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# **Government Senators' Report**

**by Senators Tierney, Ferris and Synon**

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# GOVERNMENT SENATORS' REPORT

BY

SENATORS TIERNEY, FERRIS AND SYNON

Government Senators accept many of the findings of the majority Report. They acknowledge the concerns expressed by teachers and others about the perceived decline in the status of teachers and the adverse effects of this decline upon the teaching profession, upon school education generally and, most importantly, upon students. They also recognise the enthusiasm and dedication of many teachers and the numerous examples of good teaching practice brought to the Committee's attention during its Inquiry.

Government Senators differ from other Committee members on the most effective means of addressing the problems identified during the Inquiry. In particular they believe that, as schools are primarily a State and Territory Government responsibility, it is inappropriate to make recommendations to the Commonwealth Government on future arrangements governing standards and registration. Such issues should be directed to individual State and Territory governments in the first instance and then to the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) for issues relating to national consistency and mutual recognition.

Government Senators therefore dissent from recommendation one of the majority report. They suggest it be replaced by the four recommendations which follow.

Government Senators are persuaded by the evidence received during the Inquiry that teacher registration arrangements operating in South Australia, and more especially in Queensland, have the potential to enhance the status and professionalism of teachers. They would like to encourage other jurisdictions to adopt similar approaches to teacher registration.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that State and Territory governments examine the possibility of the establishment of teacher registration boards with functions, membership and funding similar to those now operating through the Teacher Registration Board in Queensland.**

Government Senators are also persuaded of the desirability of establishing mutual recognition of teaching qualifications and registration between State registration boards. This will enable teachers to seek employment anywhere in the country and will assist employers by providing a wider pool of qualified teachers from which to select. Government Senators dissent from the majority report's conclusion that mutual recognition could be attained most effectively through imposition of a national teaching body. Rather, they would prefer that MCEETYA establish a framework for the mutual recognition of teacher qualifications and registration arrangements once these have been put in place by individual State and Territory jurisdictions.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA investigate the establishment of a framework for mutual recognition of teacher registration arrangements adopted by boards of teacher registration in each State and Territory.**

Government Senators acknowledge the desirability of nationally consistent standards for the teaching profession along the lines set out in recommendation one of the majority report. As noted however, it considers the standards should be developed by MCEETYA, working in conjunction with State and Territory governments, rather than by a new national body as recommended by the majority report.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA, working closely with State and Territory teacher registration bodies, examine the feasibility of establishing:**

- **nationally consistent 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**
- **certified levels of entry into the profession, criteria for re-registration and recognition of advanced standing in the profession**

- accreditation arrangements for initial teacher training and a professional development framework for the maintenance of the professional expertise of teachers
- a system for making recommendations to the Commonwealth Minister on priorities for national professional development programs
- mechanisms for acting on complaints of professional incompetence, and assisting teachers to improve their skills
- a national register of teachers certified by State and Territory registration boards as meeting and maintaining professional standards and thus eligible for employment as teachers in both government and non government schools.

The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA include among its responsibilities the promotion in the general community of the value of teaching.

On the specific question of accreditation arrangements for initial teacher education, Government Senators support the findings and recommendations of the *Report of the National Standards and Guidelines for Initial Teacher Education Project* prepared by the Australian Council of Deans of Education. The Report suggests that the National Standards and Guidelines be endorsed by MCEETYA and form the basis of external accreditation or approval of initial teacher education according to six principles, which it enunciates.

Government Senators support this approach. They consider that the Standards and Guidelines provide a formal framework for securing high quality teacher education in Australia and that they will consolidate the research base which increasingly is underpinning the development of course content and design of initial teacher education programs. If adopted the Standards and Guidelines will facilitate best practice in initial teacher education, achieve specified graduate outcomes and provide the necessary accountability to relevant stakeholders. They are consistent both with a recognition of the academic independence of universities and with the *National Competency Framework for Beginning Teaching*. They are also consistent with the recommendations of Government Senators set out above.

In the view of Government Senators the Standards and Guidelines provide a platform for promoting the status of teachers and for emphasising the centrality of quality teachers to quality education, and to our society more generally.

Government Senators dissent from recommendation two. Salary and career structures are a responsibility of State and Territory governments.

Government Senators dissent from recommendation three. The trend to casualisation is beyond the control of Commonwealth or State jurisdictions.

Government Senators dissent from recommendation four, as issues of casualisation are a responsibility of State governments. They have reworded this recommendation to reflect this fact.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that State and Territory governments institute research on the level of casualisation necessary to provide employers with reasonable flexibility while safeguarding the interests of teachers.**

Government Senators dissent from recommendation five.

On the issue of funding, Government Senators believe the sentiments expressed in the majority report's recommendation six are unrealistic and pay insufficient attention to the conflicting financial pressures on governments. They therefore agree only to the first part of recommendation six of the majority report, as follows.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND 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.**

Government Senators consider that State and Territory governments, as the major providers of school education, are the appropriate bodies to establish benchmarks for the funding of technology in schools. It has redrafted recommendation seven to reflect this view.

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA investigate the establishment of benchmarks for appropriate levels of funding for technology in schools.**

Government Senators dissent from recommendations eight and nine.

They have reformulated recommendation ten to reflect their view that MCEETYA is the appropriate body to direct a national recruitment campaign. This now reads:

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA develop a national recruitment campaign designed to attract high quality applicants to the teaching profession.**

Government Senators dissent from recommendations eleven, twelve and thirteen.

Government Senators support recommendation fourteen, provided it is clear that the necessary action be initiated by MCEETYA. It has reworded the majority report recommendation to reflect this sentiment. It now reads

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA consider establishment of a National Teacher Education Network comprising a consortium of innovative teacher education faculties and schools to build upon the work of the National Schools Network and the Innovative Links Project in modelling best practice in the development and delivery of initial and continuing teacher education.**

Government Senators support recommendation fifteen of the majority report, with modifications to ensure that this becomes a MCEETYA responsibility, as follows:

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA include among its responsibilities the development of a suggested structure for induction programs nationally and guidelines to assist schools and government and non government systems in implementing them.**

Government Senators dissent from recommendation sixteen of the majority report.

Government Senators support recommendation seventeen of the majority report, with appropriate modifications, as follows:

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND that MCEETYA include among its responsibilities the accreditation of professional development providers and courses.**

Government Senators support recommendation eighteen, so long as it is amended to clarify the fact that this is a State and Territory government matter. They have reworded this recommendation to reflect this fact, as follows:

**The Government Senators RECOMMEND, in line with their acknowledgment that teaching is a profession, that State and Territory governments ensure that teachers' participation in professional development be a prerequisite for their continued registration, or for re-registration.**

Government Senators support recommendation nineteen of the majority report, which reads as follows:

**The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Commonwealth Government require State and Territory governments, as part of their contribution to the National Report on Schooling, to include information on teacher supply and demand in government and non government schools, with detailed figures to be included in the Statistical Appendix to that document.**

Senator J Tierney  
Deputy Chair

Senator Judith Troeth

Senator Jeannie Ferris