

CHAPTER 5

THE OUTSIDE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT - FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS' MORALE, PROFESSIONALISM AND STATUS

Teachers do not operate in a vacuum. Like everybody else they are affected by developments in the broader political, social and economic environment of which they are a part. This Chapter examines the ways in which the status of teachers is affected by some of these broader societal influences.

Foremost among them is governments' seemingly reduced commitment to school education, as evidenced by government attacks on our schools and, in some cases at least, by declining real levels of funding to schools.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING TO SCHOOLS

Commonwealth Government funding to schools (both government and non-government) has increased steadily since the early 1970s both in per capita terms and as a proportion of total government funding. School education remains predominantly a State/Territory responsibility but the **proportion** of funding contributed by State and Territory governments has declined since the 1970s. **Per capita** funding by State and Territory governments has generally increased although there have been significant fluctuations, with government schools in Victoria in particular suffering significantly reduced expenditure over the period 1991-1992 to 1995-1996.¹

The 1997 *Report on Government Service Provision* states that:

Expenditure per student (in real terms) decreased by 0.7 per cent across Australia between 1992-93 and 1994-95. On a jurisdictional

1 For details see Submission no 267, vol 14, p 33 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

basis, the largest increase (4.0 per cent per annum) was in NSW, the largest decrease was in Victoria (8.9 per cent per annum).²

As shown in the following table, total expenditure on government schools has generally increased in the period 1988-89 to 1995-96. However, this increase has been barely sufficient to keep pace with the recurrent costs of schooling, which have been rising faster than prices within the general economy, in line with the increased demands placed upon schools. Indeed, total State government outlays actually fell by 1.6% over this period, while Commonwealth outlays rose.

2 Steering Committee for the Review of Commonwealth/State Service Provision. *Report on Government Service Provision*, vol 1, 1997, p 56

COMMONWEALTH AND STATE RECURRENT EDUCATION OUTLAYS PER STUDENT

Constant 1989-90 prices – Schools Recurrent cost Index)

Funding	1988-89	1989-90	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96	Increase: 1988-89 to 1995-96	Average Annual Increase
Government Schools:										
C'wealth Grants (\$)	315.5	339.6	351.0	385.5	396.0	329.1	335.5	329.0	4.3%	0.6%
C'wealth Joint Schools Program (\$)	15.8	17.8	18.3	23.0	23.8	79.4	81.1	82.3	420.8%	26.6%
<i>Total C'wealth Grants</i>	<i>331.3</i>	<i>357.5</i>	<i>369.3</i>	<i>408.5</i>	<i>419.7</i>	<i>408.5</i>	<i>416.6</i>	<i>411.3</i>	<i>24.1%</i>	<i>3.1%</i>
State Outlays (\$)	2,868.2	2,841.0	2,900.8	2,915.7	2,864.0	2,773.4	2,700.5	2,821.7	-1.6%	-0.2%
Total Outlays(\$)	3,199.5	2,198.5	3,270.1	3,324.2	3,283.8	3,181.9	3,117.1	3,232.9	1.0%	0.1%
Non-Government Schools:										
C'wealth Grants (\$)	1,264.9	1,319.7	1,319.8	1,365.5	1,389.3	1,463.5	1,520.6	1,522.0	20.3%	2.7%
State Outlays (\$)	654.8	749.8	718.4	810.5	815.9	745.0	787.3	807.1	23.3%	3.0%
Total Outlays	1,919.7	2,069.5	2,038.1	2,175.9	2,205.1	2,208.5	2,307.9	2,329.2	21.3%	2.8%
<i>Schools Recurrent Cost Index</i>	134.8	142.5	151.6	157.8	162.1	169.1	175.1	179.0		

Source: Mr Dennis James, Parliamentary Research Service, Canberra

During the same period (1988 -1989 to 1995-1996) both Commonwealth and State funding to private schools increased significantly. Commonwealth funding increased by 21.3% over the nine year period (compared with an increase of 1% to government schools) while total State government funding increased by 23.3%. The increase in funding to private schools exceeded their increase in enrolments (which rose from 27.3% in 1988 to 29% in 1995).³ This divergence is likely to be exacerbated by recent Federal Government changes such as the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment and the abolition of the New Schools Policy.

One response to governments' reduced relative financial contribution to school education has been greater reliance on private funding, which the Committee has estimated⁴ at approximately 5%-7% of non salary recurrent costs.

School funding has also been decreasing as a proportion of GDP. The National Commission of Audit reported in 1996 that:

Expenditure by all levels of government on schools rose from 2.8 per cent of GDP in 1972-73 to 3.6 per cent in 1983-84, but then declined to 2.8 per cent of GDP in 1993-94.

During this time, the Commonwealth's share of government spending on schools rose from 11 per cent in 1972-73 to 24 per cent in 1983-84 and 30 per cent in 1993-94, while the states' share declined from 89 per cent in 1972-73 to 76 per cent in 1983-84 and 70 per cent in 1993-94.⁵

3 ABS figures quoted in Simon Marginson. *Schools funding and the public-private problem: 1997 and after*. In *Unicorn*, vol 23, no 1, April 1997, p 21

4 In Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Not a level playground, the private and commercial funding of government schools*. June, 1997, p 30. This figure has since been supported by the Department of Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs in *Schools Funding: An issues paper on Commonwealth funding for schools arising from the Review of the Education Resources Index*, Canberra, October 1997, p 8

5 National Commission of Audit. *Report to the Commonwealth Government*, Canberra, June 1996

More recent figures indicate that expenditure on school education as a percentage of GDP has declined further since 1993-94. It was 2.7% in 1995-96.⁶

These figures are disputed by the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs⁷ which cites OECD data published in 1993 showing Australian direct public expenditure on school education was 3.6% of GDP. It is not clear however to which year the OECD figure relates. Given the long time lag in publication of many OECD statistics it is likely that the discrepancy can be accounted for by the fact that the figure of 3.6% used by the OECD refers to the position in the 1980s. Analysis by the Parliamentary Research Service indicates that total government funding on schools has not exceeded 3.0% at any time since 1990-1991, as indicated in the following table.

TOTAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS
(\$ million)

Type	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Current	10,047	10,888	11,248	11,576	11,790	12,448
Capital	734	703	704	597	676	707
Total	10,781	11,591	11,952	12,173	12,466	13,155

TOTAL GOVERNMENT FUNDING FOR SCHOOLS
(% of GDP)

Type	1990-91	1991-92	1992-93	1993-94	1994-95	1995-96
Current	2.65	2.81	2.78	2.69	2.58	2.54
Capital	0.19	0.18	0.17	0.14	0.15	0.14
Total	2.85	2.99	2.95	2.83	2.72	2.69

Source: Mr Dennis James, Parliamentary Research Service, Canberra, based on ABS Cat. No. 5512.0; ABS Cat. No. 5206.0

6 ABS. *Expenditure on Education Australia 1995-96*, Cat No 5510.0 p 8. This figure has been verified by the Parliamentary Research Service

7 Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs. *An issues paper on Commonwealth funding for schools arising from the Review of the Education Resources Index*, Canberra, October 1997, p 6

The Committee has recently considered the issue of what constitutes adequate funding for schools (or at least, adequate funding for schools to meet the eight Key Learning Areas).⁸ It reiterates here some key points from that report. The Commonwealth Government allocates per capita education funding to the states on the basis of movements in the average recurrent cost of government schools (ARCOS).⁹ The ARCOS simply averages, over the government school population, the expenditure by government on salaries and general operating expenditure. In the Committee's view, the major flaw of the ARCOS approach is that it is not linked in any way to targets, outcomes or standards. It simply represents a benchmark of expenditure based on historical circumstance. This is entirely inappropriate on a number of grounds. It is inconsistent with the thrust towards using an outcomes approach to inform funding decisions. It also ignores significant growth in retention rates, dramatic changes in curriculum, and major advances in technology, all of which impact profoundly on the resource needs of schools.

Likewise, State and Territory governments appropriate funds for education with no proper assessment of the actual needs of schools, and the cost implications of the many curricular, technological and policy changes which schools are expected to implement. The Committee considers that it is the responsibility of governments to fund schools to a standard commensurate with the expectations of the community and the demands of the expanding curriculum.

Governments need to establish the real cost of schooling and fund schools accordingly. In 1995 the Schools Council suggested that one means of addressing 'the issue of the declining resources base would be to establish a collaborative Schools Funding Committee to devise one funding formula for the allocation of Commonwealth and State resources to *all* Australian schools.

8 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee. *Not a level playground. The private and commercial funding of government schools*, 1997, pp 42-45

9 Schools Council. *Improving Commonwealth funding arrangements for government primary schools: Discussion paper*, NBEET, December 1994, p 10

...[The] Committee ... established under an appropriate national body ... would be asked to determine overall resource levels, service standards, allocative mechanisms, and the relative funding shares of the various partners...'¹⁰

The Committee endorses this proposal. It suggests that the education resource standards be linked to the eight key learning areas identified in the national goals of schooling. A basket of services approach for determining the level of resources needed to achieve these goals would provide a basis for funding.

The Committee notes with interest the work of the Victorian Government's education committee under Professor Brian Caldwell. Its June 1995 Interim Report on *The School Global Budget in Victoria* was subtitled 'Matching resources to student learning needs'. The Committee understands that a final report, which deals at length with the issue of how schools should be resourced, has been with the Victorian Minister for Education since late 1996. The Committee urges the Victorian Minister to publish the findings of the latest Caldwell report.

In the *Interim Report* of June 1995, Caldwell provided a final chapter dealing with 'Transitional arrangements and further work' which sought to lay the foundations for a comprehensive approach to establishing a link between resources allocated to schools and the stages of learning. This approach sought to address the question 'What should be the stages of learning that will form the basis for the allocation of resources in core funding for schools?'¹¹ The general thrust of the Caldwell proposals was to undertake consultation with a view to the phased implementation of per capita and per school funding levels based on the identification of three stages of schooling, namely, years K,4, years 5,8 and years 9,12. This exercise would also involve the assembling of some sense of the costs associated with different stages of schooling, which could then guide resource allocation.

The Senate Committee regards it as crucial that a sensible approach to resource allocation in schools be developed. The establishment of the

10 Schools Council. *Resources and Accountability: Commonwealth funding scenarios for government primary schools 1996-2000*, NBEET, Canberra, 1995, p 10

11 Caldwell, B, et al. *The School Global Budget in Victoria*, Interim Report, June 1995, Victorian Directorate of School Education, pp 46,49

eight key learning areas and the associated curriculum frameworks provides a solid background against which to develop measures of the costs associated with delivering that curriculum. Governments would then know what the costs are of providing a school education sufficient to cover the eight key learning areas and to meet the National Goals for Schooling. This data could then be used to develop methods of allocating resources to schools.

It is likely that the final report of the Caldwell Committee could provide some valuable guidance on these matters. Given the ongoing controversy about the involvement of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments in the funding of schools, and about the policy changes and levels of funding which the Commonwealth has introduced, it is timely to pursue a thorough investigation of school resourcing mechanisms. This requires a thorough examination of the actual costs of delivering a standard curriculum in our schools.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that:

- **governments fund public schools at a level sufficient to deliver the appropriate standard of education within the Eight Key Learning Areas, and commensurate with the National Goals of Schooling**
- **the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments jointly establish a Schools Education Costs Committee to undertake consultation and research with the aim of ascertaining the cost of delivering, at the various stages of schooling and in each of the Eight Key Learning Areas, an education which will meet the basic requirements of those Key Learning Areas and the National Goals of Schooling and**
- **on the basis of such data and information determine overall resource levels, allocative mechanisms and the relative funding shares of the various governments.**

Funding uncertainty and its failure to keep pace with costs affects every aspect of teachers' working lives. Together with excessive work load it is the single most important contributor to the declining morale and status of the profession.

It is important to stress here that teachers are but one group of professionals whose status and working lives are being adversely

affected by a declining political commitment to the provision of publicly funded services and a greater reliance upon more competitive, market oriented models of service delivery. Health and social workers are similarly affected, with services provided through the Home and Community Care Program, for example, placing a much greater focus on financial contributions by users.

The impact on teachers of uncertain and fluctuating funding and of governments' failure to match rapidly rising costs is discussed in the next Chapter, which looks at the effect on individual schools.

At the broadest level teachers expressed concern about inadequate funding because they saw it as a reflection of the low priority accorded to education in Australia. This, in turn, reflected adversely upon the status of the teaching profession.

It is our view - and it would be recognised by many within the industry as well - that, at the moment, there is not a sufficient proportion of GDP expended on education. It is our view that both the public and private sectors need to be properly resourced so that the kinds of expectations put on schools and on teachers can be fulfilled in a proper way.¹²

We say in our submission that the status of teachers is inextricably linked to the restoration of a properly resourced, high quality system of public education. We note that in Victoria the budget surplus in April of this year was \$802 million, yet Victoria spends less per head of population than any other state in Australia.¹³

Evidence to the Committee focussed in particular on governments' perceived lack of commitment to public education. Many witnesses referred in this context to the Federal Government's introduction of the Enrolment Benchmark Adjustment (EBA). The EBA transfers funds from the public sector to the private sector as the proportion of private sector enrolments increases (above 1996 levels).

12 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 672 (Independent Education Union)

13 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 701 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

Once the benchmark proportion is triggered then, for each extra student enrolled in a private school the Federal Government will deduct an average, nationally, of \$1,500¹⁴ from its grant to the relevant State. This is half the estimated national average cost of \$3,000 to educate a student in a government school. The balance of this sum, called the buffer, remains within the state system to meet infrastructure and other costs that are relatively impervious to small enrolment changes. One commentator has estimated¹⁵ that this will result in a \$200 million reduction in Federal Government funding for government schools over the next four years.

At the same time, abolition of the New Schools Policy will lift restrictions on eligibility for funding for non-government schools and is likely to result in the establishment of more small private schools which will receive subsidies from both Federal and State governments. In some areas the establishment of a private school may threaten the viability of an existing government school. In cases where government schools close as a result, there will be increasing pressure on parents to enrol their children in the private school, rather than require them to travel to the nearest government school, which might be a significant distance from home, especially in country areas.

It is too early to assess the impact of these measures but Committee witnesses were not the only ones to express misgivings about their consequences for public education.¹⁶ Ken Davidson, writing on the abolition of the New Schools Policy said:

At the national level, the Schools Minister, David Kemp, has had legislation passed that will encourage the exodus from the public school system by allowing every tinpot fundamentalist religious group to start schools with federal funding - funds withdrawn from the allocation to government schools.¹⁷

14 Figure supplied by Schools Division, Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, March 1998

15 Louise Watson. *The Federal Budget and Schools*. Paper presented at the Australian National University, 8 October 1996, p 3

16 The case for, and against, the EBA and abolition of the New Schools Policy is made in two chapters of *Unicorn*, vol 23, no 1, April 1997, pp 16-31

17 Ken Davidson. *False Economy*. In *Australian Educator*, autumn 1997, p 13

Professor Barry McGaw, of the Australian Council for Educational Research, commented on the EBA:

My concern is that this is a change of policy that on the face of it looks minor - we shift a bit of money when each student moves. But in aggregate it could be substantial to an extent that people just don't anticipate.

...From the point of view of individual choice, lowered barriers to entry and easier movement to private provision has few attractions. From the point of view of quality of Government schooling, there is a serious risk of residualisation.

Parents with a serious commitment to education will be under increased pressure to choose private provision. Those remaining in the public sector are likely to be those with fewer resources and those without the networks and capacities to work for the improvement of the public sector.¹⁸

Teachers providing evidence to the Committee raised similar concerns. These related both to the 70% of students currently enrolled in government schools and to the large majority of teachers now employed there.

The public v private debate is highly relevant to the matter of teacher status, and particularly the status of that large majority of teachers in the public school system. The debate places their schools and therefore their quality under fire and is a major vehicle for attacks on their professionalism, integrity and performance. It is also a major source of their concerns about the security of their careers. Finally, it threatens, in their eyes, the interests of children.¹⁹

Interestingly, teachers from both government and non-government schools were equally concerned by what they perceived as decreased government commitment to public education. Both groups recognised the need for schools of high quality, regardless of sector.

I hope that this report reflects some idealism in education. What we are all on about is this nation going forward through its youth. If we do not have strong government and non-government sectors, I do

18 Quoted in Luke Slattery. *The Squeeze on Schools*, Weekend Australian, 1 February 1997

19 Submission no 114, vol 4, p 133 (Tasmanian Primary Principals' Association)

not believe this nation can move forward. If we are not going to have idealism in education, where are we going to have it?²⁰

Both were also fearful that recent funding changes have the potential to reignite the state aid debate and, as a consequence, to divide teachers in government schools from those in non-government schools, to the detriment of the teaching profession as a whole.

Policy on the funding of schools must be developed in consultation with all the stakeholders. Few other issues in Australia have the capacity to divide the community in the way that the state aid debate has. As teachers in both sectors find themselves forced into taking a stance in the debate, what is lost is the united voice and sense of purpose of the teaching profession and proper intellectual debate about the key educational issues of the day. Teachers as professionals are diminished by the public/private schism.²¹

We are on the record as saying very clearly that we support a very strongly and properly resourced public system of education, and that we oppose both the removal of the new schools policy that was in the legislation prior to that and the enrolment benchmark adjustment. We do not believe that is an appropriate mechanism. We think it is pretty crude, and that is on the record.²²

I do not think you can separate government and non-government teachers. When the profession is hit, the profession is hit. The blow hits the corpus of everyone who calls themselves a teacher, and we call ourselves teachers too. It is something that is very painful.²³

20 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 997 (South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc)

21 Submission no 281, vol 16, p 10 (Independent Education Union)

22 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 681 (Independent Education Union of Australia)

23 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 1004 (South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc)

THE POLITICISATION OF EDUCATION

In the Committee's view it is essential that politicians, political parties and governments are involved in, and informed about, educational issues given the huge public resources devoted to it, its potential to influence all our economic and social futures and its direct impact upon the lives of so many of our citizens - as learners, as teachers or as otherwise involved in the educational endeavour.²⁴

Evidence provided to the Committee during its Inquiry suggests however that the nature of political involvement in education, at least with regard to its impact at the school level, can be narrowly focused, ill informed, short term and sometimes very damaging in its consequences. On the basis of the information provided to the Committee this is the case in both Federal and State/Territory jurisdictions and across the political spectrum. Perhaps this is an exaggeration of the position but it was certainly the view of **all** the teachers and teachers' representatives who provided evidence to the Committee on this issue.

Our experience has been that it [politicisation] is present at state level, it is present at federal level and it is present on both sides of politics and that the old educational priorities that were to do with a liberal humanist model, where there was a holistic education of the individual and a whole lot of things that were very commonly accepted, are not even spoken about now.²⁵

Overall, those surveyed [by Dinham and Scott] revealed... a great concern with what they saw as the growing politicisation of education in recent times and with the perceived situation that educational change was being driven by non-pedagogic concerns by people 'out of touch' with the realities of teaching.²⁶

Perhaps the greatest effect on teacher morale arises from the continuing politicisation of education. The present drive for

24 The size of the enterprise is illustrated by the fact that in 1996 there were 202,972 (FTE) teachers employed in Australian schools according to the ABS. *Schools Australia 1996*. Cat No 4221.0, p 5

25 *Transcript of evidence*, Perth, 17 September 1997, p 406 (Mount Lawley Senior High School, WA)

26 Submission no 66, vol 2, p 198 (NSW Teacher Education Council)

education to serve the needs of the economy strikes at the very heart of the professional teachers' ideals and the view of education and children's interests which stems from those ideals.²⁷

Most of the teachers who raised the issue of politicisation recognised the legitimacy of political debate on educational issues and supported it. But they strongly objected to the way in which they perceived politicians were treating them as scapegoats for all of society's failures, in much the same way as did the community more generally.

Schools have been used by federal governments over the last ten to fifteen years as a way of hiding unpalatably high unemployment figures for obviously political motives. Why should schools take the blame for a lack of political foresight and planning? Why should we form the main spearhead for containing this macroeconomic problem?²⁸

The ultimate irony, surely, is that teachers and schools are now being blamed for the unemployment situation. If that is not the ultimate - we are getting blamed for everything now. That is the present stance of some members of the present federal government.²⁹

Two recent incidents in particular were mentioned by many teachers as representing unjustified attacks upon the profession which seriously undermined their morale and contributed to a lowering of their status in the eyes of the community. The first of these was Dr David Kemp's attack upon literacy and numeracy levels in Australia, which he described as 'a national disgrace' and which he blamed on teachers' failure to devote sufficient time to teaching the basics and to their lack of skills and training. The Prime Minister blamed the results on 'faddish' teaching methods.

Clearly the literacy techniques for teaching reading and writing that have been fashionable over the last 20 years have not suited all students.

27 Submission no 114, vol 4, pp 145-146 (Tasmanian Primary Principals' Association)

28 Submission no 52, vol 2, p 98 (Mr Ewbank, ACT)

29 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 1004 (South Australian Independent Schools Board, Inc)

“We're beyond that phase now. I think many teachers in those early years perhaps haven't got the skills that they need and want to address the needs of students who have got particular problems.”³⁰

In response, teachers pointed, amongst other factors, to dwindling resources provided to education, to reduced support services and to increased demands upon the curriculum. They stressed the inappropriateness of Dr Kemp's proposed response to perceived poor levels of literacy - to withdraw funding from States and schools which failed to accept national testing or failed to meet the national benchmark for literacy.

Dr Kemp's statements appear to have been a major blow to teachers, as the following excerpts from the evidence indicate.

And when people like Kemp and Goode [sic] come out whipping teachers about literacy I want to spit, I have got to say, because they are the very people who deny the funds that support the programs and keep the programs running that catch these kids.³¹

If the health of Aborigines is judged to be poor, we do not blame the doctors; we blame the system and we look to the doctors to solve the problem. If the literacy levels of the population are lower than we want, we ought not to blame the teachers; we ought to look to the teachers to solve the problem. We ought to be encouraged to do that by the evidence from the [ABS] adult study that schools have been producing successively more literate generations.³²

In fact there is at least as much evidence to suggest that literacy levels are rising in Australia as there is to suggest otherwise. ABS data in particular shows that literacy levels are much lower in older generations than in younger ones in this country.³³ Several witnesses drew attention to this.

30 Interview with Jodie Brough. Reported in Sydney Morning Herald, 12 March 1997, p 3

31 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 9 October 1997, p 602 (Ms Taunt, Vic)

32 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 687 (Australian College of Education, ACT)

33 ABS. *Aspects of Literacy: Profiles and Perceptions, Australia 1996, 1997*

Current literacy standards are described as scandalous although when you look at the data, current literacy standards are better than they have ever been before.³⁴

A second incident was Senator Amanda Vanstone's comment to the American - Australian Chamber of Commerce that students in private schools were much more successful in obtaining jobs than were children in public schools.

“School leavers from state schools are 10 times more likely to end up on the dole queue compared to their private-school counterparts.... The bottom line is that for school leavers, private schools have beaten unemployment.”³⁵

Teachers interpreted this as an attack on public education and on teachers employed in it. Again, in their view the allegation was simplistic, misleading and quite unjustified as it took no account of the different student intakes into public and private schools and to the very wide range of factors which affect post school outcomes. In their view it was ideologically motivated and very damaging to public schools and their teachers. It was also damaging in the sense that it had the potential to create divisions between public and private school teachers.

... to politicise education in the way that happens in Australia is most unfortunate. As has been recently noted, comments on literacy by Dr Kemp in particular and comments about the employment prospects of state school students in comparison to private school students from Senator Vanstone have been most unfortunate. Teachers have felt those remarks deeply.³⁶

Senator Vanstone's most unfortunate recent comments - plus constant criticism of teachers and the way the media handles the issue of industrial unrest all add to this low perception [of teachers in the community].³⁷

34 *Transcript of evidence*, Canberra, 1 December 1997, p 1145 (Australian Council of State School Organisations)

35 As reported in Sun Herald, 10 August 1997, p 2

36 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 9 October 1997, p 608 (Ms Cesarec, Vic)

37 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 642 (Australian Secondary Principals' Association)

Senator Vanstone's comments were seen by teachers providing evidence to the Inquiry as but one aspect of an ideologically motivated assault on public education which contributed to low teacher morale and undermined the status of public school teachers in the eyes of the general community. The funding implications of increased support for private schools, at the expense of the public system, have been discussed earlier in this Chapter. The following excerpts are typical of views expressed to the Committee on the more general impact - on public schools and their teachers and parents - of the perceived attack upon public education.

There is no evidence of any State Government commitment to universal free public schooling despite the fact that the Education Act specifies that instruction shall be free. The evidence is that the Government has abandoned the role of public education advocacy. Government schools have been treated as a liability rather than an asset. The feeling amongst teachers in the state school system is that the Government's preference is for students to enrol in private education as this will reduce the State Government's budget commitment. This Government attitude has been one of the key factors affecting the morale of teachers.³⁸

... with recent changes in Federal funding to schools and to rules about establishing new private schools, the community is being encouraged to choose non-government schools for their students. Because of the lack of Government support for public schooling there are doubts in the minds of parents about the on-going ability of public schools to deliver quality programs.³⁹

Many teachers commented that education ministers - the very people who should be supporting them - were instead leading the charge against them.

The problem, basically, is in the attack that a number of governments have actually mounted on the teaching profession, who are described as the enemy. It is extraordinary that you find people who are responsible for the public's welfare denigrating more than one sector, but, in this particular instance, a sector which is devoted almost entirely to the public good. Somehow or other we have to turn that round - and I do believe, quite sincerely, that it is

38 Submission no 267, vol 14, p 37 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

39 Submission no 158, vol 6, 191 (Concerned teachers, Marryatville, SA)

the role of government to support the public sector in achieving social ends which are the responsibility of government. This has to change.⁴⁰

Public education needs a champion. The attitude of many state ministers for education is as if the CEO or spokesman of General Motors publicly castigated the quality of GM cars, blamed the workers and advocated the purchase of Fords. Such an action would be seen as quintessentially incompetent, and yet it is an everyday occurrence in the administration of schools, with disastrous consequences for schools and teachers.⁴¹

Australian politicians were compared unfavourably in this respect with some of their overseas counterparts.

What sort of society do we wish for our children? It is time to ask this question again here in Australia and of its politicians, given the poverty of discussion about anything other than the funding of Education in recent election manifestos, budgets and education forums. Compare this with the USA, where W Clinton ran for a second term on an Education platform, and the UK, where T Blair did the same.⁴²

Politicians reflect the wishes of the community. It has been strongly noticed by us that, in the recent elections in the United Kingdom and the United States, education was the number one priority. We fail to see that in our country, and that can only reflect the interest of the community in education.⁴³

I just note the way in which President Clinton has spoken out on behalf of teachers in the United States, and that the new Prime Minister of England has spoken out on behalf of teachers in Britain. Anything which is a public recognition of the tremendous work that teachers do, whether a publicity campaign or whatever, I think would be a positive step.⁴⁴

40 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 889 (Australian Council of Deans of Education)

41 Submission no 248, vol 12, p 169 (Mr Edmunds, ACT)

42 Submission no 236, vol 11, p 168 (Professor Cosgrove, NSW)

43 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 642 (Australian Secondary Principals' Association)

44 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 205 (Education Queensland)

One of the main problems to which teachers drew attention was the short term view of education espoused by politicians. They are geared to a three or four year election cycle and look at education 'reform' and change in that time frame. This has resulted in a large number of short term modifications to the curriculum and to school organisation which were disruptive to teachers and students alike and undermined good teaching practice, which requires longer time frames for change to be understood, adopted, evaluated and modified.

In [the] 80's Liberals were in government in Victoria and decided to implement compulsory physical education. We were sent suitable materials, etc. Then, an election was called and Labor won. Within a time frame of several months compulsory PE, and all the expensive written materials went into the bin!!⁴⁵

The life of parliamentary initiatives is four years, which is the life of a parliament, if it lasts that long. But the life of a primary child is seven years and the life of a secondary child is five to six. So I think we need to synchronise our activities a bit more and then there would be a sense that there is a legitimacy in what was happening between the parliament and schools.⁴⁶

Unlike many other professions, education is subject to sometimes major changes to policy as different political parties come to power at State and Federal level. This can result in significant changes to staffing quotas, resourcing etc and can negatively affect confidence in the long term prospects of the profession for those considering entry.⁴⁷

Teachers resent the ban on political comment on education issues which is in force in some States and Territories. They see it as undermining their professionalism to the extent that it prevents them publicly discussing an issue of major importance about which they have first hand knowledge - our schools - and thus deprives the community of a significant source of information about the impact of recent changes on the operation of schools.

45 Submission no 57, vol 2, p 133 (Ms Stanway, Vic)

46 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 1000 (South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc)

47 Submission no 181, vol 8, p 11 (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia)

... it is difficult to see how forbidding teachers to engage in public debate on government policy, as has been done in Victoria, improves the status of the profession. It certainly does little to raise public awareness of teaching as a profession.⁴⁸

Evidence exists of an increasing number of TAFE teachers feeling restricted in their right to speak openly about their area of expertise and issues of concern within the Institute. Many report fear that their contracts may well not be renewed if strong opinions are voiced.⁴⁹

Politicisation of the Bureaucracy

One aspect of the politicisation of education to which teachers from most jurisdictions drew attention was the politicisation of the bureaucracy. Experienced teachers in particular commented on the way in which relations between education departments and teachers had changed. Formerly seen as allies of teachers, who helped and supported them, departmental staff are now viewed as agents of government. This change was attributed by teachers to the change in employment conditions for departmental staff. Formerly permanent public servants, they are now employed on contract, with performance assessed against the achievement of government objectives.

Teachers perceived departmental staff as isolated from the business of teaching. They claimed staff did not understand what happened in schools and had different priorities from teachers.

The current setting of education is one of conflict between opposing attitudes - the bureaucratic and the professional. The bureaucrat is concerned with efficiency and statistical information to measure that efficiency. The professionals are concerned with the quality of the teaching and learning process and the needs of individual students. The bureaucrat concentrates on output and testing, the professional on input and teaching quality.... Each has a legitimate concern and it is simplistic to suggest that one is right and the other wrong. A balance needs to be achieved so that the real purpose of the enterprise of education is not lost.⁵⁰

48 Submission no 184, vol 8, p 36 (Ms Geeson, Vic)

49 Submission no 299, vol 18, p 147 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

50 Submission no 114, vol 4, p 126 (Tasmanian Primary Principals' Association)

... I want a bit of spine in the department. By that I mean I want my headmaster to back me. I want the director-general to back me. I want the director - general to get in and go the politicians and say, 'Listen, what you're doing is wrong.' I want the director to put his or her job on the line to make some sense.⁵¹

Some teachers also claimed that public servants put the short term political interests of ministers before the long term educational interests of schools and that, to this end, they were sometimes prepared to encourage negative media reporting.

In Queensland we are presently in the midst of such a period of [media] abuse. In this case I feel the negative media attention has been driven by the Education Department as part of its current Enterprise Bargaining campaign. Every day there seems to be bad press for teachers over some 'issue', often related to salaries and usually full of misinformation supplied by the Department.⁵²

Misinformation [is] often fed to the media - driven at present by the Education Department - the very people who should be supporting and promoting teachers.⁵³

Recent changes over the last few years have seen the Corporate Executive of EDWA (politicised by the use of limited tenure contracts and so called Work Place Agreements) act as nothing more than a "cat's paw" of the Education Minister. Their antics and tactics highlight their self serving interests rather than any interest in the teaching profession, student outcomes and community oriented schools.⁵⁴

The Committee considers some of the teachers' comments reveal a lack of appreciation of the conflicting pressures on bureaucrats and their requirement to serve the government of the day. It acknowledges however that, on the basis of the evidence it received, teachers feel alienated from education department staff and that, because of the constraints of their position, departments do not support them to the extent they could. Many teachers suggested that this was a relatively

51 *Transcript of evidence*, Perth, 17 September 1997, p 452 (Mr Weston, WA)

52 Submission no 70, vol 3, p 18 (Mr/Ms Cowan, Qld)

53 Submission no 166, vol 7, p 38 (Staff of Chapel Hill Primary School, Qld)

54 Submission no 34, vol 1 p 158 (Mr Macphail, WA)

new phenomenon and that in the past departments had been more helpful.

The Committee considers that education ministers could take a lead here in encouraging greater cooperation between education staff and teachers. In particular, they could ensure that communications with schools involved teachers and were not restricted to principals, as teachers advised was increasingly the case.

Conclusion

The attacks on teachers by politicians is perceived by teachers as a major contributor to declining morale and to the undermining of the status of the profession. They do not object to criticism where it is warranted but consider much recent 'teacher bashing' has been ill informed, even malicious, and ideologically motivated. This is one area in which politicians could make an immediate difference at very little financial cost.

To improve the status of teachers it will be necessary to undo the damage some politicians have done to the profession in recent years. Premier Kennett's assertion that teachers have "never done a day's work in their lives" is an example of a statement that not only demonstrates a striking ignorance of the reality of teaching, but which is hardly designed to enhance public perceptions of the profession.⁵⁵

Teachers are sick of being bashed around the head, particularly by politicians who highlight the negative things. When people are given a little bit of recognition, it does not go astray.⁵⁶

One positive ministerial initiative to enhance the status of teaching and teachers was drawn to the Committee's attention by witnesses from South Australia. This was the Education Minister's practice of sending out letters to schools congratulating them and their teachers on their successes in, for example, international competitions. The Committee commends it to the consideration of education ministers elsewhere as a

55 Submission no 184, vol 8, p 37 (Ms Geeson, Vic)

56 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 273 (Queensland Teachers' Union)

small but useful step towards righting the balance in public political statements about teachers and teaching.

THE IMPACT OF THE MEDIA

Media coverage of schools and teachers is generally regarded as negative, misleading and ill informed. It reinforces community stereotypes and prejudices rather than presenting a balanced view in which the strengths and weaknesses of schools and teachers are given due consideration and the complexity of the issues is acknowledged.

... the media ... by their constant focus on ills and in sensationalising the criticism of schools, exacerbate the expressed problems and obscure the real ones. Extreme and biased attitudes are evident in negative media portrayal. Often the attacks on teachers and schools have been inaccurate, highly selective in the material used, totally unwarranted and often motivated by the point of view of the writer/presenter or of the management of the newspaper or other media avenue.⁵⁷

Community perceptions of teachers and their schools are mixed. It is unfortunate that negative perceptions are discussed more readily than the positive. As well as this, the media generally reinforces the negative, the unfortunate, the disastrous and the reality is that the general community hungers for his type of news. In this way schools can quickly be labelled as "bad" or "undesirable".⁵⁸

Extreme and biased attitudes are frequently evident in negative media portrayal of teachers in public schools. In most cases, the attacks on teachers and schools in the public sector have been inaccurate, totally unwarranted and politically motivated.⁵⁹

A number of teachers pointed to governments' use of the media to denigrate teachers. This was particularly evident during industrial disputes, although not confined to them. In this situation it is easy for

57 Submission no 114, vol 4, p 128 (Tasmanian Primary Principals' Association)

58 Submission no 15, vol 1, p 64 (Ms Ratcliffe, Qld)

59 Submission no 263, vol 13, p 176 (Australian Education Union)

ministers to gain immediate media coverage but difficult for teachers to gain access to put their point of view.

For me personally, and for many of my colleagues, the attitude of the NT government towards teachers [during enterprise bargaining negotiations during 1995 and 1996] through their advertising campaign and the attitude of the senior officers of the Northern Territory Department of Education, for example the Secretary, has left a very bitter taste in our mouths. The impact of the lockouts on teachers was massive. The role the media played, particularly in editorials, was massive.⁶⁰

It is probably fair to say in the last 12 months in South Australia that teachers received a fair battering in the media during the dispute last year.⁶¹

In respect to the media, governments' lack of support for teachers was in marked contrast to the use of the media by other employers to support their employees.

Teachers often remark on the fact that other organisations, private and public, spend thousands of dollars on television and advertisements that promote the status of workers in those organisations; Telstra, Australia Post and Airlines are some examples. No government has ever made a similar commitment to schools or teachers.⁶²

Many teachers believe that recent media coverage of paedophilia in schools has been particularly irresponsible and sensational and very undermining of teachers. As well as damaging the careers of innocent teachers it leaves the impression in the general community that paedophilia in schools is more common than is in fact the case.

... the media tends to revel in the reporting of the failures of schools and teachers, rather than their achievements. Even in the reporting of alleged abuse by schools, the media quite willingly reports the name of the teacher. No consideration is given to the possibility that the allegations might have been false, advanced by some students

60 *Transcript of evidence*, Darwin, 14 October 1997, p 831 (Australian Education Union, NT)

61 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 1008 (Australian Education Union, SA Branch)

62 Submission no 71, vol 3, p 25 (State School Teachers' Union of WA)

with a grudge. ... Teachers that are subsequently acquitted are very rarely given the same press coverage as when there are allegations made against them. Consequently, the community comes to regard the teacher with suspicion, despite his/her innocence.⁶³

... in recent times teachers, as a group, have suffered because of the recent publicity concerning sexual abuses perpetrated on students of which many were unaware and did not condone. (It is worth noting here that AARE has no objection to the publication of findings concerning sexual abuse of children. Indeed, we support the exposure of this unjust and demeaning oppression of young people.) We simply draw attention here to the impact on the community's perception of the image and status of teachers, especially amongst those who have no first hand contact with schools and who are therefore reliant on media images to make their assessments. The impact on teachers' morale is obvious.⁶⁴

Teachers acknowledged their lack of expertise in dealing with the media and the need to use it more effectively if they were to counter the largely negative portrayal of teachers now being presented.

AISQ suggests that not enough has been done by teachers themselves to publicly promote their professional status. Negative perceptions of the quality of their work may well be reversed by credible, dignified and visionary advocacy from professional bodies such as the Australian College of Education and the various Principal's associations which have become peak bodies for consultation in recent years. As a teaching profession we need to begin to promote our work and our value to the community in a positive light.⁶⁵

Teachers face the problem of having media sensationalise bad news stories about them and their work while frequently neglecting the many good news stories that could, and should, be part of the daily press on teachers and teaching. And as Hargreaves (1997) pointed out, the profession has not been particularly skilled or prepared to take the initiative in developing a 'discourse of dignity' which they

63 Submission no 96, vol 3, p 198 (Brother Ivers, NSW)

64 Submission no 109, vol 4, p 66 (Australian Association for Research in Education)

65 Submission no 128, vol 5, p 77 (Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc)

promulgate through the media to combat the many voices engaged in the 'discourse of derision'.⁶⁶

I do not think that as a profession we sell ourselves and our profession very well. We fall into the trap of saying: 'we are not producing a product, a car or whatever, we are producing human beings et cetera.' I think we have got to focus in on what we are doing well and we need to communicate that well to the wider community. Then our credibility with the community will rise and our status will improve.⁶⁷

There are many positive achievements which should be brought to the community's attention. Were they better informed about such achievements, the community could form a more balanced judgement on the strengths and weaknesses of our schools and teachers.

We also think it is time that, instead of the rather negative publicity the teaching profession has had, we ought to stress some of the achievements of schooling over the last 20 to 30 years. There have been spectacular successes in terms of retention rates within schooling and educational outcomes for girls. We also believe - and this may be somewhat controversial but very current - that the available evidence indicates that there have been spectacular successes in the area of literacy as well.⁶⁸

Most of the evidence provided to the Committee on media issues favoured a more concerted effort to gain more balanced coverage of educational issues in general and of teachers in particular, although opinions differed on the best approach to adopt.

Some witnesses considered a local media campaign had the best chance of success. Local media is generally more positive than State or national media in portraying success stories from local schools and it was felt by some that this represented a sound basis on which to build.

Existing positive media initiatives also had the potential for wider adoption and dissemination. These include broader coverage of the

66 Submission no 109, vol 4, p 66 (Australian Association for Research in Education)

67 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 185 (Mr Sloman, Qld)

68 *Transcript of evidence*, Canberra, 1 December 1997, p 1145 (Australian Council of State School Organisations)

national Excellence in Teaching Awards and events associated with International Teachers Day (discussed in Chapter 4) as well as, for example, the national journalism award presented by the Australian Council of Deans to six journalists from around the country to acknowledge quality journalism in the field of education.

The Australian Council of Deans of Education ...[instituted this award] in the belief that, if we do something to hold up and acknowledge quality work, we will actually get greater support within the newspaper industry for wanting to respond to it in a more constructive way.

... The response from journalists themselves has been terrific to that. We get 50 to 80 applications a year for those awards.⁶⁹

Other witnesses felt a media campaign should be conducted at a national level, with government support.

I think it is absolutely imperative that there is a positive campaign about teachers and teaching that is taken forward by the government and by other senior leaders of industry and other areas. It is that sort of thing that reflects most strongly on morale.

...Images happen no matter whether you want them to or not. While we do not guide the image of teaching in a particular way, so that it becomes a positive and satisfying thing, we allow it to degenerate into the way it is at the moment. We need to take control with a concerted campaign to get out there and push as a group.⁷⁰

The Australian Teaching Council, before it was disbanded, certainly intended national advocacy to be a major part of its role. It envisaged this as encompassing education of the media and of the general community on what teachers actually do, as well as increasing their voice in national and local debates about teaching and learning.⁷¹

The Committee endorses the ATC's emphasis upon the need to inform the community and the media about what it is that teachers actually do.

69 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 887 (Australian Council of Deans of Education, Vic)

70 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 745 (Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia)

71 Australian Teaching Council. *What do teachers think?* Sydney, 1995, pp 16-17

Most are woefully ignorant of this - with views based on their own experiences of school more than thirty years ago. Greater understanding of what is involved is likely to lead to greater respect and appreciation for teachers' work. It may be more effective in enhancing status than merely restating the long hours worked by teachers and drawing attention to other unsatisfactory aspects of their working conditions.

Some witnesses suggested that a national campaign could be linked to the proposed MCEETYA national campaign designed to attract high quality entrants into the teaching profession. This issue is addressed in Chapter 7.

Some witnesses drew the Committee's attention to successful overseas media campaigns to improve the status of teachers and of public education and suggested that Australia might adopt a similar strategy, modified to meet Australian conditions.

I have just finished a consultancy in Hong Kong looking at schools there. In the latter stages before the handover, they ran an excellent campaign on billboards on behalf of teachers. You saw on billboards a teacher working with a kid who had an overdose of drugs. What was highlighted was the way the teacher was there, along with medical people, helping this kid on to the next stage of support.

You pick obvious things, that the public may not be aware of, beyond the good things that go on in classrooms and in playgrounds. You need to look at the profession in amongst the other professions and work in with the other professions and the community to get the job done. I do not think we have done that.⁷²

I have been in America and have seen some of the [television] ads, like the Macdonald's ads which have got sports people - they have all sorts of people. And it is not unsubtle; it is pretty direct in saying, 'Here are successful people. Why are you successful? I am successful because of my teacher.'⁷³

The Committee supports the call by a number of witnesses for a national media campaign aimed at raising the profile of the teaching profession.

72 *Transcript of evidence*, Sydney, 29 August 1997, p 89 (NSW Ministerial Advisory Council on the Quality of Teaching)

73 *Transcript of evidence*, Darwin, 14 October 1997, p 796 (Ms Stokes, NT)

While there was general support for such an approach the Committee also notes the reservations expressed by some witnesses. These relate to:

- the greater rewards likely to accrue from media campaigns at the local level
- the likely failure of a national media campaign conducted in the absence of complementary actions to enhance teacher status, such as positive political support
- the difficulty of conveying through the media the complex nature of teaching and the view, for example, that teachers' success should be measured according to the distance they bring each individual student during the course of a year, and not simply on the skills each student possesses at the end of that year
- the need to ensure that teachers are involved in all aspects of any national media campaign.

TEACHERS' CAREER STRUCTURE

Teachers consider some aspects of their current career structures inimical to an enhancement of their status and professionalism. Although career structures vary slightly from State to State they are broadly similar and will not generally be differentiated in the following discussion, which looks at salary levels, salary structures, feminisation and casualisation.

Teachers' Salaries

Salaries were briefly discussed in Chapter 3, which concluded that, while there has been a long term decline in both the relative starting salaries for teachers and in the relative salaries of established teachers (over the last twenty or so years) relativities have been broadly maintained during the 1990s. The decline in teachers' salaries relative to average weekly earnings in the period since 1974 is illustrated in Appendix 2.

The disadvantages suffered by teachers, relative to other professionals with similar qualifications, relate not so much to their starting salaries but to their compressed salary scale. This means that they reach the top of their salary scale after nine years teaching. In this respect the teaching profession compares unfavourably with many other professions which have both more extended salary scales and more opportunities for promotion 'at the coal face'. In terms of salary, a career in teaching becomes more unattractive the longer you remain in it. These issues are examined in the following section.

The Salary Structure

Upon initial appointment a teacher's salary is in the range \$25,116, in Western Australia, to \$31,409 in the NT (for three year trained teachers). It then rises in annual increments to a maximum ranging from \$42,570 in Tasmania (after 11 years teaching) to \$47,504 in the ACT (after 12 years teaching).⁷⁴

Teachers' starting salaries in 1996 averaged \$29,000 per annum. This was above the median starting salary for graduates, which was \$28,000 per annum. It was well above the starting salary of pharmacy graduates (\$21,000) but well below those of graduates in medicine and dentistry (\$40,000)⁷⁵

The Table below shows the comparative starting salaries for bachelor degree graduates aged under 25 in first full-time employment in 1996.

74 Figures supplied by Australian Education Union, Vic. Refers to the position at 1 January 1998. See Appendix 2 for further details

75 Figures are from Graduate Careers Council of Australia. *Graduate Starting Salaries, 1996*

Starting salaries for graduates under 25 years of age, 1996

	no. of graduates	median salary	rank in 1996
Dentistry	91	40.000	1
Medicine	416	40.000	1
Earth Sciences	147	35.000	3
Optometry	61	35.000	3
Engineering	1562	32.500	5
Computer Science	604	30.000	6
Mathematics	134	30.000	6
Veterinary Science	117	30.000	6
Physical Sciences	200	29.400	9
Education	1660	29.000	10
Social Work	139	28.900	11
Paramedical Studies	2419	27.500	12
Biological Sciences	723	27.400	13
Accounting	1445	27.000	14
Economics, Business	1771	27.000	14
Psychology	328	27.000	14
Law	521	26.500	17
Agricultural Science	227	26.000	18
Architecture and Building	272	26.000	18
Other Social Sciences	260	26.000	18
Humanities	921	25.000	21
Art and Design	230	24.000	22
Pharmacy	200	21.000	23

Source: *Graduate Starting Salaries, 1996*, p 10

Teachers reach the top of their salary range by the age of 30 (assuming they begin their training from school). They remain at this level until they retire unless they are promoted out of the classroom and into administration. In this important respect therefore the current salary structure acts as a disincentive for teachers to remain in the classroom. It promotes the view that managing schools is more important than teaching in them.

To "get on" in teaching, unlike most professions, means getting out of professional practice. The career structure does not place value on high quality teaching. It says, in effect, that teaching well is less important than administration or management. Teachers who want to specialise in teaching and to concentrate on improving their

practice are made to feel that they must forgo the idea of a career in teaching.⁷⁶

After reaching the top of the incremental pay scale, at about 30 years of age, most teachers who wish to remain in a teaching position stay on the same salary level until they retire. In short, teaching has been a flat, career -less occupation.⁷⁷

I think it is ludicrous that, to get reward and recognition in your career, you actually move out of teaching and become an administrator and you do less and less teaching as the years go by.⁷⁸

The declining financial rewards of teaching over time compared with those for selected other professions is illustrated in the following table, which looks at starting salaries and salaries after six years in the profession.

Occupation	1991 (\$pa)	1997(\$pa)	1991-7 (%)
APS Legal 1	27183	46300	70.3
APS Medical 1	39094	59009	50.9
Grad Engineer	26500	54500	105.7
Grad Accountant	31548	57804	83.2
Teacher	26718	40636	52.1

Source: AIRC, APESMA Cullen Egan & deil

76 Submission no 272, vol 14, p 168 (Prof Ingvarson, Vic)

77 L Ingvarson and R Chadbourne, *The Rise and Fall of the Advanced Skills Teacher in Australia*. In *Leading and Managing*, vol 2, no 1, 1996, p 49. See also L Ingvarson and R Chadbourne. *Reforming Teachers' Pay Systems: The Advanced Skills Teacher in Australia*. Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association, New York, April 1996. Reproduced in *Journal of Personnel Evaluation in Education*, 11: 7-30, 1997, pp 7-30

78 *Transcript of evidence*, Perth, 17 September 1997, p 389 (State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia)

The comparison shows that in terms of salary, teaching as a career becomes more unattractive the longer you stay in the profession.⁷⁹

Teachers' salaries compare unfavourably with the average salaries of other professionals, as illustrated in the following table.

Average Incomes for Professional Occupations 1994 30+ AGE GROUP	
	Aver. \$ p.a.
Judges/Magistrates	93226
MPs/Councillors	85718
Spec. Medical Practitioners	73882
General Managers	69138
Dentists	67251
General Practitioners	65175
Public Policy Managers	63175
Commissioned Officers	62724
Mining Engineers	61525
Data Processing Managers	60378
Geologists/Geophysics	58293
Physicists	58188
Personnel/IR Managers	58188
Other Specialist Managers	56415
University Teachers	55894
Finance Teachers	55790
Secondary School Teachers	46196
Primary School Teachers	38012

Source: Stinson, R. "What Jobs pay?"

*Note: A Comparison of salaries for various professions for people over 30 years of age based on 1994 ABS data.

When combined with other factors affecting teachers' satisfaction with their jobs (as detailed earlier in the Report) poor remuneration contributes to low retention rates.

Teachers reach a salary ceiling approximately 10 years into their career. This is the point at which many teachers, especially female teachers, leave the profession.

79 Submission no 281, vol 16, p 17 (Independent Education Union of Australia)

A number of measures have been suggested to overcome the disincentives to teachers remaining in the classroom. The most widely adopted of these was the concept of the Advanced Skills Teacher (AST). The AST was a new classification system introduced in most jurisdictions in the early 1990s. It was intended to provide a career path for high performing teachers who wanted to remain in the classroom. The scheme failed. This was mainly because, in effect if not in intention, it continued to reward teachers primarily for duties conducted out of the classroom rather than for teaching within it.

Other factors contributed to its failure. These related to confusion between industrial and professional issues surrounding its introduction, lack of rigorous standards in its application, poorly regarded merit promotion procedures and the very small financial rewards offered. As a consequence, a study by Dinham and Scott⁸⁰ concluded that levels of dissatisfaction were significantly higher among AST teachers than among all other teachers.

The Advanced Skill Teacher initiative, while it held great promise, has come to be seen as a failure. Opinions vary about the causes for this. Certainly the original plan to proceed with AST2 and AST3 has not eventuated, and AST1 has generally come to be regarded as another step on the incremental scale, although the take-up rate varies around the country. The AST scheme therefore has not achieved the goal of affirming and rewarding outstanding teachers and encouraging them to see a career path in the role of classroom teacher as highly skilled practitioner.⁸¹

Similar flaws are evident in the Professional Recognition Program (PRP) which forms part of the *Schools of the Future* initiative in Victoria. Again, the concept was sound. The PRP was intended to encourage good teachers to remain in the classroom by rewarding them for highly developed teaching skills. Despite its stated objectives the PRP has, in

80 Dr Steve Dinham and Dr Catherine Scott. *The Advanced Skills Teacher - a missed opportunity?* In Unicorn, vol 23, no 3, December 1997, pp 36-49 and Dr Steve Dinham and Dr Catherine Scott. *The Advanced Skills Teacher. "It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time."* Paper presented to the National Conference of the Australian Council for Educational Administration and the Australian College of Education, Perth, 29 September - 2 October 1996

81 Submission no 269, vol 14, pp 125-126 (National Catholic Education Commission, ACT)

practice, rewarded teachers for non teaching duties outside the classroom rather than for teaching duties within it, just like the AST. It has thus diverted teachers' time and energy into non-core tasks, especially administration.

Despite repeated promises, the Victorian system with which I am most familiar, has not been prepared to 'recognise good teachers'. Put simply, the last three career re-structures (all of which were heralded by claims of the need to recognise and reward good teachers,) have actually encouraged teachers to *leave the classroom*. Promotion to a higher step on the career ladder, and hence better salary, requires taking on additional duties and responsibilities. Almost inevitably these are accompanied by a time allowance - classes off in which to complete this extra duty. Obviously, this is completely contrary to the notion of keeping good, experienced teachers in the classroom.⁸²

Teachers reported [in a 1997 survey conducted by Ingvarson and Chadbourne] that recent career structure reforms such as the Professional Recognition Program in Victoria had exacerbated the problem because the only basis for progression after the first nine or ten years is to take on extra administrative work, with little time in which to do it, and with negative effects on the quality of their preparation and teaching. The career structure was, in effect, undermining the quality of teaching.⁸³

The need remains for a new career structure, with aims similar to those of the AST. Indeed the AST has not been abandoned everywhere. Queensland, for example, retains the AST 1 classification and is considering introducing an AST level 2 classification. In Western Australia, the Department is to establish 300 level 3 teaching positions in 1998, to reward excellent teachers and to encourage them to remain in the classroom.

Those teachers will stay in the classroom, they are going to receive a salary equivalent to what is at the moment a level 3 administrator, and there will be some release time, attached to the school where

82 Submission no 180, vol 7, p 197 (Mr Wise, Vic)

83 Submission no 273, vol 14, p 170 (Professor Ingvarson, Vic)

that teacher is located, provided for that teacher to mentor other teachers or to assist in the induction of a new teacher.⁸⁴

Two issues will need to be addressed if career structures in teaching are to be made sufficiently attractive to encourage high quality students into the profession and to retain excellent teachers within it. One relates to an overall increase in funding for teachers' salaries. This will be necessary to ensure that starting salaries remain equivalent to those for similarly qualified professionals and that salaries for experienced teachers reflect more closely their teaching experience and professional development.

The second issue is the need to re-examine the way in which financial rewards are offered in teaching so that they do indeed go to teachers in the classroom **for their teaching** and not just for additional, non teaching tasks. This need is recognised by teachers and education departments alike and it should be possible to develop a system which overcomes the flaws in earlier attempts to rectify the current unsatisfactory situation. Salary restructuring would also provide an opportunity to reward teachers for teaching- related tasks carried out in the classroom which at present are not acknowledged in any formal way, such as mentoring of trainee and beginning teachers. Its development could become a responsibility of the new national teaching body, the establishment of which is recommended in Chapter 2.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that the new national professional teaching standards and registration body establish clear levels of advanced professional certification reflecting teachers' experience, professional development and additional roles such as mentoring. Such certification might be helpful in determining levels of remuneration for teachers.

Efforts to reward good teachers should be assisted by our increased understanding of what good teachers actually **do** and what differentiates them from mediocre teachers. A different career structure, which rewards teaching excellence, will also require greater attention to defining and assessing teacher performance and greater accountability for the maintenance of agreed standards. The Committee's views on the

84 *Transcript of evidence*, Perth, 17 September 1997, p 389 (State School Teachers' Union of Western Australia)

issue of standards and accountability were spelled out at the beginning of this Report

In teaching, the essential tasks remain similar throughout a working life. In the Committee's view therefore it is essential that opportunities are available to reward teachers and to allow them time and space for reflection within the profession. Modification to the AST model represents one possible approach. Another, suggested by many teachers, was to allow teachers to forego 20% of their salaries over a four year period and then to have a fifth year away from school, possibly but not necessarily, undertaking some form of professional development. Such a scheme was introduced in New South Wales in 1997.

Other recommendations in this Report, especially those relating to the need to give teachers greater control over their work and to enable them to concentrate their energies on teaching would do much to reinforce those elements of the profession which teachers find most rewarding and would reduce those factors undermining their enthusiasm and, in many cases, persuading them into other careers.

There is also a case for separating negotiations on salaries from trade offs on terms and conditions. It was claimed by a number of witnesses that linking the two through enterprise bargaining has undermined teachers' status and done little to improve their relative salary position. (See Chapter 3)

Feminisation and the Career Structure

Teaching is a feminised profession, if one makes an assessment on the basis of the percentage of the teaching force which is female. In 1996 females constituted 64.4%⁸⁵ of the total teaching force in primary and secondary schools, a pattern consistent across government and non-government schools. A high proportion of female teachers is concentrated in primary schools (76.6% in 1996). In secondary schools the gender division is more balanced (52.6% of secondary school teachers were female in 1996). There are also significant imbalances

85 Figures in this section are from ABS, *Schools Australia 1996*, Cat No 4221.0

between subject areas at the secondary level. For example, in 1994 only 42% of secondary maths and science teachers were female.⁸⁶

The disparities are most marked for school support staff (such as teacher aides and assistants), 92% of whom were female in 1996. The National Board of Employment, Education and Training drew attention to their disadvantaged position in a 1994 Report.

School support officers are the most disadvantaged group in schools. They are predominantly women, are the least well-paid, have fewest career path options and have little access to training, inadequate articulation of the work they do, little recognition in the community and weak tenure. At the same time, they are an untapped resource for improving learning in schools.⁸⁷

Given their total numbers in the teaching force, female teachers are grossly under-represented in promotion positions. The following figures give an indication of the extent of the disparity:

- in Western Australia in 1993 there were 212 male principals of level 5 government primary schools (from a male teaching force of 2328) and 12 female principals (from a female teaching force of 7898)
- in Victoria in 1992 there were 668 male secondary school principals in government schools (from a male teaching force of 10,791) and 163 females (from a female teaching force of 11,172)
- in 1996, 88.5% of women in the secondary sector in New South Wales were in non promotional positions.⁸⁸

Various reasons were suggested to the Committee for the persistence of this gender segregation. Some of these related to systemic barriers. These included, for example, employers' reluctance to acknowledge in

86 Figure based on teacher participation in the Third International Mathematics and Science Study. Quoted in Submission no 276, vol 15, p 13 (Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs)

87 National Board of Employment, Education and Training. *Women in the Teaching Profession*. Commissioned Report No 32, 1994, p viii

88 Figures are from Submission no 278, vol 15, pp 81-83 (Association of Women Educators and Submission no 263, vol 13 pp 248-251 (Australian Education Union)

their employment arrangements at senior levels the disproportionate impact of family responsibilities on women.

Presently it is impossible for Principals of schools [in New South Wales] to gain approval for permanent part time work. As education is still very strongly the domain of women, who still bear the brunt of child care responsibilities, it is critical that permanent part time be introduced at the senior levels to provide the incentive for women to balance a family life with a senior leadership role.⁸⁹

Some witnesses⁹⁰ suggested that the movement to school based management, with educational leadership positions now requiring accounting and marketing skills, has also disadvantaged women who, to a greater extent than men lack training or interest in these subjects.

It has been suggested that professions in which women predominate are characterised by low salary and status⁹¹. This view was held by some witnesses in relation to teaching.

Teaching was once a respected profession. The demise of this status is paralleled by the feminisation of the teaching profession.⁹²

FOSCO is concerned also that the increasing feminisation of the teaching profession may be contributing to a loss of status for teachers. Although there is equal pay for men and women within the teaching profession the majority of classroom teachers are women. The difference is less pronounced at more senior levels and this inequity contributes to a view of teaching as "women's work" and less intrinsically valuable than professions where the gender balance is tilted the other way.⁹³

Others disputed the link between feminisation and status.

The use of the word 'feminisation' of the teaching profession can be misleading. Certainly the majority of workers in the system are female and this percentage is growing. Women however, are under-

89 Submission no 209, vol 10, p 7 (Sydney South West Primary Principals' Forum)

90 See, for example, Submission no 278, Association of Women Educators

91 *ibid*

92 Submission no 83, vol 3, p 112 (Ms Bullivant, ACT)

93 Submission no 262, vol 13, p 149 (NSW Federation of School Community Organisations)

represented in positions of management in schools and systems. The fact that women have always been under-represented in areas of senior management means that they have had little influence and control over policy directions, the informal and formal curriculum, the allocation of resources and the appointment and promotion of staff. With women making only very slow inroads into positions of senior management, and in some cases no movement, the education system remains in the control of men.⁹⁴

Some witnesses supported the recruitment of more male teachers to act as role models for boys.

I know from my experience of teaching for 25 years that young boys need young men around in the school to relate to.⁹⁵

... we now have a situation in society that we did not have 20 and 30 years ago, where we have all of these kids who live with Mum. They do not have any male role model in their life at all. That is perpetuated in the school. I think that is a concern, particularly amongst boys who are growing up with no role models. I think there needs to be some encouragement towards males taking up primary teaching, and junior primary teaching, otherwise it will have some fairly significant effects on society.⁹⁶

Others disagreed.

Men are not necessarily, because of their biological make-up, automatically good role models.⁹⁷

Having males in teaching does not necessarily ensure that we are teaching our boys to be the sorts of boys that we want them to be. We have to know what the aim of having men in teaching is and then ask how we will achieve that. Because we have men in teaching does not ensure that boys will come out a certain way. I would also question how much of an influence a male teacher could have on a

94 Submission no 278, vol 15, pp 67-68 (Association of Women Educators, ACT Branch)

95 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 225 (Association of Independent Schools of Queensland)

96 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, pp 929-930 (Mr Cook, SA)

97 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 269 (Queensland Teachers' Union)

child's life, considering there are role models throughout our society for children and most of them are male.⁹⁸

The Committee would be concerned if the supposed link between status and feminisation were used to support an argument for recruiting more males to the profession. It considers this is far too simplistic a solution to a very complex problem and further, that it might be interpreted as suggesting, implicitly if not explicitly, that women teachers are less valuable than their male colleagues.

In the Committee's view the profession should be attempting to attract the best and most suitable people into the profession, regardless of gender. If teachers mirror more accurately the society in which they operate - in terms of gender, class and ethnicity - so much the better. But teaching ability must remain the primary consideration.

Where particular barriers can be identified to the recruitment and retention of male teachers, for example fears of litigation, these should be addressed, to the extent that it is within employers' power to do so. In the same way, barriers to women's promotion within the profession should also be addressed.

Our focus should be on reestablishing and reasserting the value of education and of those who practice it, and of recognising and rewarding the skills good teachers bring to their task. A rise in status will follow. In this context, undue emphasis upon gender issues is, in the Committee's view, a diversion from the main game.

Casualisation and the Career Structure

Casualisation of the teaching profession is most marked in Victoria, especially in the TAFE sector where over 40% of teachers are now employed on a temporary or casual basis. (In 1995, 57% of the Victorian TAFE teaching service was employed on a permanent basis.⁹⁹) This figure is likely to have declined since that date.

98 *Transcript of evidence*, Canberra, 1 December 1997, p 1137 (Association of Women Educators, ACT Branch)

99 See OFTA Draft Selected TAFE Institute Performance Indicators for 1995

In the school sector also Victoria has the dubious distinction of leading the trend to casualisation, with predictable consequences for teacher morale. Indeed, with passage of the Public Sector Management Act in 1993, permanency was effectively abolished in the Victorian Teaching Service for all new teachers. But the move to casualisation has not been confined to Victoria. For example, in the ACT:

There has been a shift away from offering teachers permanent employment towards hiring on a one-to-three year contract system. Teachers employed on these terms have no job security and are becoming a pool of people within a school who can be expected to take on additional extra workloads to enhance their chances of being re-employed the following year. When such people keep working at this rate for several years and do not perceive that they have come any closer to gaining permanent employment, they become disillusioned with the system and with teaching itself... and leave teaching if another job becomes available.¹⁰⁰

The most damaging consequences of the move away from permanency of employment are on the most vulnerable teachers - those beginning in the profession.

A significant number of new teachers enter the profession in less than ideal circumstances. Many teachers begin with one day emergency teaching opportunities and some more fortunate have short-term positions (one month to one term). This is not a good introduction to their career and limits the impact these people could have in schools with their enthusiasm, skills and abilities.¹⁰¹

The IEU views with concern evidence of increasing casualisation in employment contracts in the non-government sector, particularly for young teachers. Whilst this trend is reflected in other occupations, the IEU believes that the costs it may save in terms of the denial of accrued benefits to employees, are outweighed by the lack of stability that the profession should engender in both students and teachers.¹⁰²

Increasing reliance on casual teaching staff is detrimental to the interests of both teachers and students. Both suffer because they cannot establish

100 Submission no 26, vol 1, p 116 (Ms Byrne, ACT)

101 Submission no 1, vol 1, p 5 (Professor Northfield, Monash University, Vic)

102 Submission no 281, vol 16, p 18 (Independent Education Union of Australia)

the relationships on which good teaching and learning depend. Frequent changes of teaching style and personality are disruptive for students, especially those of primary school age. For teachers, frequent changes of school increase work load as they may be thrown at short notice into subject areas with which they are unfamiliar. They add to stress as teachers are denied the opportunity to build up supportive networks with their colleagues. Increasingly, departments are employing casual teachers for the school year, terminating their appointments in December and re-employing them in February, thus saving salary costs but forcing teachers to find other temporary work.

The Committee heard evidence of young teachers in rural areas being unable to accept short term appointments (of a term or less) because they could not afford the costs associated with frequent transfer.

There are frequently advertisements in the state paper for contract teachers that run four and five weeks at a time. Teachers are not prepared to go out into the country. One of the contributing factors to this is that there is not a removals allowance. It is up to the individual to pay their relocation expenses. If you are a contract teacher working in four different locations across the country in one year, that can be a considerable expense. Many new graduates simply cannot afford to take up the short -term vacancies - it is not financially viable.¹⁰³

The Queensland and New South Wales education departments were both anxious to distance themselves from the trend to casualisation evident in other jurisdictions.

We are maintaining full-time permanent jobs at a higher rate than other states are doing. That is a commitment we have given. Indeed, we have a motion of the parliament in this state guaranteeing teachers' jobs.¹⁰⁴

103 *Transcript of evidence*, Adelaide, 16 October 1997, pp 1008-9 (Australian Education Union, SA Branch)

104 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 195 (Education Queensland)

In terms of employment practices we are not moving to casualisation of the teaching service.¹⁰⁵

While the Committee recognises the need for a proportion of teachers to be employed on a casual basis so that departments are able to respond flexibly to changing demands upon schools, for example through illness among permanent teachers, it can see no justification for the very high rates of casualisation now in force. Casualisation on this scale is a serious deterrent to attracting good students into the profession and to retaining them in it. The National Commission on Teaching & America's Future is just one of the authorities to point to the necessity of tenure for teachers, provided that they can demonstrate their competence. The National Commission dismisses as one of the major myths of teaching the suggestion that tenure is a means of protecting incompetent practitioners.¹⁰⁶

Nor can casualisation be justified on purely economic grounds. The financial savings from widespread casualisation are minor in comparison with the financial loss through large scale defections from the profession of trained teachers. This is quite apart from the non financial costs of lower student outcomes, from heavy reliance upon casual teachers. The Committee regards the move to casualisation as a serious threat to teachers' status and professionalism. It is particularly unjustifiable at a time of predicted increases in school enrolments and predicted decreases in teacher supply. It is contrary to our governments' stated commitment to improving the quality of teaching and to moves in countries like Britain and America to focus attention on education through investment in teachers.

The Committee RECOMMENDS a reversal of the trend to casualisation of the teaching force.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Commonwealth Government institute research on the level of casualisation necessary to provide employers with reasonable flexibility while safeguarding the interests of teachers.

105 *Transcript of evidence*, Sydney, 29 August 1997, p 81 (Department of Training and Education Coordination)

106 National Commission on Teaching & America's Future. *What Matters Most: Teaching for America's Future*, New York, 1996 p 55