very seriously."²

The Committee's analysis, assessments and recommendations emerge directly from the evidence placed before it. This evidence confirms the place of teachers not only as major players in the development of our young people, but as the key to educational change. This recognition of teachers as the key factors in student achievement and the core agents of educational change has several important and obvious implications for any government which is serious about schooling excellence.

- High priority must be given to maintaining the quality and capacity of the existing cohort of teachers. Ongoing professional development is of critical importance.
- The recruitment and training of new teachers must be predicated on rigorously developed and enforced standards which are owned by the teaching profession and recognised by education authorities as benchmarks for employment. To ensure comparability across State systems and between government and non-government school sectors such standards should be developed on a national basis.
- A system of professional recognition for teachers must be established which is based on the achievement of enhanced knowledge and skills and which retains teachers at the front line of student learning. Such knowledge and skills should be identified, classified and assessed according to criteria developed by expert panels drawn from the

¹ Report on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, 1996, pp6-8

² Hargreaves, Andy, *Changing Teachers, Changing Times*, Cassell 1994, p 11

profession. Education authorities should structure remuneration accordingly.

- Schools must be managed according to principles which place teaching and student learning at the heart of decision making about school organisation and resource allocation. Teachers should be intimately involved in the planning, implementation and evaluation of a school's educational program and the learning experiences of students.

In encouraging governments to exercise their educational responsibilities for students through a focus on the quality and well being of teachers, the Committee is not ignoring the importance of other dimensions of school systems, such as the physical and technological infrastructure, curriculum development and so on. But it is the Committee's strong belief that the most powerful leverage for improving education lies with a skilled and high quality teaching force. Any effort applied to enhancing teaching will multiply the effects on student learning.

There are two significant and pragmatic considerations, which, in their own right, justify the focusing of governments' attentions on teachers. The first is that expenditure on teachers takes up the vast bulk of governments' expenditure on education, and will continue to do so. The second is that Australia is entering a phase when there will be a substantial change in the profile of the existing teacher cohort, and which will see a significant influx of new teachers. This provides an ideal opportunity for governments to enhance the educational effectiveness of schools through a revitalised, better trained and more esteemed teaching profession. In the Committee's view there is no comparable development in other areas – technological, curricular or organisational – which has the potential to produce such significant educational benefit.

In emphasising the role of teachers as agents of educational change, the Committee has received evidence that many teachers have identified relentless change as a key contributor to the sense of crisis infecting the profession. Teachers have the capacity to change, and indeed acknowledge the imperative for change. However, teachers need to be able to bring their professional judgement to bear upon what things require changing and what things need to be preserved. They should

play a key role in determining how change is to be most effectively implemented within the administrative, regulatory and policy frameworks which governments and education authorities prescribe. To do this, teachers need the opportunity to reflect on and evaluate current practices and the implications of introducing new ones.

To emphasise the role of teachers as agents of change therefore requires a simultaneous affirmation of their professional rights and their responsibilities in implementing that change. The imposition of a series of changes – across a raft of policy and curriculum areas, and largely by government fiat - is contrary to such a requirement and denies teachers the opportunity to be effective professionals. Governments should view the teaching profession as their most powerful change agent and strategic ally in adapting schools to the needs of students and in achieving the goals and standards set by governments for Australia's educational attainment.

It is important to set out briefly the dominant features of the context in which teaching is now carried out, so that we are clear about the social and historical conditions which apply to the schools and classrooms of Australia in the nineties.

With the average age of teachers at around 46 years, and with many of these having been in the profession for well over two decades, it is a truism to observe that these teachers have experienced massive changes in the social, cultural and vocational attributes of their students. The shift to an emphatically multicultural student population is but one of these. The shift from mainstream classes which excluded students with special needs to a more inclusive class profile is another. The increased diversity of students' domestic arrangements, and of their needs and aspirations at the post-compulsory level are two other discrete variables which teachers must now take more deliberately into account as they exercise their professional responsibilities.

At a broader level, schools and teaching have been markedly affected by the major changes in Australia's technological, employment and economic profiles, and by the associated changes in labour markets and skills requirements. The overall pace of living in Australia has increased dramatically, with people generally, including teachers, students and their parents, living much more harried and stressful lives. Over this period schools have become even less – if ever they were - a cloistered

domain. The Committee was told repeatedly that teachers are increasingly a first port of call for parents or young people seeking advice and guidance about a range of personal, domestic and welfare-related matters.

The school of today must address the needs of a culturally diverse, socially and economically differentiated cohort of students. To meet contemporary social and economic demands it is required to present more challenging content to be mastered at ever higher levels by a much greater proportion of students than has hitherto been the case. Because many of the basic organisational features of school have changed little over the years, the task of facilitating this more intensive learning, with closer personal support for students and the utilisation of new technologies, has fallen substantially to teachers.

In short, teaching in the 1990's is a profoundly more complex and professionally demanding activity than it was twenty years ago. The American National Commission on Teaching expresses this point in the following terms:

It is not just that educational demands are increasing but that the very nature of learning is changing. Students must do more than learn new facts or cover more chapters; they must learn to integrate and apply their knowledge in more complex ways to more difficult problems. This means that teachers must accomplish very different things that require them to work in new ways. Consequently the nature of their preparation and the settings in which they teach must change substantially as well.³

In the Committee's view, policy makers and education authorities have a strong sense of this need for a paradigm shift in the structure and operation of schools and school systems and to acknowledge the dramatic changes which have been wrought in teachers' experience of their profession. This possibly explains the blizzard of initiatives which has emerged from successive governments over the past two decades, all aimed at 'making schools better'. The Committee finds it very telling, however, that these reform initiatives were repeatedly cited in evidence as a debilitating factor in teachers' morale and an impediment to their

³ Report on the National Commission on Teaching and America's Future, *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, 1996, p13

efforts to improve student learning. Similarly telling is the comment by Max Angus, a senior, highly regarded Australian educator and bureaucrat closely involved in many such initiatives over that time. He writes in the Preface to his 1998 book on school reform:

The fact that most of the ideas failed to come to fruition was taken merely as a sign of the importance of trying harder.... Each [of four representative examples of reform described by the author] consumed the depleted reserves of energy and good will of thousands of teachers and officials. None succeeded in achieving their fundamental purpose. ⁴

The Committee believes that such evidence and comments raise serious questions about recent approaches to school reform. Combined with other evidence - such as that of an American study of 1,000 school districts which concluded that “every additional dollar spent on more highly qualified teachers netted greater improvements in student achievement than did any other use of school resources” (WMM p8) – there is a strong prima facie case that school reform is best approached by a focus on teachers and their professional standards.

In pursuing its Inquiry on the *Status of Teachers*, the attention of the Committee has necessarily turned to the issue of teaching as a profession. (A discussion of questions of status and professionalism appears in a separate chapter of this Report.) No consideration of this sort can avoid the fundamental question of professional standards. If, as the evidence indicates, teachers are both the key factors in student achievement and the core agents of educational change, the Committee considers that all who take on the role of teacher must demonstrate their ability to operate at the appropriate professional standards.

The Committee has strong views about how this requirement should be met. These views about standards and the mechanisms by which they are established, regulated and enforced are articulated in the parts of the Report which deal with the building blocks of professional standards – such as proper selection and initial training, effective licensing, thorough professional development, practice informed by research, and so on. It is necessary here, however, to make some general comments about the

⁴ Angus, M, *Rules for School Reform*, The Falmer Press, 1998 p ix

question of professional standards and some idiosyncrasies which attach to it because of teaching's distinctive relationship to the state.

Standards are essentially concerned with quality assurance and accountability. Quality assurance is generally understood as the process by which users (but also producers) of a service or product can be confident of its consistency, reliability, safety and to some extent its 'value for money'. Such assurances are normally predicated on certain key assumptions about the conditions under which the product or service will be used, and the nature of the users involved.

Accountability involves the requirement that one group (here a profession) provide an account or justification of its activities to another group (here the public) in return for the trust or privileges granted to the former by the latter. Accountability also normally involves the expectation that the accountable group be willing to accept advice or criticism from the public and to modify its practices in the light of that advice or criticism. How, and sometimes whether, such modifications are effected, usually remains the prerogative of the trusted (accountable) group. This prerogative tends to be carefully guarded and partly constitutes what it means to be 'professional'.

In both the quality assurance and accountability domains, some idiosyncrasies attach to teaching which make the discussion of these key elements of professional standards particularly interesting. Chief among these is the nature of the relationship between teachers and the public, which is quite different from that which normally applies between the public and professional groups such as lawyers or engineers.

For example, teaching is a profession comprising large numbers of practitioners. It deals very closely with people en masse over an extended period of time. Another distinguishing feature of the teaching profession is that governments have been the major employers of teachers. As a result of funding arrangements for the non-government sector, Australian governments also have relatively close ties to private schools and hence to the teachers within them. Not only have governments been the employers of teachers, they have been to a greater or lesser extent the regulators of teachers, the gatekeepers into the profession, and the monitors of their training. For teaching, and unlike other professions, governments have exercised the kind of influence that in other professions would fall to the profession itself.

Governments, representing the public interest have been largely both producers and users of the product/service called ‘teachers’/ ‘teaching’. Governments also significantly determine the conditions under which these products/services are used – that is, the conditions in schools. This makes the issue of quality assurance peculiarly problematic. Moreover, governments not only influence both the product (teachers) and the conditions under which their services are used (schools) but are responsible for paying for both of them! There are some parallels here with governments’ responsibilities for hospitals and doctors. However, with schools and teachers the scale of governments’ involvement is broader.

Somewhat similar considerations render the issue of accountability also problematic. In a strong sense governments are both the “accountable for” and the “accounted to” when it comes to the teaching profession. Add to this the electoral accountability of governments to the public where the public is also the major user of the teachers whom governments are responsible for producing and the picture becomes exceedingly complicated. In the Committee’s view, both governments and the teaching profession must be mutually responsible for the standards of Australian schooling. These responsibilities should be separated out in a way which helps to clarify which standards are more properly the province of which group, and where the lines of accountability should be drawn.

In the Committee’s view, governments’ core responsibilities in education should be described in terms of the quality of the resources and the working conditions in schools. (For ‘governments’ read also ‘education/employing authorities’.) These range from buildings and other physical infrastructure to the safety and sufficiency of the various human and technical support services which together make up the overall environment in which teaching and learning take place.

The Committee stresses governments’ clear responsibility to ensure that conditions in schools are commensurate with the requirements of good teaching practice. It is up to the profession, however, to specify the standards that should apply to teaching practice.

Government policy cannot provide an adequate basis for determining what teachers should know and be able to do any more than it does in other professions. It is very difficult for government

policy to penetrate practice, as it is for any occupation that must rely on the exercise of judgement and the adaptation of skill in ever-changing local situations.⁵

The Committee concurs with Ingvarson's view that it is very important to distinguish between the government's and the profession's areas of responsibility, and to be clear about the lines of accountability that apply. This means distinguishing between educational matters that are properly the province of government control and those matters that should be under the control of professional bodies.

The Committee regards the government's domain as embracing what Darling-Hammond⁶ calls *delivery standards* while the teachers' domain embraces *standards of professional practice*, a matter which will be explored in more detail shortly. By defining the boundaries, the Committee believes that both teachers and departmental officials will be helped to focus on the main game for the profession and for government respectively. It also believes that this distinction will assign lines of accountability, and construct the relationship between governments and the teaching profession in a way which promotes the interests of both.

The Committee appreciates that a lively tension arises when professionals aspire to the highest levels of practice and demand of governments the resources and conditions to achieve them. In the context of teaching, this would mean that the relevant delivery standards for schools should be determined with reference to professional teaching practice, just as the resources and conditions which apply in hospitals, say, should be at a standard commensurate with the requirements of professional medical practice. The best surgeon or physician in the world cannot perform to the required professional standard if the hospital does not provide the necessary environment in terms of cleanliness, equipment, ancillary staff and so on. Likewise, the best teacher in the world cannot perform properly in an inadequately resourced and inadequately staffed school.

⁵ Ingvarson, Lawrence, *Professional Credentials: A discussion paper*, Australian Science Teachers Association, October 1995, p23

⁶ Darling-Hammond, Linda, *Creating Standards of practice and delivery for learner-centred schools*, Stanford Law and Policy Review No. 4, 1992 pp37-52

On the other side of the coin, the highly resourced and well serviced school will not ensure quality education without teachers who can perform to the relevant professional standard. *In the Committee's view, these relevant professional standards are the province of the teaching profession itself, and should be established and upheld by the profession.*

The most desirable state of affairs for education would be one in which *delivery standards* (of conditions and resources, for which governments are responsible) are predicated upon *standards of professional practice* (for which teachers are responsible). The current economic facts of life are hardly likely to realise such a desirable state, but it is a principle which the Committee believes should inform the construction of the relationship between governments and the profession.

Historically, and because state governments have constitutionally had the responsibility for school education, it has been assumed that governments are directly responsible for all aspects of school quality including the maintenance of the professional standards of teachers. Registration of teachers by state governments is typically cited as a key quality control mechanism, and while the Committee endorses the need for registration or licensing arrangements, it believes that, by themselves, they are not adequate for assuring satisfactory teaching practice.

REGISTRATION OF TEACHERS - THE WAY FORWARD

Registration is the legal mechanism by which state authorities give permission to applicants to practice their profession within that state's jurisdiction. Arrangements for registration vary between jurisdictions. In the Committee's view, registration should provide the legal benchmark for employment of teachers, whether in the government or non-government sectors. This is because governments have an obligation to *all* students, regardless of their location, to ensure that they are being taught by a properly qualified teacher.

Registration standards must be developed with serious attention to standards of professional practice, and should have particular concern for the qualifications and competencies of those who are seeking to enter employment in the profession for the first time. For this reason, the Committee believes that registration should occur in two stages.

Provisional registration should rely on the possession, by the prospective entrant, of the relevant university qualifications and formal professional qualifications. Only those professional qualifications acquired through a nationally-accredited teacher training course would be acceptable for provisional registration purposes.

The appropriately qualified person would be permitted, on the strength of provisional registration, to teach in a school. Full registration would follow satisfactory assessment after the first year of teaching. Teachers would have to seek re-registration every few years, when proof of satisfactory performance and ongoing professional development would be the core criteria for renewal.

Registration serves an important purpose as gatekeeper for entry into employment in schools, and registration standards are a vital consideration. However, the Committee is of the view that current registration arrangements, which are generally limited and variable between jurisdictions, do not provide the necessary ongoing guarantees of standards of professional practice.

STANDARDS OF PROFESSIONAL TEACHING PRACTICE

When speaking of *standards of professional practice* there is a risk of being too glib by half. Long and heated debate invariably characterises attempts to define standards. The complexities, surprises and subtleties of teaching have often been cited in claims by some that it is simply not feasible to determine meaningful standards for it. While acknowledging the difficulties of determining clear statements of standards, the Committee insists that establishing such standards of professional teaching practice is possible, unavoidable and absolutely necessary.

Without standards, a professional body is defenceless. A demonstrated ability to articulate standards for high quality practice is an essential credential if a professional body wishes to be taken seriously by the public and policy makers. When placed on the table in forums with policy makers about reform and accountability, established professional standards are hard to ignore.⁷

⁷ Ingvarson, Lawrence, *Professional Credentials: A discussion paper*, Australian Science Teachers Association October 1995, p107

An abundance of high quality work in developing standards which has already been done by teachers, teacher associations and an array of researchers, academics, administrators and educational philosophers. Perspectives and insights are also available from serious attempts in other countries, both successful and unsuccessful, to devise and implement standards for teachers' knowledge, performance, ethical behaviour, professional development and so on.

It is not the Committee's role to prescribe standards for the Australian teaching profession nor will it pre-empt the profession's own determination of how, and at what pace, it can proceed to a new era of professional autonomy and self-regulation based on explicit and rigorously-maintained standards of professional practice. Nevertheless the Committee, on the basis of the evidence it has received, is in a position to propose some broad strategies for the teaching profession to become the fully credible, standards based and properly recognised profession that is required. The Committee is also of the view that it is in the interests of government, and indeed an obligation upon it, to assist the profession to achieve these goals.

The task remains to decide what strategy and structures will facilitate the development, exercise and control of standards by the teaching profession, while taking into account the historically close relationship between the profession and governments, and the latter's responsibility to provide for school systems which facilitate professional teaching practice.

It is an essential characteristic of standards of professional practice that they apply equally to practitioners wherever they are located, whatever the system or jurisdiction that pertains. The standards are determined by the profession itself – although the Committee acknowledges that those with a relevant interest in the provision of education, such as governments and education authorities, have a legitimate contribution to make to the development of those standards. The Committee sees such stakeholders as working alongside the teaching profession, reflecting and commenting upon the professional standards as they are developed and taking note of the implications for governments of their implementation.

In its earlier discussion of registration, the Committee emphasised the need for registration and re-registration of teachers to be linked closely

with professional standards of practice, and noted that the limited state-based registration mechanisms which currently exist are inadequate for assuring teacher quality. The discussion of standards of professional practice has emphasised that such standards must apply equally to all teachers, wherever they are located, and whether they work in the government or non-government sectors. In the Committee's view, certification of a teacher's professional competence, and the registration of that person as eligible for employment in schools, are not separable. Therefore, the optimum arrangement which will ensure teacher quality throughout Australia is one which is nationally based and which does not differentiate between responsibility for professional standards and responsibility for registration.

The Committee believes that any serious approach to standards requires the establishment of a national professional teaching standards and registration body with the responsibility, authority and resources to develop standards of professional practice, to direct their application, to accredit pre-service teacher training courses and professional development programs, and to certify the quality and advanced standing of individual teachers.

Such a national professional teaching standards and registration body must be constituted in a way which has credibility with teachers, governments and the general public. In particular, teachers must enjoy a strong sense of ownership of their national professional body, they must exercise a powerful influence over the deliberations and actions of the body, and they must take full responsibility, through the body, for both admission to and dismissal from the profession.

To date, the development and guardianship of the professional interests of teachers have been dispersed amongst an array of teacher organisations and subject associations. The teacher unions have played a major role in promoting the professionalism of teachers, while also being the key advocates for better pay and conditions for teachers. In proposing a national professional teaching standards and registration body, the Committee expects that the teacher unions, with their strong professional as well as industrial commitments, will make a major contribution.

The establishment of such a national body is no small undertaking. It will need the goodwill of governments, teacher unions, professional

subject associations and teacher training institutions. Its development must be properly resourced to enable extensive consultation and careful planning, and its establishment will require an adequate infrastructure. The Committee expects that governments will meet establishment costs but that recurrent costs will be met largely through teachers' registration fees. The Queensland example of registration arrangements suggests this is a reasonable expectation.

In providing the focus for developing professional teaching standards, the national body will need to draw upon the advice and expertise of the peak teacher organisations, and to call upon the services of the subject associations which presently exercise an important standards setting role in the various teaching disciplines. This is why it is crucial that the establishment of the national body is done in such a way as to win the confidence and engage the support of existing stakeholders. An overriding consideration will be to ensure the transparency of the whole process to teachers, without which 'grass roots' support will be denied.

The Committee sees the national professional teaching standards and registration body as having a strategic and coordinating role for a range of activities all building towards effective national standards. The implementation of these professional standards could be assured at the state level through appropriate boards acting on behalf of the national body.

As well as setting the standards for professional practice, the national body should be the prime mover in the assessment of teacher performance against these standards. Again, this is not a task which can be accomplished overnight, but the national body should be responsible for preparing detailed guidelines for teacher assessment, and for accrediting those who carry out the assessment. The assessment itself would be undertaken locally by a relevant nationally-accredited agency (whether university, subject association or purpose-designed assessment body) and the teacher would receive appropriate national certification. Such certification would provide benchmarks for teacher advancement in terms of both salary and professional status.

An important function for the national body would be to collaborate with university education faculties to accredit pre-service teacher training courses, and to set out the professional development framework within which, after initial training, teachers would be encouraged to

maintain their professional expertise. Such professional development could be linked to ongoing national certification and to renewal of a teacher's registration. This framework would have links to, but not be driven by, universities offering higher degree studies in education or a particular subject/discipline area. While the national body would address itself initially to professional standards for school teachers, there is no reason why its work could not be extended to embrace teaching in the VET sector and in universities.

The national body, in keeping with its role as the developer and monitor of standards of professional practice, would be responsible for dealing with allegations of professional incompetence. This would involve establishing a transparent process by which allegedly incompetent teachers would be investigated and assisted to bring their performance up to the required standard. In the event of the teachers' failing to do so, the national body would withdraw their professional privileges and deregister them.

There is an argument that the establishment of a national professional teaching standards and registration body should be initiated by teachers themselves. However, the Committee believes that there are a number of reasons why governments should contribute to its establishment. Education, and a quality school system, remain a fundamental responsibility of government. Governments are the major employers of teachers, and it is in the interests of governments that their employees are highly skilled and effective. It is a simple matter of equity that young people, regardless of where they reside, should enjoy the benefits of quality teaching. Given the mobility of many Australian families, it is important that there is consistency of teaching quality in all Australia's schools, government and non-government. In helping to establish a national professional teaching standards and registration body, governments would be able to demonstrate their commitment to appropriate quality assurance of teacher knowledge and skill across Australia's school systems.

At present, the professional standards of teachers are supported by teacher unions and subject associations, operating within various jurisdictions and serving a variety of professional and industrial purposes. In the Committee's view, the Commonwealth government is well placed to act as a catalyst in establishing a national teaching body which will provide a focus for all this professional activity. Such a body

will not usurp the roles of the existing groups, but rather serve as a reference point and a pivot around which they operate. The national body will seek coherence in the key aspects of professional self-determination such as pre-service training, induction and professional development, monitoring of professional standards and the assessment of practitioners against those standards. It will give these practical effect through the registration of teachers. The development and maintenance of such a register will be a core responsibility of the national body, and the eligibility for employment of all teachers, whether in the government or non-government sphere, will be determined by it.

- **The Committee RECOMMENDS that:**
- **the Commonwealth Government facilitate the development of a national professional teaching standards and registration body to have the responsibility, authority and resources to develop and maintain standards of professional practice. The national body should work closely with State governments and peak teaching organisations. The national body will:**
 - ◆ **establish standards of professional practice which take into account what teachers should be expected to know and be able to do in order to facilitate student learning across the key learning areas**
 - ◆ **certify levels of entry into the profession, criteria for re-registration and recognition of advanced standing in the profession**
 - ◆ **accredit programs of initial teacher training and establish the professional development framework for the maintenance of the professional expertise of teachers**
 - ◆ **make recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister on priorities for national professional development programs**
 - ◆ **consider and act on complaints of professional incompetence, and assist teachers to improve their skills**
 - ◆ **manage a register of teachers who meet and maintain professional standards and are thereby eligible for**

employment as teachers in both government and non-government sectors of education

- ◆ **promote the value of teaching in the general community.**
- **The national professional teaching standards and registration body should be empowered to delegate aspects of its authority, and such tasks as it sees fit, to appropriate agencies or teacher associations.**
- **The national body should cover all sections of the industry and teachers from all sections of education, including those in early childhood, government and non-government schools, vocational education and training, TAFE, adult and community education and, in time, universities.**
- **The national body should be funded by governments and by teachers' registration fees.**