

The Senate

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Education, Employment  
and Workplace Relations  
References Committee

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Teaching and learning – maximising our  
investment in Australian schools

May 2013

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# **PREFACE**

Maximising our investment in our schools is of paramount importance to all Australians: the quality of education each student receives has important consequences for the student, his or her family and, ultimately, the Australian economy.

Australia has maintained its level of performance against its international peers, yet the data reveals that the current education policies and funding models continue to fail our most disadvantaged students. In particular, students from a low socio-economic background, students with a disability, Indigenous students and students living in rural, remote and regional areas.

Many other factors also influence student achievement. Chief among these are parental engagement, parent and teacher expectations, effective behaviour management, teacher quality, ongoing professional learning, appropriate support for students with special needs and school autonomy.

The committee has approached this inquiry with the firm belief that each child, regardless of his or her background, is entitled to a quality education and appropriate support to reach his or her full potential. The outcomes may be different for different students, however, the quality of education must be excellent in all instances.

A number of submitters and witnesses advised the committee that there have been more than thirty inquiries into education in the past three decades. The inference to be drawn from this observation is that this report will inevitably join the pile of reports heavy with recommendations oft repeated. The committee acknowledges this concern. However, until we get it right education will remain a key interest for members of Parliament, governments, academics and the Australian community.

While this report builds upon the conclusions reached by previous inquiries, the following pages also provide fresh perspectives on how to improve teaching and learning in our schools.





# **RECOMMENDATIONS**

## **Recommendation 1**

**3.17 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Commonwealth Government, provides teachers with training on how to use and interpret evaluative data.**

## **Recommendation 2**

**3.39 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Close the Gap program and identify further measures to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, particularly for Indigenous students in very remote areas.**

## **Recommendation 3**

**3.63 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood Development and the Catholic and Independent school sectors work to ensure continued investment in programs with proven effectiveness that assist parents and guardians to support the education of their child, beginning in early childhood.**

## **Recommendation 4**

**3.74 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, urgently work to identify measures to close the gap between educational outcomes for rural and remote students and metropolitan students. Funding measures may be required to ensure that each student is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.**

## **Recommendation 5**

**3.75 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors review the current incentives arrangements for hard-to-staff positions in metropolitan, regional, remote and rural schools, to ensure that these are appropriate.**

## **Recommendation 6**

**3.94 The committee recommends that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership ensure that university teaching programs provide appropriate practical and theoretical training to pre-service teachers in effective behavioural management.**

## **Recommendation 7**

**3.95 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school**

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sectors, consider initiatives to better support teachers and principals effectively manage behaviour in Australian schools.

#### **Recommendation 8**

**3.103** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work with the Catholic and Independent School sectors to further develop programs to ensure that parents and guardians have the highest expectations for each child, regardless of socio economic status.

#### **Recommendation 9**

**3.113** The committee recommends that Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors to ensure that adequate funding for support is provided to all students with a disability, to ensure that each student with a disability is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their potential in a safe and appropriate environment.

#### **Recommendation 10**

**3.119** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood conduct research into whether public schools participating in school autonomy programs have improved student results.

#### **Recommendation 11**

**4.69** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education consider the research conducted by Incept Labs and the conclusion that multiple methods should be used to select entrants to teaching programs. These methods may include: academic ability; psychometric testing; behavioural based interviews; role-plays; teaching practice.

#### **Recommendation 12**

**4.70** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education work to ensure that adequate funding is directed to schools to provide quality mentoring and support programs for pre-service teachers during practicum.

#### **Recommendation 13**

**4.71** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work to ensure that demand for quality teachers is high and consider:

- restricting the number of places available to pre-service teachers for practical training;
- capping the number of graduates who can register as teachers (any cap imposed should be reviewed each year and reflect the expected demand for teachers in particular disciplines); and

- 
- introducing a registration exam to be used in conjunction with the current registration standards to assess graduate suitability.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**4.72** The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency conduct an audit of literacy teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers have an appropriate level of literacy and are equipped to teach the English language. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

#### **Recommendation 15**

**4.73** The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, in consultation with the Australian Mathematic Sciences Institute, conduct an audit of mathematics teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers are equipped to teach mathematics and numeracy to students. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

#### **Recommendation 16**

**4.74** The committee recommends that the Australian Council of Deans of Education liaises with the relevant Deans of Sciences and Mathematics to ensure that students in those disciplines receive timely and accurate advice about the pre-requisites required to become secondary mathematics and/or science teachers.

#### **Recommendation 17**

**5.22** The committee recommends that state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider rewarding Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers with meaningful remuneration and an improved salary structure under the new national certification process (consistent with initiatives already undertaken in some jurisdictions).

#### **Recommendation 18**

**5.65** The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood commission research into the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.

#### **Recommendation 19**

**5.66** The committee recommends the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, in consultation with the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, develop guidelines on how best to support first year teachers.

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**Recommendation 20**

**5.107** The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider ways to support in-house professional learning and development (including mentoring), with an associated reduction in teaching loads.

**Recommendation 21**

**5.108** The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations investigates the potential use of online tools for delivery of professional learning for teachers.

**Recommendation 22**

**5.109** The committee recommends that the state and territory governments consider creating pathways (for example scholarships) for teachers teaching 'out of field' in mathematics and science to become qualified in these disciplines. The Commonwealth Government should also consider increasing the number of postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places in these disciplines. As an interim solution, the committee recommends that programs which assist teachers teaching 'out of field' be expanded.

**Recommendation 23**

**5.110** The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations commission a study in 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives being undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.

# CHAPTER 1

## Introduction

### Referral

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

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

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

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

### Conduct of the inquiry

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

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

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

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

### **Other inquiries**

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

### **Structure of the report**

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

1.8 Chapter 2 provides a background to education in Australia.

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

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

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

1.12 Chapter 6 provides a conclusion.

### **Note on references**

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

### **Acknowledgements**

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

## CHAPTER 2

### Education in Australia: a background

2.1 This chapter provides a broad overview of education in Australian schools. The respective role of the Commonwealth and the states is outlined, along with school funding and recent policy announcements.

#### **The role of the Commonwealth and the states and territories**

2.2 The Constitution provides that school education is primarily the responsibility of the states and territories. The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations described the division of responsibilities in the following terms:

While the Australian Government plays a leadership role in driving forward national educational reforms and provides funding for areas of national educational importance, school education in Australia is principally the constitutional responsibility of the states and territories who are responsible for the delivery and management of schooling.<sup>1</sup>

2.3 Because the responsibility for schooling rests with the states and the territories, the success of initiatives by the Australian Government are dependent upon the cooperation and participation of state and territory governments, independent schools and Catholic schools.

2.4 In recent decades the Australian Government has become increasingly involved in education policy development and has worked with states and territories through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) to introduce reforms. The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) was launched by the COAG in January 2012 and provides a forum for strategic policy discussions on a national level.<sup>2</sup>

#### ***National initiatives***

2.5 In December 2008, Education Ministers from the states, territories and the Commonwealth released the Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians. The twenty page declaration sets the direction for Australian schooling for the next ten years.<sup>3</sup>

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1 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 28*, p. 4. See also, *Australian Constitution 1901*.

2 The SCSEEC supersedes the Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

3 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008.

2.6 The two goals identified are:

Goal 1:

Australian schooling promotes equity and excellence

Goal 2:

All young Australians become:

- Successful learners
- Confident and creative individuals
- Active and informed citizens.<sup>4</sup>

2.7 The Australian governments committed to 'working with all school sectors and the broader community to achieve the educational goals'<sup>5</sup>, noting that responsibility for achieving these goals does not rest solely on one group:

Achieving these educational goals is the collective responsibility of governments, school sectors and individual schools as well as parents and carers, young Australians, families, other education and training providers, business and the broader community.<sup>6</sup>

2.8 The Ministers released a Four Year Plan as a companion to the Melbourne Declaration. This plan sets out the strategies and initiatives that Australian governments agreed to implement to achieve the goals. Recent reforms to improve teaching and learning at a national level, with state and territory support, include:

- The National Professional Standards for Teachers;
- National system of accreditation of initial teacher education programs;
- Nationally consistent approach to teacher registration;
- National approach to the Certification of Highly Accomplished and Lead Teachers;
- Professional development needs for principals and school leaders;
- National Professional Standards for Principals; and

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4 MCEETYA, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p. 7.

5 MCEETYA, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p. 10.

6 MCEETYA, *Melbourne Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians*, December 2008, p. 7.



- The Australian Curriculum.<sup>7</sup>

2.9 To promote the reforms listed above and in cooperation with COAG, the Australian Government established the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL). The key purpose of AITSL is to 'provide national leadership for Commonwealth, state and territory governments in promoting excellence in the profession of teaching and school leadership'.<sup>8</sup>

2.10 The Australian Government has also created the Australian Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) to 'oversee the development of an Australian schools' curriculum' and to develop and administer the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), and to assess this data.<sup>9</sup>

2.11 In September 2012 the Prime Minister announced the National Plan for School Improvement. The Department describes this plan as focusing on 'those things that make the most difference in improving student outcomes, including ensuring that the best teachers are in every school'.<sup>10</sup> The Australian Government has discussed the plan with state and territory governments, Catholic Schools, and independent schools with a view to settling on an agreement on the terms of the plan by July 2013.<sup>11</sup> The Australian Government has also made a number of announcements recently related to school funding, which are discussed below.

### ***State and territory initiatives***

2.12 Concurrently with federal initiatives state and territory governments have conducted inquiries and announced policy changes to education policy. A large number of announcements have been made in the past 12 months, as the following examples illustrate.

2.13 On 21 June 2012 the Victorian Government launched its *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession* outlining a 10 year vision for the teaching profession aimed at improving student performance.<sup>12</sup> The discussion paper includes suggestions that the worst 5 per cent of teachers be sacked, higher pay for teachers in demand areas such as mathematics and science and sourcing principals

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7 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 28*, p. 3.

8 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 3.

9 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 28*, p. 4.

10 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 28*, pp 3–4.

11 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Submission 28*, p. 4. At the time of printing, NSW had agreed to the proposal, however the federal government was still negotiating with other states and territories (the Prime Minister had extended the due date to the end of July 2013).

12 Available online:  
<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/Pages/teachingprofession.aspx?Redirect=1>  
 (accessed March 2013).

outside of the teaching profession.<sup>13</sup> The paper also calls for rigorous performance assessments and higher admission standards for prospective teachers. Submissions on the discussion paper were due by 1 September 2012.<sup>14</sup> The Victorian Government recently announced an in-principle agreement with staff in Victorian Government schools in relation to their Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, which included a number of reforms. These reforms included annual salary increases, greater flexibility for principals in managing resources and performance-based incentives and salary level progression. These reforms are still going through formal approval processes, including agreement by staff.<sup>15</sup>

2.14 In early March 2013 the New South Wales government announced a number of initiatives to restrict the number of year 12 graduates who can access teaching courses. Students would need to achieve more than 80 in three HSC subjects (including English), the number of students who can access practical training would be capped, and prospective teachers would need to undertake literacy, numeracy and aptitude for teaching tests.<sup>16</sup> The Victorian government made a similar announcement. Both announcements were quickly followed by announcements by the federal government to raise teacher entry standards, improve practicum, review courses, and the establishment mandatory literacy and numeracy tests for all teaching students prior to graduation.<sup>17</sup>

2.15 The Queensland Government has undertaken a number of measures through the *Review of Teacher Education and School Induction Project*.<sup>18</sup> In response to the *Review of Teacher Education and School Induction*, by Professor Brian Caldwell and Mr David Sutton, the government established a Teacher Education Implementation Taskforce. The taskforce was established to report on 41 of the 65 recommendations made in the review (the other 24 were implemented immediately) which it completed in January 2012. The taskforce's report is still under consideration by the

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13 Jewel Topsfield, 'Baillieu plan to get rid of bad teachers', *The Age*, 21 June 2012.

14 Victorian Government, *New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession* Discussion Paper, June 2012, pp 7–8, <http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/departments/Pages/teachingprofession.aspx?Redirect=1> (accessed 5 April 2013).

15 The Hon. Dr Denis Napthine MP, Premier, and The Hon. Peter Hall MLC, Minister for Higher Education and Skills; Minister for the Teaching Profession, 'Coalition Government finalises teachers' EBA', Joint Media Release, 17 April 2013.

16 Anna Patty, 'Teaching bar raised: 70% of applicants would be rejected', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 2013.

17 The Hon. Chris Bowen MP, Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research and The Hon. Peter Garrett MP, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth, 'Higher Standards for Teacher Training Courses', Joint Media Release, 11 March 2013.

18 Queensland Government *Review of Teacher Education and School Induction Project* webpage, <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/higher-education/services/projects/review.html> (accessed 5 April 2013).

government.<sup>19</sup> The Queensland Government recently released *Great teachers = Great results: A direct action plan for Queensland schools*. The policy commits an additional \$535 million to education over four years, commencing in 2015. Released in the context of Gonski model funding negotiations, the extra funding is dependent on the Commonwealth Government committing to 'ongoing funding for Queensland schools at current rates (including funding currently provided under relevant National Partnership Agreements) with appropriate indexation'.<sup>20</sup>

2.16 'Great Teachers = Great results' aims to increasing the standard of teachers and school leaders and provide schools with greater autonomy. Key initiatives include:

- Annual performance reviews for teachers
- An accredited mentoring program for beginning teachers
- The creation of 300 'Master Teacher' positions to support poor performing schools, employed on three year contracts.
- 200 scholarships for 'high performing' teachers to undertake a Masters degree.
- Increasing school autonomy by expanding the 'Independent Public Schools' initiative.

2.17 The policy does not detail what mechanisms or standards will be used to evaluate teacher performance. The Master Teacher positions, while an innovative way of supporting poor performing schools, are temporary (based on a three year contract) rather than permanent.

2.18 The initiatives listed above are a brief snapshot of the recent policy announcements rather than an exhaustive list.

## School funding

2.19 Although state and territory governments are constitutionally responsible for education, the Commonwealth is the major provider of public funds for non-government schools while state and territory governments regulate and primarily fund public schools. The Commonwealth government achieves its educational policies by providing conditional funding to the states and territories. Funding on both levels of

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19 Queensland Government *Teacher Education Implementation Taskforce* webpage, <http://education.qld.gov.au/students/higher-education/services/projects/review.html> (accessed 5 April 2013).

20 Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, 'Great Teachers = Great results: A direct action plan for Queensland schools Factsheet', April 2013.

government is currently coordinated through the Council of Australian Governments.<sup>21</sup>

2.20 The Commonwealth substantively engaged school funding in 1964 and subsequently established recurrent per student grants with an overall objective of supporting minimum acceptable standards in all schools. In 2009 the Commonwealth changed its funding arrangements with the majority of funds now being administered under the National Schools Specific Purpose Payment (NSSPPs). NSSPPs exist in two streams for government and non-government schools respectively. State and territory government authorities have discretion on how monies from NSSPPs should be spent – but on the basis of agreed outcomes.<sup>22</sup>

### ***Government school payments***

2.21 The NSSPP for government schools funds a base agreed amount of 10 per cent of the Average Government School Recurrent Costs (AGSRC) per student in recurrent funding.<sup>23</sup> This funding is indexed each year based on the growth in full-time equivalent enrolments and increases in primary and secondary amounts of the Average Government School Recurrent Costs standard.

### ***Non-government school payments***

2.22 While maintaining programs that existed prior to 2009, NSSPPs for non-government schools also introduced additional recurrent funding measures for Indigenous students and remote schools.<sup>24</sup> It encompasses funding for general recurrent grants which are based on a calculated measure of need according to a socioeconomic score (SES).<sup>25</sup>

2.23 Although funding is calculated on a needs basis, due to a commitment by the Howard Government in 2001 that no school would be financially worse off, schools

21 Marilyn Harrington, *Australian Government funding for schools explained*, Background note from the Parliamentary Library, Department of Parliamentary Services, Updated 8 March 2013, p. 2, [http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=date-eFirst;page=0;query=MajorSubject\\_Expand%3AEducation%20Dataset%3Abillsdgs,prspub;rec=7;resCount=Default](http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;adv=yes;orderBy=date-eFirst;page=0;query=MajorSubject_Expand%3AEducation%20Dataset%3Abillsdgs,prspub;rec=7;resCount=Default) (accessed 23 April 2013).

22 The COAG Reform Council 'Reports: Education.' <http://www.coagreformcouncil.gov.au/reports/education.cfm> (accessed 9 April 2013).

23 Established on the basis of the COAG *Intergovernmental Agreement on Federal Financial Relations*, 2001, [http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/inter\\_agreement\\_and\\_schedules/IGA\\_federal\\_financial\\_relations\\_aug11.pdf](http://www.federalfinancialrelations.gov.au/content/inter_agreement_and_schedules/IGA_federal_financial_relations_aug11.pdf) (accessed 9 April 2013).

24 Authorised under the *Schools Assistance Act 2008* (Cth).

25 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 'SES Scores, funding status and levels for non-government schools – 2009-13', [https://ssp.deewr.gov.au/ssp/help/html/ses/funding\\_09\\_12/ses\\_scores.html](https://ssp.deewr.gov.au/ssp/help/html/ses/funding_09_12/ses_scores.html) (accessed 9 April 2013).

that otherwise may have suffered a drop in funding after their SES score was calculated did not. Funding levels were maintained and indexed in subsequent years. (Recently, the Gillard government has made similar undertakings to independent schools – although concerns remain about indexation).<sup>26</sup>

2.24 Other schools that automatically receive the maximum available rate of funding included schools catering for the disabled, special assistance schools and majority Indigenous student schools.<sup>27</sup> In addition, due to some schools joining the SES system later with other conditions attached, there are a range of schools with the same SES scores but funded at different rates under various funding arrangements.

2.25 In addition to NSSPPs, National Partnerships<sup>28</sup> and Commonwealth Own-Purpose Expenses<sup>29</sup> also exist to fund a number of measures such as the Digital Education Revolution, More Support for Students with Disabilities and the Australian Baccalaureate.

### ***Gonski Review of Funding for Schooling***

2.26 In 2010 the Australian Government commissioned a Review of Funding for Schooling inquiry. The government asked the Review Panel to 'develop a funding system for schooling which is transparent, fair, financially sustainable and effective in promoting excellent outcomes for all Australian students'.<sup>30</sup> The review panel received over seven thousand submissions, visited 39 schools and consulted widely with education groups. The panel was chaired by Mr David Gonski, and delivered its final report to the government in December 2011.<sup>31</sup> The final report, commonly known as the 'Gonski Review', spans more than 300 pages and provides 41 recommendations.

2.27 The review panel identified a number of difficulties associated with reviewing funding arrangements. These included:

- significant organisational differences across school sectors;
- differences in demographics of student bodies;

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26 For concerns on indexing, see evidence given to the Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee during its inquiry into the Australian Education Bill: *Proof Committee Hansard*, 1 March 2013, pp 3, 11 and 50.

27 70 per cent of their costs as assessed under the Average Government School Recurrent Costs standard.

28 Authorised by the *Federal Financial Relations Act 2009* (Cth).

29 Authorised by the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1997* (Cth), Section 32(b).

30 Executive Summary, Review Panel (Chaired by David Gonski AC), *Review of Funding for Schooling*, Final Report, December 2011, <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review> (accessed 12 March 2013), p. xiii.

31 Review Panel (Chaired by David Gonski AC), *Review of Funding for Schooling*, Final Report, December 2011, <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review> (accessed 12 March 2013).

- different challenges being faced by sectors and states;
- variation in funding arrangements from the Australian and state and territory governments across sectors and states; and
- a lack of consistency in data collection and reporting.

2.28 Overall the review panel found that existing funding arrangements for schooling need to be more coherent and transparent, less complex and reduce duplication of funding in some areas. The review panel concluded that lower performing students should receive funding priority and recommended that reforms be made to achieve this. Key measures to implement this vision include:

- *Creation of a new schooling resource standard.* The standard would provide for general recurring funding across all sectors; educational needs (e.g. socioeconomic background); equity of funding in terms of student numbers across school sectors; and periodical reviews. The standard would be modelled on resourcing trends from existing high-performance schools.

Under the schooling resource standard all public schools would be fully funded on a per student basis. Schools in the non-government sector would be funded on the anticipated level of a school's private contribution.

- *Better coordination of infrastructure.* Expanded Australian Government funding to better coordinate planning on new schools and major expansions, and grants for other major works and infrastructure projects.
- *National Schools Resourcing Body.* The report recommends that an independent National Schools Resourcing Body be formed for governance of the new measures.
- *Review of existing framework of intergovernmental agreements on schooling.* The report states that the existing framework of agreements would need to be revised to meet the requirements of the new funding framework.

2.29 Relevantly for this inquiry, the review panel concluded that the challenges faced by the Australian school system cannot be addressed simply in financial terms:

The panel accepts that resources alone will not be sufficient to fully address Australia's schooling challenges and achieve a high-quality, internationally respected schooling system. The new funding arrangements must be accompanied by continued and renewed efforts to strengthen and reform Australia's schooling system.<sup>32</sup>

2.30 In response to the Gonski Review the government introduced the Australian Education Bill 2012 in Parliament on 28 November 2012. The bill, which was

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32 Executive Summary, Review Panel (Chaired by David Gonski AC), *Review of Funding for Schooling*, Final Report, December 2011, <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review> (accessed 12 March 2013), p. xix.



informed by the Gonski Review, outlines a vision for national school reform and the development of a National Plan for School Improvement. The government states that if passed the bill would provide a legislative framework for school funding that provides equitable access and high quality education to all children.<sup>33</sup>

2.31 The Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee conducted an inquiry into the bill and reported on 13 March 2013.<sup>34</sup> The committee majority welcomed the broad in-principle support offered by stakeholders for the measures that would be established through the bill. Coalition Senators expressed concern at the lack of detail in the bill, indexation, loadings, timing, and additional costs to schools.<sup>35</sup>

### *April COAG Meeting*

2.32 On the Sunday before the upcoming COAG meeting, the Prime Minister the Hon. Julia Gillard MP released details of the government's School Funding. The government proposed to increase school funding by \$14.5 billion over 6 years, with \$12 billion to be reserved for public schools, \$1.5 billion for Catholic Schools and \$1 billion for independent schools. The government undertook to index its contribution at 4.7 per cent. The proposal is contingent upon the states and territories agreeing to increase their spending by 3 per cent.<sup>36</sup>

2.33 The Prime Minister submitted that as a consequence of this funding boosts schools could afford to provide specialist teachers where needed and improved technology aids.<sup>37</sup>

2.34 Controversially, the government proposes to fund this expenditure by introducing cuts to higher education, including an imposition of an efficiency dividend

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33 At the time of printing, the Australian Education Bill had not yet been introduced to the Senate. Updated information is available on the bill's homepage:  
<http://parlinfo.aph.gov.au/parlInfo/search/display/display.w3p;query%3DId%3A%22legislation%2Fbillhome%2Fr4945%22>.

34 Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee, *Australian Education Bill 2012 [Provisions]*, March 2013.

35 Coalition Senators' Dissenting Report, Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Legislation Committee, *Australian Education Bill 2012 [Provisions]*, March 2013.

36 ABC News Online, 'Gillard reveals details of Gonski school funding', 14 April 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-14/gillard-announces-details-of-gonski-education-reforms/4627910> (accessed 14 April 2013).

37 ABC News Online, 'Gillard reveals details of Gonski school funding', 14 April 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-14/gillard-announces-details-of-gonski-education-reforms/4627910> (accessed 14 April 2013).

on universities, which are estimated to be worth \$2.3 billion.<sup>38</sup> This initiative was supported by the Australian Education Union but subject to criticism from other quarters, including universities, the National Tertiary Education Union, Mr Gonski and the Federal Coalition.<sup>39</sup>

2.35 The Commonwealth Government presented the proposed education reforms to the state and territory governments at the COAG meeting on 19 April 2013. Although agreement was not reached, a number of states have indicated a willingness to work with the federal government with a view to reaching agreement by the end of June 2013.<sup>40</sup> At the time of publishing this report, the NSW Government has signed on to the proposed agreements.<sup>41</sup>

## Conclusion

2.36 The policy setting since this inquiry was referred in September last year has changed remarkably. A number of Australian governments have announced changes to admission standards for prospective teachers, higher exit and registration standards, and higher remuneration. Against this backdrop, the federal government has introduced a bill to respond to the Gonski Review of School funding, and is working with the states and territory governments through COAG to reach a new funding agreement for schools.

2.37 However, improving our schools and the outcomes for our students is not simply about spending more money: the way that money is spent and what it is spent on matters. Decisions must be made about how to allocate finite resources and any increased funding must be expended strategically and directed to areas of most need – while maintaining fairness. It is these issues that the remainder of the report focuses

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38 A 2 per cent efficiency dividend will be imposed in 2014, and 1.25 per cent in 2015 (averaging \$300 million per annum). Other measures include removal of the 10 per cent discount on paying university fees upfront, removal of the 5 per cent bonus received for voluntary repayment of HELP debts and converting student start-up scholarships into a loan. Minister the Hon. Craig Emerson MP, 'Statement on Higher Education', Media Release, 13 April 2013. <http://minister.innovation.gov.au/craigemerson/MediaReleases/Pages/StatementonHigherEducation.aspx> (accessed 1 May 2013).

39 ABC News Online, 'Gillard reveals details of Gonski school funding', 14 April 2013, <http://www.abc.net.au/news/2013-04-14/gillard-announces-details-of-gonski-education-reforms/4627910> (accessed 14 April 2013). The National Tertiary Education Union has also criticised the cuts, see for example National Tertiary Education Union, 'School reforms should not come at cost of universities', Media release, 13 April 2013.

40 Council of Australian Governments, *Council of Australian Governments Meeting – Communiqué Canberra, 19 April 2013*, <http://www.coag.gov.au/node/498> (accessed 24 April 2013).

41 Ben Packham, 'PM urges other states to sign on to Gonski reforms', *The Australian*, 24 April 2013; <http://www.theaustralian.com.au/national-affairs/education/pm-urges-other-states-to-sign-on-to-gonski-reforms/story-fn59nlz9-1226628444956> (accessed 24 April 2013).



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on. The next chapter discusses the performance of Australian students – in relation to each other and overseas peers.



# CHAPTER 3

## Australia's performance

Students cannot be disadvantaged because they do not necessarily have the money to attend the greatest and best school in the country or the state. Regardless of whether they are in the corner of the Pilbara or in the leafy green suburbs of Perth they need to have that access.<sup>1</sup>

3.1 This chapter provides a discussion of the successes and challenges experienced by Australian students. The key national and international testing programs are outlined and the performance of Australian students in literacy, mathematics and science is examined. This data is used as a foundation to examine the education outcomes of students facing particular challenges; including an analysis of students from low socio-economic backgrounds, students living in non-metropolitan areas, Indigenous students, and students with a disability. Other factors which influence educational outcomes are also discussed, with particular attention given to behavioural management, parental engagement and support for students with a disability.

### Australian performance in international and national testing

#### *Background*

3.2 The Productivity Commission concluded that despite the increase of government investment in Australian schools, sufficient progress is not being made in key areas such as literacy and numeracy. The Productivity Commission surmised that:

Despite an increase in spending per student and falling class sizes, there is evidence that student literacy and numeracy have declined in recent years, and that Australia has fallen behind other high-performing countries.

Australia does not perform as well as comparable countries in giving students equal opportunity to realise their educational potential, irrespective of their background or ability. The resulting educational disadvantage is particularly evident among Australian students who are Indigenous, from low socioeconomic backgrounds, have a disability or other special needs, or reside in a rural or remote area.<sup>2</sup>

3.3 The key piece of assessment data to report on the performance of Australian students in the international context is the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA). The test is a survey of 15 year olds, from more than 65 mostly industrialised countries, and is conducted every three years. PISA assesses the

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1 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 44.

2 Productivity Commission Research Report, *Schools Workforce*, April 2012, p. 54.

reading, mathematical and scientific literacy achievements of students. PISA uses sample testing and approximately 14,000 Australian students participated in the survey in 2009. The schools and students were randomly selected, and included students from each state and territory and from each of the three school sectors.<sup>3</sup>

3.4 The test is sophisticated; the Australian Council for Educational Research describes PISA as assessing 'young people's ability to apply their knowledge and skills to real-life problems and situations rather than how well they have learned a specific curriculum'.<sup>4</sup> Dr Ben Jensen described the PISA tests as 'not easy' and 'not rote learning' and 'a much better test than anything we have nationally'.<sup>5</sup>

3.5 Two other commonly cited international tests are the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) and the Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) tests. Both tests are administered by the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER). TIMSS is conducted at years 4 and 8, PIRLS at year 4 only. Both of these tests use sample testing of schools and students and the tests are drawn from local curriculum. In contrast to PISA, these two tests examine what students have learnt and not how students apply this knowledge to real-life problems and circumstances. Surveys of parents, educators and students are also conducted.<sup>6</sup>

3.6 At a national level, the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN) is an annual assessment of Australian students in years 3, 5, 7 and 9 that tests students in reading, writing, language and literacy.<sup>7</sup> The test is funded by both the Commonwealth and the states and territories (the latter on a pro rata basis).<sup>8</sup> The test has been conducted in May each year since 2008, and results are available four months later in September.<sup>9</sup> The government attributes this four month

3 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 2.

4 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, <http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/PISA-2009-In-Brief.pdf> (accessed 20 March 2013).

5 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 43.

6 See ACER, *Highlights from TIMSS & PIRLS 2011 from Australia's perspective*, December 2012 [http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/TIMSS-PIRLS\\_Australian-Highlights.pdf](http://www.acer.edu.au/documents/TIMSS-PIRLS_Australian-Highlights.pdf) (accessed 12 April 2013).

7 For more detail, see the Australian Government NAPLAN website: [www.nap.edu.au](http://www.nap.edu.au) (accessed 20 March 2013).

8 The states contribute to the costs of NAPLAN indirectly through funding the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority, half of ACARA's budget comes from the Commonwealth and the rest from the states and territories. In addition, states and territories bear the costs involved with administering and delivering NAPLAN in their jurisdictions: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, answer to question on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), p. 3.

9 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, answer to question on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), p. 2.

wait to the time it takes to mark and statistically analyse the test – this could be sped up if NAPLAN was delivered online. The Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood (SCSEEC) has agreed that there is a 'strong rationale for online delivery of NAPLAN tests' and noted that ACARA is working towards achieving this by 2016.<sup>10</sup> The committee notes that this could present administrative difficulties for those schools that do not have reliable access to the internet.

### ***Perspectives on the value of testing***

3.7 The results outlined below have caused some commentators to express concern about the performance of Australian students in an international context. However, others have urged a sense a perspective and for policy makers, parents and politicians to read test results in the appropriate context.

3.8 For example, in relation to the TIMMS and PERLS results, Emeritus Professor Alan Reid wrote recently that it 'is simplistic to use test results from just two year levels in only three areas of the curriculum, to make claims about Australian education'.<sup>11</sup> This is because while reading, mathematics and science are important, other curriculum areas such as information technology, history, geography, literature have not been assessed. Further, unlike the OECD PISA tests, the TIMMS and PIRLS tests do not test high order problem solving or creativity. As outlined below, Australian students do very well in international rankings on the more complex OECD PISA tests by Year 9 – so perhaps all we can really take from Australia's comparatively poor performances in TIMMS and PERLS is that primary school provides a good foundation for high school achievement.<sup>12</sup>

3.9 A number of witnesses raised specific concerns about NAPLAN testing, arguing that the testing is expensive and encourages teachers to 'teach to the test'.<sup>13</sup> Ms Lorraine Wilson, a retired teacher and deputy principal, described NAPLAN as a 'huge, vindictive black cloud' and explained that:

It [NAPLAN] has just changed everything that is happening in our schools. The sad thing about it is that NAPLAN is making all children run the one race for education, and the ones who win are considered the winners. They are the ones who will always have their photographs on the front of the Age when they get the top NAPLAN scores. In education for every little child

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10 Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, *Communique*, 7 December 2012. <http://www.scseec.edu.au/Communique%c3%a9s-and-Media-Releases.aspx> (accessed 3 April 2013).

11 Alan Reid, 'Raising the level of education debate', *Professional Educator*, March 2013, pp 5–6, p. 5.

12 Alan Reid, 'Raising the level of education debate', *Professional Educator*, March 2013, pp 5–6, p. 6.

13 See for example, Mr Phil Cullen, *Submission 6*; Leslie Granville O'Gorman, *Submission 7*; Ms Lorraine Wilson, *Submission 41*.

there is a different route. Some of the most circuitous routes are the richest and most educational.<sup>14</sup>

...

So much time is going on preparation for NAPLAN. Schools start teaching the genre that is to be tested from almost after the last NAPLAN test. Some schools started practising persuasive writing for this year's test last November. So much weighting of the school's future is put on their NAPLAN results.<sup>15</sup>

3.10 Mr Phil Cullen, former Queensland Director of Education, described NAPLAN as 'the worst thing that has ever happened in Australian education' and the 'biggest threat we have ever had to the cognitive development of young children'.<sup>16</sup> Ms Wilson suggested that sample testing, as is the case with international testing such as PISA, should be used in Australia. This approach would enable the effectiveness of education programs to be assessed periodically without subjecting every child, every year, to testing.<sup>17</sup> Mr Cullen and Ms Wilson agreed that responsibility for evaluating teaching and learning on the individual level should be 'entirely in the teachers' hands'.<sup>18</sup>

3.11 In response to committee questioning, school principals rejected the suggestion that they were teaching to the test and did not share the strident criticism expressed above.<sup>19</sup> For example, Haileybury Independent School submitted that NAPLAN testing is useful because the data can contribute to building a professional culture and bring a level of accountability to education.<sup>20</sup> However, the Australian Council of Jewish Schools acknowledged that it had heard of schools outside its network panicking about NAPLAN results.<sup>21</sup>

3.12 Professor Field Rickards described NAPLAN results as 'really, really useful' however cautioned that teachers need to be trained how to use and interpret NAPLAN data in order to improve education outcomes.<sup>22</sup> The committee notes that the

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14 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 62.

15 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 64.

16 Mr Phil Cullen, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 62.

17 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 62.

18 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 62.

19 See evidence given by the Australian Association of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 27 February 2013, pp 1–10 and Mr John Fleming, Deputy Principal (Primary), Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 48.

20 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 45.

21 Australian Association of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 27 February 2013, pp 1–10.

22 Professor Field Rickards, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 13.

usefulness of NAPLAN data will be diminished if some parents continue to withdraw their children from school on the day of the tests.<sup>23</sup>

### *Conclusion*

3.13 International and national testing have their limits. Critics are quite correct to point out that there is more to successful schooling than just literacy and mathematics, and that Australians may not wish to emulate the different lifestyle that some students may have in other higher performing countries. However success in these core subjects often sets students up for success in other subjects such as history, sports science and art.

3.14 The concerns raised by Ms Wilson, Mr Cullen, and others, demonstrate the importance of ensuring that parents, teachers and students understand the purpose of NAPLAN. Students should not be stressing about NAPLAN exams, or feeling judged by the results and schools should not be advertising their NAPLAN scores to attract more students. The Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority has a special role to perform in this regard.

3.15 Testing results provide useful data on student performance, however teachers need to be given training to understand and interpret evaluative data.

3.16 In the following pages Australian's performance in NAPLAN, OECD PISA and to a lesser extent, TIMSS and PIRLS, is discussed. The key conclusion from the data is that while the majority of students are benefiting from the education system, Australian education policies are failing the most disadvantaged students: those students from low socio-economic backgrounds, Indigenous backgrounds, and students living in rural, remote and regional areas.

### **Recommendation 1**

**3.17 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Commonwealth Government, provides teachers with training on how to use and interpret evaluative data.**

### *Mathematics and science*

3.18 Australia's NAPLAN results reveal that performance in numeracy and mathematics has remained static over the past 5 years. Internationally, there is a 'slow but gradual decline of Australia's international ranking' with a number of countries overtaking Australia by significantly improving their mathematics performance.<sup>24</sup> The

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23 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, Additional Estimates 2012-2013, EW0860\_13. See also, Jessica Marszalek, 'Stressed kids miss tests: NAPLAN boycotts', *Herald Sun*, 24 November 2012; ABC News, 'Qld parents join push to boycott NAPLAN', 2 May 2013; Bethany Hiatt, 'More withdraw from NAPLAN', *The West Australian*, 26 April 2013; Bianca Hall, 'Parents urged to pull children out of NAPLAN tests', *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 27 April 2013.

24 AMSI, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, p. 4. See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 4.

table below, supplied by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute using PISA data, illustrates Australia's decline in mathematical performance over 2000–2009.<sup>25</sup>

Table 2.1.2. Student performance in the mathematical sciences among 15-year olds: selection of data from OECD PISA reports over the period 2000–2009

	Australia score	Highest country score	Lowest country score	Comparison to intern. average	No of countries significantly outperforming Australia	Countries significantly outperforming Australia
2000	533	557	334	Above average	1	Japan
2003	524	550	356	Above average	4	Hong Kong-China, Finland, Korea, Netherlands
2006	520	549	311	Above average	8	Chinese Taipei, Finland, Hong Kong-China, Korea, Netherlands, Switzerland, Canada, Macao-China
2009	514	600	331	Above average	12	Shanghai-China, Singapore, Hong Kong-China, Korea, Chinese Taipei, Finland, Liechtenstein, Switzerland, Japan, Canada, Netherlands, Macao-China

3.19 The 2009 PISA results indicate that twelve countries performed significantly better than Australia in mathematical literacy in 2009, four countries had mean scores similar to Australia's and all other countries – including the United States and the United Kingdom – performed at a level significantly below Australia.<sup>26</sup>

3.20 The TIMSS results released in December 2012 can be contrasted with the PISA results. Australian Year 4 students were significantly outperformed by 17 countries in mathematics and by 18 countries in science. However, in the Year 8 cohort only 6 countries performed significantly better than Australia in mathematics and 9 countries in science. The Australian Council for Educational Research concluded that Australia's performances had 'largely stagnated over the past 16 years'.<sup>27</sup>

3.21 The Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute advised the committee that while most Year 12 students study some mathematics, the proportion of students who are undertaking intermediate or advanced mathematics subjects is in decline. For example, 41.5 per cent of year 12 students studied intermediate or advanced mathematics in 1995, this dropped to 29.4 per cent in 2011.<sup>28</sup> The TIMSS survey results indicated that student achievement was impacted by resource shortages and teachers who did not feel confident teaching science and/or mathematics.

3.22 Unfortunately, many students identify mathematics as difficult, not enjoyable and not relevant to their future. A number of teachers of mathematics are teaching out of field and do not possess relevant qualifications and training. Many principals, particularly in rural areas and low socio economic areas, find it challenging to fill

25 AMSI, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, p. 5. See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 5.

26 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 7.

27 Australian Council for Educational Research, 'ACER releases results from latest international studies of student achievement', Media Release, 18 December 2012.

28 AMSI, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, p. 6. See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 6.



vacancies in mathematics and science disciplines. As a consequence, teachers may be required to teach outside their discipline.<sup>29</sup>

3.23 The committee heard from a science teacher at a rural high school who advised that he was the only qualified mathematics teacher at the school. Due to staff shortages mathematics was taught by a Physical Education (PE) teacher, who did not understand negative indices. Another PE teacher was required to manage the agricultural program for the students. The witness advised the committee that this was not the fault of the PE teachers – they are trained to teach PE.<sup>30</sup>

3.24 There are remarkable differences in the level of teacher training in discipline specific areas such as mathematics between metropolitan non-metropolitan areas. The Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute summarised that:

The percentage of teachers with three years or more tertiary education in mathematics in Years 7 to 10 is 45% in metropolitan areas, and 37% and 40 % in provincial and remote areas respectively. For Years 11 and 12, teachers in provincial and remote areas also show comparatively less tertiary education background in mathematics (57% and 43% respectively) than their counterparts in metropolitan areas at 64%.<sup>31</sup>

3.25 The disparity between metropolitan and other areas is illustrated in the table below, which represents the highest year level of tertiary education in field by region in 2010.<sup>32</sup>

Highest Year Level of Tertiary Education in Field															
	None			Year 1			Year 2			Year 3 and higher			Total		
	Metro	Prov.	Remote	Metro	Prov.	Remote	Metro	Prov.	Remote	Metro	Prov.	Remote	Metro	Prov.	Remote
Year 7-10 Maths	359 24%	223 31%	31 26%	242 16%	119 6%	20 17%	214 14%	116 16%	20 17%	669 45%	266 37%	48 40%	1484	724	119
Year 11-12 Maths	112 12%	62 16%	7 14%	92 10%	47 12%	9 18%	139 15%	62 16%	13 25%	600 64%	226 57%	22 43%	943	397	51
Year 11-12 Physics	21 8%	11 9%	2 18%	38 15%	24 20%	4 36%	50 20%	19 16%	1 9%	139 56%	66 55%	4 36%	248	120	11
Year 11-12 Chemistry	12 4%	7 5%	0	27 9%	13 9%	2 33%	40 13%	22 15%	3 50%	220 74%	103 71%	1 17%	299	145	6
Year 11-12 Biology	18 5%	17 9%	2 11%	11 3%	9 5%	0	18 5%	7 4%	2 11%	342 88%	147 82%	14 78%	389	180	18

29 AMSI, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, p. 10. See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 10. See also, Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 1.

30 Confidential Witness, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013.

31 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, 2013, p. 8. See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 8.

32 AMSI, *Discipline Profile of Mathematical Science 2013*, p. 8 (Using data from the Office of the Chief Scientist, Mathematics, Engineering and Science in the National Interest, May 2012, Appendix F). See also, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, Additional Information, p. 8.

3.26 The data reveal serious performance gaps between metro students and students located outside of metropolitan areas. Fewer Australian students are studying intermediate and advanced mathematics in high school and Australia's international performance reflects this. The consequences of declining mathematic ability are grave. Fewer students are eligible to study subjects that require intermediate and advanced mathematics and science skills, such as engineering and health sciences. This contributes to skills shortages and also is cyclical, with less students with mathematical and science degrees qualifying as teachers. It is clear that prospective teachers need to receive early advice of skills shortages in teaching, and consideration should be given to ensuring that the appropriate incentives are in place to encourage skilled mathematics and science graduates to pursue careers in teaching to fill hard-to-staff positions.<sup>33</sup>

### ***Literacy***

3.27 In the 2009 OECD PISA survey, 6 countries performed better than Australia in reading literacy: Shanghai (China), Korea, Finland, Hong Kong (China), Singapore and Canada. Three countries achieved mean scores close to Australia's: New Zealand, Japan and the Netherlands. All other countries, including the United States and the United Kingdom, performed at a level significantly below Australia.<sup>34</sup>

3.28 In the 2012 PIRLS results can again be contrasted with PISA: 21 countries performed at a significantly higher level than Australia in Year 4 reading. ACER reported that the results show that around a quarter of Australian students are not reaching the minimal level of proficiency.<sup>35</sup> This is the first time that Australia has participated in PIRLS so historical comparisons cannot be made.

3.29 Some commentators linked teacher literacy with student literacy results, suggesting that many teachers have not been taught how to teach language. One witness reported that he was aware of at least one primary school teacher who struggled to teach reading because in her four year education course 'she was never taught' how to do this.<sup>36</sup> Ms Misty Adoniou, Academic and Lecturer at the University of Canberra, explained that while literacy skills are very important, teachers also require language knowledge so that they can 'intervene' when students are struggling.<sup>37</sup> Ms Adoniou provided the following example to illustrate this point:

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33 As recommended by the Productivity Commissioner: Productivity Research Report, *Schools Workforce*, April 2012, p. 117. See also Chapters 4 and 5 of this Report.

34 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 3.

35 Australian Council for Educational Research, 'ACER releases results from latest international studies of student achievement', Media Release, 18 December 2012. See also Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, pp 7–8.

36 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 33.

37 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 24.

A child writes, on Monday, in their journal: 'My sister go to ballet'. The teacher is interested in the story and says, "Oh, that's interesting; your sister goes to ballet. In English, we write 'goes'." They are very good at correcting. Every teacher knows that it is 'my sister goes to ballet'.

The next week, the child writes: 'I goes to soccer.' With the correction, all they have understood is that it is not 'go' it is 'goes'. They have not been told that, actually, the go and goes are dependent upon the person. If you are a second-language learner, if you have been left to figure that out for yourself, it could mean you being in the classroom for 1½ years before you figure out that rule—or you could have a teacher tell you and you would know it in one minute. We just do not have teachers who are aware of how English works in that way. It is quite a deep knowledge that you need to have.<sup>38</sup>

3.30 A teacher needs to have such a deep knowledge of the English language that he or she can explain to the child why language is used in a particular way. This knowledge is important even with quite simple corrections to language. Ms Adoniou provided another example of a child writing 'I rode in a blue, big car':

We know that does not sound right. It is not a blue, big car, it is a big, blue car. If our only explanation is, 'Oh, that doesn't sound right in English. It's a big, blue car' then we have not told them that, actually, we have preferential order of adjectives in English. We need to tell them that colour goes closest to the noun. We just do not have this knowledge, as teachers, generally speaking.<sup>39</sup>

3.31 Significantly, poor literacy will also have an impact on mathematics performance once children are in year 5 and above. This is because mathematical questions are no longer 'hands on' where students can play with blocks to determine the answer to mathematic questions. Instead, questions become very language based.<sup>40</sup>

3.32 The committee was heartened to hear of targeted programs to support children who are functionally illiterate. The Macquarie University Multilit program applied by the Exodus Foundation has remarkable results. The Reverend Bill Crews provided evidence that students two years behind their peers can catch up to year level after an 18 week intensive remedial intervention course.<sup>41</sup> The organisation runs three literacy centres, two in Sydney and one in Darwin. Having regard to the PISA results discussed in this section, unfortunately more programs of this nature are needed in Australia.

3.33 Teacher quality is discussed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5 of this report.

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38 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, pp 27–28.

39 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 28.

40 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 28.

41 Exodus Foundation, *Submission 29*. See also, MultiLit, *Submission 54*; Reverend Bill Crews, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, pp 31–38.

## Educational outcomes for different groups of students

In this section PISA data is used to examine the performance of particular cohorts of students. This is possible because the 2009 PISA survey broke down performance by state and territory and by particular groups.

### *Indigenous students*

3.34 Indigenous students scored 82 points lower, on average, than non-Indigenous Australian students in reading literacy (and 57 points below the OECD average). ACER observed that this difference amounts to more than two full years of schooling.<sup>42</sup> This result was similar to the scores for scientific literacy. In mathematical literacy, Indigenous students recorded 76 points lower, on average, than non-Indigenous Australian students. This difference amounts to almost two full years of schooling.<sup>43</sup>

3.35 The NAPLAN results are equally concerning; the Closing the Gap Report 2013 observed that:

Nationally, in 2012 across reading and numeracy, the proportion of Indigenous students who are at or above National Minimum Standards ranged from 64.7 per cent for Year 5 Reading to 74.4 per cent for Year 7 Numeracy. In Persuasive Writing the best result was in Year 3 where 78.3 per cent of Indigenous students were at or above National Minimum Standards in 2012, and the poorest result was in Year 9 where only 48.8 per cent met the National Minimum Standards.<sup>44</sup>

3.36 The NAPLAN results from 2008 to 2012 actually show a decrease in the percentage of Indigenous students at or above National Minimum Standards in Reading for Years 3 and 9.<sup>45</sup> Overall, results for Indigenous students in remote areas are especially poor. For example, 'in 2012 only 20.3 per cent of students in very remote areas achieved at or above the National Minimum Standards in Reading, compared to 76 per cent in metropolitan areas'.<sup>46</sup>

3.37 The committee heard of efforts made by governments and the community sector to support indigenous education. For example, the Smith Family runs the

42 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 11.

43 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 11.

44 Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2013, p. 24.  
[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2013/00313-ctg-report\\_accessible11.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2013/00313-ctg-report_accessible11.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2013).

45 Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2013, p. 26.  
[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2013/00313-ctg-report\\_accessible11.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2013/00313-ctg-report_accessible11.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2013).

46 Closing the Gap: Prime Minister's Report 2013, p. 27.  
[http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02\\_2013/00313-ctg-report\\_accessible11.pdf](http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/02_2013/00313-ctg-report_accessible11.pdf) (accessed 6 May 2013).

Girls@the Centre program in Alice Springs. This program promotes parental engagement and has resulted in improved attendance rates among participants – the majority of whom are of Aboriginal background.<sup>47</sup> The Exodus Foundation remedial literacy program, discussed earlier, also supports literacy among Indigenous students in Darwin. Federal, state and territory governments also have targeted programs to support Indigenous education, including the HIPPY program discussed below.<sup>48</sup>

3.38 However, on balance, this data indicates that more innovative solutions are necessary.

## **Recommendation 2**

**3.39 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood continue to monitor the effectiveness of the Close the Gap program and identify further measures to improve outcomes for Indigenous students, particularly for Indigenous students in very remote areas.**

### *Comparisons across school sectors*

3.40 Students in the independent school sector attained significantly higher scores than students in the Catholic and government sectors, and students in the Catholic sector performed significantly better than students in the government sector.<sup>49</sup> However, these differences did not remain once mean scores were adjusted to take into account individual student socioeconomic backgrounds and the school average socioeconomic background. The best indicator of student performance is socio-economic background – not whether a student attends a public, Catholic or an independent school.<sup>50</sup> This is discussed in the next section.

### *Socioeconomic background*

3.41 There is no universal definition of socio-economic status, and any definition is dependent on the indices used. The committee is aware of a range of different definitions used by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, the Australian Curriculum and Reporting Authority and the Australian Council for Educational Research.<sup>51</sup>

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47 The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 9.

48 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q7.

49 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 12.

50 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 12.

51 Marilyn Harrington, Senior Researcher, Social Policy, Parliamentary Library Briefing, 13 May 2013.

3.42 PISA measures socioeconomic background by taking into account economic, social and cultural status.<sup>52</sup> Across the three tests, the mean score for students from the highest socioeconomic quartile was much higher than the other three quartiles – indeed the schooling gap was between 1 and 3 years.

3.43 In relation to reading literacy, ACER provided the following examples of performance from PISA:

- In reading literacy, students in the highest socioeconomic quartile achieved a mean score of 562 points, which was 30 score points higher than the average score of students in the third socioeconomic quartile, 58 score points higher than students in the second socioeconomic quartile, and 91 score points higher than students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile.
- The gap between students in the highest and lowest socioeconomic quartile is equivalent to more than one proficiency level or almost three full years of schooling.<sup>53</sup>

3.44 The results were similar in mathematical literacy where:

- [S]tudents in the lowest socioeconomic quartile scored on average 90 score points lower than those students in the highest socioeconomic quartile.
- Twenty-eight per cent of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile were not achieving Level 2 in mathematical literacy, compared to five per cent of students in the highest socioeconomic quartile. Only six per cent of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile achieved Level 5 or above, compared with 29 per cent of students in the highest socioeconomic quartile.<sup>54</sup>

3.45 The gap between the highest and the lowest socioeconomic quartiles in Australia was even more pronounced in scientific literacy, ACER reported that:

- In scientific literacy, the gap between students in the highest and lowest socioeconomic quartiles was, on average, 96 score points.
- Twenty-two per cent of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile were not achieving Level 2 in scientific literacy, compared to four per cent of students in the highest socioeconomic quartile. Only six per cent of students in the lowest socioeconomic quartile achieved Level 5 or

52 For a discussion of the method used by OECD PISA, See Review Panel (Chaired by David Gonski AC), *Review of Funding for Schooling*, Final Report, December 2011, p. 113 <http://www.betterschools.gov.au/review> (accessed 12 March 2013).

53 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 13.

54 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 13.

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above, compared with 28 per cent of students in the highest socioeconomic quartile.<sup>55</sup>

3.46 A number of submitters and witnesses emphasised the important role that socio-economic background has on educational outcomes and expressed concern that in Australia a student's background is a greater determinant of success than in comparable high performing OECD countries. For example, the Smith Family cited evidence from a 2012 Productivity Commission report that:

Australia does not perform as well as comparable countries in giving students equal opportunity to realise their educational potential, irrespective of their background or ability. The resulting educational disadvantage is particularly evident among Australian students who are Indigenous, from low socioeconomic backgrounds, have a disability or other special needs or reside in a rural or remote area.<sup>56</sup>

3.47 If this trend is not halted, and if there continues to be great disparity between the performance of Australia's highest and lowest performing students then the consequences for Australia, as well as for each student, are dire. The Smith Family explained that:

The individual and collective impact of not addressing this situation is significant. Young people with poor educational outcomes are more likely to experience unemployment and poorer health outcomes, and rely more heavily on income support payments. This creates additional economic and social costs for individuals and the community as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

3.48 Research by Professor John Hattie was cited by a number of submitters, including The Smith Family.<sup>58</sup> Professor Hattie's research concludes that students come to school with a range of factors that will impact how they achieve in the classroom, such as family background, pre-school learning, natural aptitudes and personal attributes. Teachers cannot control these factors, however teachers can have an influence on student learning by providing good or poor quality teaching – and principals and the wider school community can have an influence on what happens at the school more generally.<sup>59</sup> Professor Hattie observed that students account for about 50 per cent of the 'variance of achievement' and 'teachers account for about 30 per cent of the variance. It is what teachers know, do and care about which is very powerful in this learning equation'.<sup>60</sup>

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55 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 13.

56 Productivity Research Report, *Schools Workforce*, April 2012, p. 41. (Cited by the Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 3).

57 The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 3.

58 See, for example, The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 4.

59 Professor John Hattie, 2003 (Cited by The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 40).

60 Professor John Hattie, 2003 (Cited by The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 40).

3.49 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, submitted that the socioeconomic background of students and a school community constrains the ability of teachers to easily translate successful approaches in one school to another school, because the challenges in a particular school are largely based on the student demographic:

That is not to say we cannot learn from each other in terms of trying to import good practice where it can work. The fact is that our schools face many very different challenges, and those challenges are largely driven or influenced by our student demographic. When the student demographic at a particular school changes, so do the challenges. What we have seen, regrettably, over the course of the last 15 years in Australia is a growing segregation when it comes to student enrolment patterns and, as a result of that, a growing and deepening concentration of disadvantaged kids in disadvantaged schools—largely in public schools...<sup>61</sup>

3.50 Research conducted by the Smith Family, including the *Making a Difference* project illustrates the impact that poverty can have on children's capacity to participate in the school community. For example, children experiencing poverty have constrained ability to attend sports clubs, arts based programs, excursions and other extra-curricular activities.<sup>62</sup> These are obstacles that cannot be overcome by changes to teacher quality or family expectations. A common response to this study would be that extra-curricular activities are 'add ons' to a good education, and that the primary goal of education should be literacy and mathematical skills. However, the committee was impressed by evidence provided by recent graduates from a Perth selective high school, Mr Anish Badgeri and Mr Jonathan Israel. During the Sydney hearing, Mr Badgeri and Mr Israel highlighted the crucial role that extra-curricular activities play in the educative context, including development of social awareness, a sense of belonging, obligation and connection to a wider community and tolerance.<sup>63</sup>

3.51 Other witnesses argued that quality teaching and the expectations of teachers and parents can overcome low socio-economic indicators. Mr John Fleming from the Haileybury Independent School provided examples where, through targeted teacher training in the explicit instruction method, schools in low socioeconomic areas reported a prompt and significant improvement in NAPLAN results.<sup>64</sup> The examples that Mr Fleming gave during the Melbourne hearing are remarkable, and strongly support his argument that socio-economic background should not determine the success or otherwise of poorer children:

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61 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2012, p. 55.

62 The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 5.

63 Mr Anish Badgeri, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 11; Mr Jonathan Israel, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 12. (Appearance facilitated by the Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission 55*).

64 Mr John Fleming, Deputy Principal, Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2012, p. 52.



At Ballajura Primary School in Perth, three years ago they were a sea of red in NAPLAN; all their cohorts were underperforming. Three years later, after using explicit instruction, they are a sea of green—one of the highest performing schools in Western Australia. With the state election coming on, both sides of politics are saying, 'We will follow the Ballajura model of explicit instruction'. If we go to South Australia, there is a school I work with in Whyalla called Fisk Street Primary School. Here is some data from them: in 2010, in that year 3 cohort in maths, they had 26 per cent of their kids at national benchmarks. There are a lot of Indigenous kids at the school and it is a very disadvantaged school. Two years later, after using explicit instruction, they had 92 per cent of their kids meeting national benchmarks. So they went from 26 per cent to 92 per cent—no change in the cohort, just a change in the way the curriculum was delivered to those kids. If we look at Queensland, Goondi is a school in Innisfail. It has 600 kids and about 60 per cent of those kids are Indigenous. Over the last three years through explicit instruction they have now got to a stage where in 2012, 12 of their 15 areas that are measured by NAPLAN are now green. Their principal is very confident that 15 out of their 15 areas will be green this year. Now what has changed there? Explicit instruction.<sup>65</sup>

3.52 The committee heard that the 'explicit instruction' approach to teaching is practiced elsewhere but is called different things:

You will find nuanced terminology for things that mean nearly the same thing. Explicit instruction, focused learning episodes, direct teaching, didactic pedagogy, all mean something similar but not exactly the same. It means the teacher telling the child, 'Here is some specific information. You need to know and understand it', or 'Here is a very specific skill. I'm going to explain it to you, we're going to practise it and you're going to master it.' It is teacher directed, explicit in that term—as I understand it.<sup>66</sup>

3.53 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Education Standards Institute, agreed that socio-economic background should not be a determinant of success, and described his own upbringing in a housing commission estate as a positive example.<sup>67</sup> Dr Donnelly cautioned against a 'victim mentality' that can pervade discussions about the impact of socio-economic background on student achievement:

...I disagree with the victim mentality or the self-fulfilling prophecy that because you grew up in, say, Broadmeadows or Western Sydney, or you are from a non-English speaking background family, or your dad is a labourer or your mum's working pulling coffee that somehow you are not as capable

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65 Mr John Fleming, Deputy Principal (Primary), Haileybury, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 46.

66 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 11.

67 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 28.

as another kid. I would argue you are, and there are a variety of factors that will determine that.<sup>68</sup>

3.54 Parents of all backgrounds can contribute in a positive way to their child's capacity to learn. Dr Donnelly described how parents can engage their children in learning in the home environment. For example,

[I]f your parents read to you, if they take you to the museum or the galleries...and sit around the dinner table and talk over dinner and engage about current affairs and politics and all the issues that we confront, then all of that is beneficial. I was surprised to read a survey two weeks ago that found 40 or 50 per cent of families eat dinner by the TV. I find that horrendous because what is happening is kids are not engaging in that kind of stimulation, that intellectual stimulation, that comes from eyeballing their parents, talking and discussing, and obviously their parents reading to them. I think the research says if you read to your kids four or five times a week they will start off school ahead of the game.<sup>69</sup>

3.55 The Smith Family submitted that school-community partnerships are a key way to maximise investment in schools, especially in low SES areas.<sup>70</sup> Schools operating on this model provide extended services before and after school to students and the general community. Services may include additional academic support, youth development, family support and social services.<sup>71</sup> These partnerships encourage families, students and communities to participate in the life of the school and support improved educational outcomes.

3.56 The federal government has funded programs through the National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic School Communities to improve the education outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. State and territory governments are also implementing a number of initiatives targeting these groups of students, particularly those from non-metropolitan areas and Indigenous students.<sup>72</sup>

3.57 Of particular note are government initiatives targeted at supporting parents to support their children, as these are likely to have the biggest impact.<sup>73</sup> The Home

68 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 31.

69 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 31.

70 The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, pp 6–8.

71 The Smith Family, *Submission 19*, p. 6.

72 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q7.

73 See for example, Tina Rosenberg, 'The Power of Talking to Your Baby', *The New York Times*, 10 April 2013. Parents from low socio-economic backgrounds tend to talk to their children less, children whose families were on welfare hearing about 600 words an hour, working-class children 1,200 words and children from professional families heard 2,100 words. Researchers Betty Hart and Todd R Risley concluded that this language exposure explained the difference in student preparedness for school.

Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY) is a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood program designed to help parents and carers to 'be their child's first teacher'.<sup>74</sup> Home tutors from the local community work with parents 'to ensure that children start school on an equal footing with their more advantaged peers'.<sup>75</sup>

3.58 The HIPPY program commenced in 2008 and is run by the Brotherhood of St Lawrence. The program targets disadvantaged areas with a high proportion of young children. Currently the program is run in 20 locations across Australia, and the government has allocated funding to increase this to 100 by 2015.<sup>76</sup>

3.59 An evaluation of the HIPPY program in 2011 found that the program was appropriate and cost-effective, however further work needs to be done to ensure that more Indigenous families are engaged in the program. The effectiveness of the program was measured by a two-year longitudinal study, which compared the outcomes of one group that received HIPPY and one that did not.<sup>77</sup> The results indicated that the goals of HIPPY were being achieved. Relevantly for this inquiry, parents felt more confident raising their child and children liked to read for longer periods of time. The impact on children's preparedness for school is also significant. The report found that:

- The gap observed in HIPPY children's early numeracy and early literacy skills at the beginning of the program, compared with the Australian norm, had closed by the end of the program.
- HIPPY children had fewer problems with their peers—which is one of the five measures of the child's socio-emotional adjustment.

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74 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Website, <http://deewr.gov.au/home-interaction-program-parents-and-youngsters-hippy> (accessed 2 May 2013).

75 Max Liddell, Tony Barnett, Fatoumata Diallo Roost and Juliet McEachran, *Investing in our future: an evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters*, Final report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, August 2011, p. vi. Available online: [http://www.mychild.gov.au/documents/docs/hippy\\_evaluation.pdf](http://www.mychild.gov.au/documents/docs/hippy_evaluation.pdf) (accessed 2 May 2013).

76 For a list of locations see: Department of Education and Workplace Relations, Website, <http://deewr.gov.au/further-information-about-hippy> (accessed 2 May 2013).

77 Max Liddell, Tony Barnett, Fatoumata Diallo Roost and Juliet McEachran, *Investing in our future: an evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters*, Final report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, August 2011, p. viii.

- For parents who completed more of the program rather than less of the program, their child displayed higher levels of pro-social behaviour—a second measure of the child’s socio-emotional adjustment.<sup>78</sup>

3.60 The evaluation concluded that overall:

The evaluation provides a strong evidence base as to the effectiveness of HIPPY, which sets it apart from most other early childhood parenting programs in Australia. Significant positive impacts were found across a number of important developmental domains and spheres of influence, including the child, the parent, the home learning environment and parents’ social connectedness and inclusion.<sup>79</sup>

***Committee view***

3.61 The committee strongly supports the view that all children can succeed at school regardless of socio-economic background. Parents play an important role in supporting children, particularly prior to the commencement of school. Initiatives such as the HIPPY program demonstrate that with support, all parents and guardians can promote reading and literacy during the pre-school years. Initiatives such as the Smith Family’s program in Alice Springs also demonstrate the value of parental engagement for older children.

3.62 The committee is impressed by the short-term NAPLAN results achieved by Mr John Fleming in schools with children from low socio-economic backgrounds. A more detailed empirical assessment has not yet been conducted, however the initial evidence supports the arguments that teacher quality has a strong influence on student achievement and that student performance is not dictated by socio-economic background.

**Recommendation 3**

**3.63 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood Development and the Catholic and Independent school sectors work to ensure continued investment in programs with proven effectiveness that assist parents and guardians to support the education of their child, beginning in early childhood.**

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78 Max Liddell, Tony Barnett, Fatoumata Diallo Roost and Juliet McEachran, *Investing in our future: an evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters*, Final report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, August 2011, p. ix.

79 Max Liddell, Tony Barnett, Fatoumata Diallo Roost and Juliet McEachran, *Investing in our future: an evaluation of the national rollout of the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters*, Final report to the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, August 2011, p. vii.

### *Rural, remote and regional*

3.64 PISA also reported on the differences in performance of students in metropolitan, provincial and remote schools.<sup>80</sup> In reading literacy the gap between students in metropolitan and remote schools is the equivalent of one and half years of schooling. Six per cent of students from remote schools performed at the higher end of the reading literacy proficiency scale. This can be sharply contrasted with 8 per cent of students from provincial schools and 14 per cent from metropolitan schools.<sup>81</sup> The gap in mathematical literacy and scientific literacy between students in metropolitan and remote schools is almost 18 months of schooling.<sup>82</sup>

3.65 The NAPLAN testing also shows a large disparity between metropolitan students and rural students. In practical terms, 'students in metropolitan schools at the end of year 8 are performing as well on average as kids in country schools halfway through year 10'.<sup>83</sup> Mr Duncan Taylor explained the NAPLAN results for New South Wales:

New South Wales NAPLAN testing indicates that in 2011 11 per cent of year 9 metropolitan students failed to reach minimum standards in writing. But in remote schools over 47 per cent failed to reach these standards. In very remote schools over 50 per cent failed. While 5 per cent of year 9 metropolitan students failed to reach minimum standards in numeracy, 24 per cent of remote students failed as did 37 per cent of very remote students. Not surprisingly, these poor outcomes in middle secondary school translate into poor tertiary participation.<sup>84</sup>

3.66 Ms Corinda Hollis, a 16 year old student attending Trinity Catholic College (Lismore) described living in a rural area as 'both a blessing and, in some ways, a disadvantage' that had 'created a lot of questions regarding my education'.<sup>85</sup> Ms Hollis attended the local Catholic primary school in her home town of Casino, however decided to change to travel further afield for high school:

Throughout my early education I attended primary school in Casino at the local Catholic school, a reflection of both my parents' and my family's values. In terms of my education, my first real challenge and a major choice for me was looking at where to go for high school. There are a few high

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80 The geographic location of schools was classified using the MCEECDYA Schools Location Classification.

81 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 14.

82 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 14.

83 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 16.

84 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 16.

85 Ms Corinda Hollis, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 11. (Appearance facilitated by the Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission 55*).

schools in my local area, but I and my family chose to look further away and to a more regional area and city for both academic purposes and the opportunity to study a creative arts subject, as dance is one of my major passions. It is not so accessible in those rural areas and particularly my area. I discovered that it was quite difficult to leave friends and community behind and to have to adapt to that new community.<sup>86</sup>

3.67 Ms Hollis was fortunate to have the financial resources and personal resilience to choose a high school further away from home. However, Ms Hollis called for an awareness of the particular challenges faced by rural students when accessing education and the need for all rural students to have:

[T]he same opportunity as people everywhere else to excel in what they do and not have the quality of their education and extension determined by their rural postcodes.<sup>87</sup>

3.68 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, observed that 'in rural and remote areas, the problem with education is a problem of critical mass'.<sup>88</sup> This manifests in obvious ways, such as the lack of specialist teachers and limited variety of extra-curricular activities, but also, for example, because rural schools tend to be smaller, the administrative burden on teachers is often higher because there is an absence of appropriate administrative staff.<sup>89</sup> This means that it is harder for teachers and principals to focus on learning.

3.69 The critical mass problem can be solved in a number of ways. One idea which has gained traction overseas is the cluster management of schools, to lessen the administrative burden of individual schools.

3.70 The committee heard that many independent and government schools in rural areas work collaboratively to ensure that students can have as many opportunities as possible. Mr Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, reported that:

I will give you an example of a school I left after 10 years as principal—Scotch Oakburn College in Launceston. We had three independent schools, in that relatively small regional city. Each student in year 11 or year 12 was allowed to choose a subject at one of the other schools—those independent schools and the state schools as well—in order to increase the subject choice for them. That happens in Hobart, too. My knowledge is more of Tasmania, but I am sure it happens in lots of other ways, too. It also happens in sharing trade possibilities. We also sent students to alternative institutions, one of them being a state college, for VET training and that sort of thing. So yes, there is a lot of sharing. I think you will find across the

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86 Ms Corinda Hollis, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 11.

87 Ms Corinda Hollis, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 11.

88 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 17.

89 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 17.

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country, particularly in smaller regional and remote areas, that sharing does take place. And it has to take place; you have to be innovative.<sup>90</sup>

3.71 Schools can also become educational hubs by supporting education in a local town both in early childhood education and distance tertiary education.<sup>91</sup> Mr Taylor provided an example of a community hub in a rural area that also promoted access to tertiary distance education:

There is a school not far from us that I understand is now inviting students who are doing university study to come into the school, to use the technology, to use the video conferencing to access their university tutors, and to avail themselves of teachers who might be able to help them with creating Excel spread-sheets or word-processing assessment tasks and provide that support. What that will do is not only support those students so we have less dropout in tertiary education but also raise the whole expectation in country towns of being able to go on and participate in tertiary education. A lot of the low participation rates in tertiary education are because there is a low expectation that that is actually a realistic pathway for students to take. But if there are tertiary education students at the schools with the high school students, actually using these facilities to participate in tertiary education, that might start to turn around.<sup>92</sup>

3.72 The Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW suggests that policy makers should focus on recruiting rural students to teaching because the evidence is that these students are more likely to return and teach in rural areas – even if they attended metropolitan universities.<sup>93</sup> Mr Taylor, called for teaching and learning and innovation to be prioritised in rural and remote areas in Australia. Mr Taylor explained that:

We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect the gap to narrow or for the situation to improve. We have to concede that we have a crisis in educational opportunity and outcome in rural and remote areas, set ourselves targets for improvement and become accountable for making that improvement happen. That will require innovation. That will require translating successful programs for isolated students from other schools within Australia and internationally and multiplying those programs across our own schools. That will require collaboration rather than competition in our rural schooling sector.<sup>94</sup>

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90 Mr Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2012, p. 34.

91 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 17.

92 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, pp 17–18.

93 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 16.

94 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 16.

***Committee view***

3.73 To reiterate the view expressed by Ms Hollis earlier in this section, rural students must not be disadvantaged because of their rural postcode. Australian governments at all levels must work to support rural teachers, principals and communities to provide the best education to rural students. The committee notes the evidence provided earlier in this chapter that rural and remote schools often struggle to recruit qualified maths and science teachers. It is crucial that appropriate incentives are in place to encourage teachers to work in hard-to-staff positions across Australia, including those in remote and rural locations.<sup>95</sup>

**Recommendation 4**

**3.74 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, urgently work to identify measures to close the gap between educational outcomes for rural and remote students and metropolitan students. Funding measures may be required to ensure that each student is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential.**

**Recommendation 5**

**3.75 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors review the current incentives arrangements for hard-to-staff positions in metropolitan, regional, remote and rural schools, to ensure that these are appropriate.**

***Immigrant status and language background***

3.76 Immigrant status and language background did not have a significant impact on attainment in the reading literacy test. ACER reported that:

- No significant differences were found between the average reading literacy scores of Australian-born and foreign-born students.
- No significant differences between the average reading performances of students who spoke English as their main language at home compared to those students whose main language at home was a language other than English.
- There were 12 per cent of Australian-born students, 16 per cent of first-generation students and 14 per cent of foreign-born students who achieved the higher levels in reading literacy.

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95 As recommended by the Productivity Commissioner: Productivity Research Report, *Schools Workforce*, April 2012, p. 117. (See pp 111-113 for examples of current incentives already in place in the states and territories).



- 14 per cent of Australian born students, 11 per cent of first-generation students and 15 per cent of foreign-born students failed to reach the satisfactory level in reading literacy.<sup>96</sup>

3.77 First generation and foreign born students performed well in mathematical literacy. ACER reported that Australian born students attained a mean score significantly lower than the average score attained by first-generation students. ACES advised that there were no significant differences between the average scores of Australian-born and foreign-born students, nor between the scores of first-generation and foreign-born students. There were no significant differences found in the average mathematical literacy performance of students who spoke English as their main language at home compared to those students whose main language at home was a language other than English.<sup>97</sup>

3.78 In scientific literacy, Australian-born students attained a mean score that was significantly lower than first-generation students and similar to the mean score for foreign born students. On average, students who spoke English at home scored significantly higher in scientific literacy (532 score points) than did students who spoke a language other than English (512 score points).<sup>98</sup>

3.79 The evidence indicates that foreign born and first generation Australian students are generally well served by the education policies. However, this data is represented in terms of means, medians and averages. The experience of some students who have moved to Australia from overseas can be very challenging. During the Sydney hearing Mr Habib Mohammadi, a public High School student, told the committee about the particular difficulties he faced when he first enrolled in an Australian school:

I came from Pakistan about five years ago, but I was born in Afghanistan. I never went to school in Pakistan or Afghanistan. I was raised in Pakistan. When I came here, the education was totally different for me to study. I did not know how to speak English, read, write or talk with others. I went to a language school and went to primary school in the first year, which did not help me a lot. Then I moved to Cranbourne Secondary College and started year 7. I still did not know how to read or write, but I was lucky enough that I had good teachers helping me out through the year and I learned a lot in that year.

The first year of my secondary school was really bad due to a lot of discrimination, racism and bullying against my culture and me which I experienced. I started playing footy. That was the same thing as the first two years. I was getting a lot of discrimination on the ground, getting told

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96 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 13.

97 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 14.

98 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 14.

off and getting told to go back to my country, which was really sad. I thought the difference in the first two years was that I could not find the difference between my country, Pakistan and here. There was no difference. It was basically the same thing. I was not feeling safe at school.<sup>99</sup>

3.80 Mr Mohammadi explained that in Year 9 he decided to take action and started working with the City of Casey youth community workers with whom he set up a program called Multi-Pride to support students from different cultures, particularly to address racism and bullying. Together the students 'try to solve the problems and help others to feel safe and learn more'.<sup>100</sup> Mr Mohammadi shared that student outcomes in the Afghan migrant community are improving, and he links this to a decrease in bullying:

In my last few years at school, everyone in the Afghan community was getting a score of 50 or 60. Last year a student got 98, and it was the top student in the Afghan community. One of the reasons was that it was a safe environment for him. There was no bullying or racism going on. He was just focusing on his study rather than having conflict with other persons saying your culture is this or that.<sup>101</sup>

3.81 Mr Mohammadi explained that he is committed to school, and grateful to the teachers who stayed back late to tutor him in English. However, he would like more time each week to be spent studying the English language:

We only do four periods a week. It does not help me a lot, but it does help in some places. We need more of that. I do outdoor education, which is basically about working in the environment. Some of the words used in that subject are really challenging for me. And there is psychology as well, which I had never heard of in my country, which I did in year 10. Some of the words used are challenging, so what I want from the government is more time for people to learn vocabulary and for teachers to help students if they need it.<sup>102</sup>

3.82 It is not surprising that student educational outcomes improve when school is a safe place and appropriate social supports are in place. The committee trusts that any changes to school funding, currently the subject of negotiation between the states and territories with the Commonwealth, will take into account the particular needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds.

### **Other factors that influence student achievement**

3.83 In addition to socio-economic status, cultural background and geographic location there are other factors that influence achievement. The most significant of these are teacher and parental expectations, and effective behavioural management.

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99 Mr Habib Mohammadi, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, pp 12–13 (Appearance facilitated by the Foundation for Young Australians, *Submission 55*).

100 Mr Habib Mohammadi, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 13.

101 Mr Habib Mohammadi, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 20.

102 Mr Habib Mohammadi, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 18.

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**Behavioural issues**

3.84 Many teachers are concerned about student behaviour and classroom management, although opinions were mixed as to the cause of poor behaviour.

3.85 The committee received evidence *in camera* from a teacher that student behaviour is the 'major contributor to a child's learning' and that students who are well behaved have better learning outcomes. The committee was told that:

[W]ell-behaved children learn a great deal better and a great deal more than poorly behaved children. It should not be the teacher's responsibility to fix this...I find there is relatively little focus on supporting teachers with student behavioural issues, which teachers themselves should not need to manage. As professionals, we could do with greater responsibility from government to put in place sufficient deterrents to ensure that a more civil environment for every child can be obtained in every single school in this country. We have an educational crisis and the solution is not to put greater pressure on teachers but to release them from added burdens.<sup>103</sup>

3.86 The confidential witness told the committee that teachers 'are in no way resourced and never will be properly skilled' to deal with the excesses of student behaviour and this behaviour is 'a constant, disruptive and wasteful input into a classroom'. One example of poor behaviour was particularly concerning. The witness advised the committee that once he had dealt with the behaviour, he then needed to console and calm down the remaining students. The emotional impact on the well behaved students constrains their ability to learn long after the problematic student has left the classroom. The committee heard that a good principal will support teachers, have autonomy and a sense of what it is really like in the classroom. Poor student behaviour is exacerbated when teachers are not supported by the school principal to manage student behaviour.

3.87 Mr Christopher Watt, Independent Education Union of Australia, acknowledged that there are no simple answers. However, he suggested that many behavioural problems stem from poor literacy and numeracy and could be prevented through early intervention:

My view is that if we put more appropriately targeted resources into those early years to make sure that every child is able to read and write and do basic numeracy then some of the issues that I have encountered as a secondary teacher would be mitigated. When they are in year 8 or year 9 they have become totally disconnected from their learning. They have not been able to do much learning for the previous five or six years because they did not learn to read well in the early years because there was no reading support or reading recovery teachers provided. If we did that, those would be engaged in learning because they can learn. I think some of the

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103 Confidential Witness, 5 March 2012, Canberra.

disconnect in terms of kids in the classroom is because they missed out along the way and it was not addressed.<sup>104</sup>

3.88 Mr Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, suggested that behavioural issues can have a number of causes, some of which rest with the teacher. For example, it is important to consider whether the teacher is engaging and able to properly engage students in the subject matter, and that the learning style is 'appropriate to the culture and context of a particular school'.<sup>105</sup>

3.89 Mr Watt submitted that quality teaching practice and proper resourcing within classrooms can address challenging behaviour. Mr Watt explained that:

I think teachers by and large have recognised that the old models of teaching do not work and did not work for a range of kids. Teachers have been retraining themselves and there are quite different approaches going on in classrooms now to ensure that teachers are better engaged. But teachers need continued assistance with that because, as we know, it is quite an aged workforce. Many of them started on average over 20 years ago when some of the child centred project learning work was not understood, was not taught in pre-teacher training and certainly was not developed in their early years. So I think there is work that can still be done with the profession.

Another element goes to the basic resourcing within classrooms, with respect to those students' behaviours. Sometimes they are behaviours that relate to the child themselves, rather than the learning environment, so we need resources around that. There is significant work underway in terms of students with a disability, and some additional resources are being put in there—and new standards and what have you. I do not want to confuse that work with these students who have particular behavioural needs, but we need a similar body of work around these kids to assess what their needs are.<sup>106</sup>

3.90 Parents and caregivers also need to take responsibility for ensuring that students are aware of what behaviour is appropriate at school. Unfortunately this does not always happen, the Australian Education Union of Australia reported that:

We have had members—and I have seen it in my own teaching—who, when they challenge a child's behaviour and say, 'You wouldn't do that at home', they are told, 'Yes, I do' or 'Yes, I can'. And if you ask the parents to be engaged with some of that, they are not interested—they just say, 'That's the school's issue; they're your responsibility while they're at school—you deal with it'. I think that has been a significant shift in the way the expectations placed on schools have moved. It is manifest in a range of

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104 Mr Christopher Watt, Australian Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 6.

105 Mr Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2012, p. 35.

106 Mr Christopher Watt, Australian Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 6.

other things, for example all of the additional curricula requirements, whether it is bike education, driver education, drug education, stranger danger—all of which are important and good things, but more and more things seem to be put onto schools that historically have been the domain of the broader community.<sup>107</sup>

3.91 Mr Taylor observed that the current policy of encouraging students to remain in schooling until the end of year 12 has resulted in some lost opportunities for many students and contributed to some behavioural problems:

The government has made schooling go now to later years. It is more difficult to leave school early. We are finding out in rural and remote schools that that is possibly a retrograde step, because students that would previously have left school and gone into a vocation or a trade, or just left school anyway, are now staying at school, and often the behavioural problems that result from that are making it difficult for the students who want to stay at school and continue to study. So I think lengthening the years that people stay at school has increased behavioural problems, and I think it is incumbent on the community or on the schooling sector to provide those kids with something useful to do while they are at school if they are students who would otherwise have left. It is no good regulating to make these students stay at school but not changing curriculums and the capacity to cater for them. The growth in vocational education in schools has been one thing that has assisted to keep these students engaged, but I still think it is a terrible problem.<sup>108</sup>

3.92 It is important that students who are 'good with their hands' and not academically minded are provided with opportunities to achieve their potential outside of the school environment.<sup>109</sup> Failure to provide such opportunities can result in disruptive behaviour.

### *Committee view*

3.93 Classroom management is a complex task that teachers, principals and parents need to support each other to achieve. Schools need to be safe and rewarding places to learn and work. Students must also be encouraged to take personal responsibility for their learning.

### **Recommendation 6**

**3.94 The committee recommends that the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership ensure that university teaching programs provide appropriate practical and theoretical training to pre-service teachers in effective behavioural management.**

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107 Mr Christopher Watt, Australian Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 7.

108 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 17.

109 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 32.

## Recommendation 7

**3.95 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors, consider initiatives to better support teachers and principals to effectively manage behaviour in Australian schools.**

### *Expectations*

3.96 An often overlooked factor that has a significant impact on student achievement is parent and teacher expectations of students. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds can, and should, perform well at school.

3.97 The importance of expectations was studied in the TIMMS and PIRLS questionnaires, with interesting results. Those students performed better on the tests had parents who expected they would complete a university degree:

Parents' aspirations for their children have been found to strongly predict a student's own educational aspirations, and in turn these strongly predict student achievement. Results from the Home questionnaire provided evidence for a relationship between parents' aspirations for their 10-year-old child and student achievement. Students whose parents expected that they would complete at least a university degree significantly and substantially (44 points in reading, 47 points in mathematics, 48 points in science) outperformed students whose parents expected their child to complete a TAFE qualification or similar (post-secondary but not university), as well as those whose parents did not expect them to complete anything past secondary education.<sup>110</sup>

3.98 The key reason outside the classroom that students from a disadvantaged background are more likely to perform poorly is low expectations. Professor John Hattie's research found that parental expectations had the largest impact on student outcomes (in terms of factors that originate with parents). This had a bigger impact on student performance than other factors such as parental communication with the school or having a quiet place to study.<sup>111</sup>

3.99 Dr Kevin Donnelly submitted that the expectations of teachers are just as important as the expectations of parents, and we should not accept that children with low SES backgrounds will perform poorly. During the Melbourne hearing Dr Donnelly submitted that 'Parenting is important but I would still argue good teachers with an effective curriculum should be able to pick up kids who do not always have that benefit'.<sup>112</sup> Dr Donnelly praised the student results obtained by

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110 Australian Council for Education Research, *PISA in brief: Highlights from the full Australian Report – Challenges for Australian Education: Results from PISA 2009*, p. 33.

111 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 6. (Citing Professor John Hattie's 2008 Research).

112 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 31.

Mr John Fleming, discussed earlier. Prior to working at Haileybury Mr Fleming worked as a principal at a school that was:

..very low SES, very working-class, very migrant, but he had excellent results in NAPLAN and his argument was 'No excuses; set the bar high, make the teachers work hard, make the kids work hard.' Give them a good quality curriculum and you can achieve things.<sup>113</sup>

3.100 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, told the committee that it is challenging for some parents to have high expectations for their children when they themselves have not completed high school, however teachers can overcome this:

What teachers have to have is the highest expectations for every child; and one of the dangers of concentrations of children and students who come out of families where many of them have probably not gone past year 9 or 10 in education is that the expectations for these students are low. That is something we have to change. I have seen some shocking examples of that—where because there has been a high Indigenous population, 'Well, they won't learn anything,' and, of course, they do not.<sup>114</sup>

3.101 Professor Rickards discussed a study into the learning outcomes for children with hearing loss. The study found that the most important factor for those children with appropriate levels of literacy was expectations, and those children who had teachers and parents with high expectations had the best outcomes.<sup>115</sup> This example can be applied to teaching generally.

### *Committee view*

3.102 The evidence clearly indicates that alongside teachers, parents and guardians play a critically role important in their children's education.

## **Recommendation 8**

**3.103 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work with the Catholic and Independent School sectors to further develop programs to ensure that parents and guardians have the highest expectations for each child, regardless of socio economic status.**

### *Students with a disability*

3.104 Children with a Disability Australia (CDA) reports that 'on every measure students with disability are performing more poorly than their peers in Australian schools'.<sup>116</sup> CDA provided the following evidence to support this observation:

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113 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 31.

114 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 14.

115 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 14.

116 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 4.

- 63 per cent of school children with disability experienced difficulty fitting in at school;
- 29.6 per cent of people aged 15 to 64 years with reported disability had completed Year 12 compared to 49.3 per cent of people without a disability;
- 12.7 per cent of people with a disability had completed a bachelor degree or higher compared to 19.7 per cent of people without a disability; and
- Around 15% of Australian students require additional assistance but only 5% receive funded supports.<sup>117</sup>

3.105 The Australian Education Union (AEU) reports that 78 per cent of students with a disability are concentrated in public schools.<sup>118</sup> While targeted funding is provided for students in public schools, the AEU advised that the increased funding has 'not been sufficient' to meet the needs of an increasing number of students.<sup>119</sup>

3.106 CDA reported that the Catholic and independent sectors also enrol students with a disability and particularly struggle to access adequate funding supports for students and often rely on donations from parents, Medicare and internal funds.<sup>120</sup> For example, the Australian Council of Jewish Schools reported that it receives minimal funding from the government for 'a significant number of students who suffer intellectual and/or physical disabilities'.<sup>121</sup> On average, four per cent of its student population has a disability, with one school having a disability rate of 15 per cent.<sup>122</sup>

3.107 The CDA submission provides a number of examples where governments, teachers, schools and communities have failed to provide appropriate support to children with disability. At times, where funding is unavailable, schools have only allowed the child to attend part-time or even for just an hour a day. These problems are exacerbated because of an increase in the number of children with disability. For example, demand for the NSW Government program that supports students with disability has increased by 144 per cent in the past decade.<sup>123</sup> At the beginning of the decade, 2.7 per cent of enrolled students received funding from the NSW government due to disability, in 2012 this had increased to 6.7 per cent of students.<sup>124</sup>

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117 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 5. (Footnotes in original submission)

118 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

119 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 17.

120 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 9.

121 Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Submission 34*, p. 1.

122 Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Submission 34*, p. 1.

123 NSW Department of Education and Communities, Implementation Plan for the More Support for Students with Disabilities Initiative, COAG, 2012. Cited in Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 8.

124 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 17.



3.108 The increasing number of students with a disability places more pressure on teachers. However, the majority of teachers do not hold special education qualifications. A South Australian study reported that only 4.4 per cent of teachers in that state held the relevant qualifications.<sup>125</sup> The AEU agreed that teachers are often not well prepared to teach students with disabilities, and this will have an impact not only on the student with a disability but also the other students in the class.<sup>126</sup>

3.109 Teaching competencies, including teaching students with a disability, are articulated in the National Professional Standards for Teachers. CDA calls for 'a major investment in professional training' to ensure that these standards are met (and exceeded).<sup>127</sup>

3.110 The CDA acknowledges that a number of the concerns outlined in its submission are 'beginning to be addressed' by a number of current initiatives. These include:

- More Support for Students with Disabilities National Partnerships (aimed at capacity building in all education systems);
- Nationally Consistent Data Collection (COAG initiative to address the inconsistent definitions of disability in school systems and collecting data to assist with the new funding system for schools); and
- The National Curriculum (work by ACARA to develop materials for students with a disability within the National Curriculum).

#### *Committee view*

3.111 The committee supports CDA's vision that one day:

[C]hildren and young people with disability living in Australia are afforded every opportunity to thrive, achieve their potential and that their rights and interests as individuals, members of a family and their community are met.<sup>128</sup>

3.112 The presence of special needs will often impact upon a student's ability to perform well at school, however supports must be in place to ensure that each student can learn to the best of their ability. Expectations of parents and teachers are important. Students also need infrastructure and specialist support. The committee is aware of the current federal and COAG initiatives to students with a disability, and hopes that the outcomes of these programs will benefit students in government, Catholic and independent schools. The National Disability Insurance Scheme will provide further support to children with disabilities, once the program is rolled out. In the short-term, any discussion about increases to school funding needs to focus on

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125 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 9.

126 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 16.

127 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 9.

128 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 1.

supporting the particular needs of students with disability to ensure that a 'learning/education service' not just a 'disability service' is provided to students.<sup>129</sup>

## Recommendation 9

**3.113 The committee recommends that Commonwealth Government work with state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors to ensure that adequate funding for support is provided to all students with a disability, to ensure that each student with a disability is given every opportunity to thrive and reach their potential in a safe and appropriate environment.**

### *School autonomy*

3.114 The committee is aware that a number of states and territories have been trialling programs to provide public schools with greater autonomy. The degree of autonomy varies between states. The Western Australian Government's Independent Public Schools initiative gives schools greater flexibility to respond to the needs of their local community; principals can recruit staff and control the school's budget.<sup>130</sup> The Queensland Government also recently announced the expansion of their Independent Schools program.<sup>131</sup> Victoria has a 'decentralised system where principals have a high degree of autonomy'.<sup>132</sup>

3.115 Submitters and witness had mixed attitudes to the issue of autonomy. Ms Catto, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, pointed out that principals who have control over recruiting staff also then have an increased administrative workload. There is also a 'smaller pool' of teachers for the non-independent public schools.<sup>133</sup> Mr Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury Independent School said that 'principal autonomy', the ability to oversee teacher performance and control recruitment that makes independent schools successful in Australia.<sup>134</sup> The Australian Primary Principals Association argued that discussions about autonomy

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129 Children with Disability Australia, *Submission 23*, p. 8.

130 Department of Education (Western Australia), Fact sheet for parents and communities, <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/independentpublicschools/detcms/navigation/information-for-parents-and-communities/overview-of-the-independent-public-schools-initiative/> (accessed 7 May 2013).

131 Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment, 'Great Teachers = Great results: A direct action plan for Queensland schools Factsheet', April 2013.

132 Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Submission 43*, Attachment 1, p. 3.

133 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 42.

134 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 46.

need to be in the context of the whole school, rather than simply the 'position of the principal' being autonomous.<sup>135</sup>

3.116 Mr Geoff Metcalf, former principal of an independent school in Western Australia, praised the independent school model, crediting it with an increase in 'the level of aspirations of the school and the community'. In a 2011 speech Mr Metcalf explained that as a result of becoming an independent school, Roseworth Primary School has:

[E]mbraced the opportunity to develop a culture of self-belief and self-worth. Anyone who visits the school is inspired by the way in which the community has engaged with the school and demonstrates such a strong sense of pride. Independent Public School status recognised that Roseworth had the potential and capacity to take a greater level of leadership in its own affairs and the school community has responded in kind. There is an element of self-fulfilling prophecy about IPS [Independent Public Schools] for a school like Roseworth. The school community feels that they are entrusted to make decisions and to know the decisions made are in the school's best interest. Raising the aspirations of the community has been an empowering journey and has embedded a sense of community ownership.<sup>136</sup>

3.117 The benefits described by Mr Metcalf are to be praised, particularly given earlier discussion in this chapter about the value of teacher and parent expectations for children. However, it is unclear whether school autonomy ultimately improves student outcomes.<sup>137</sup> Ms Catto, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, described how there has yet to be a thorough analysis of the Western Australian program:

Our concern is that we are some years into the program and are yet to see a comprehensive review that demonstrates that the primary achievement or result of this is an improvement in student outcome. That has to be the primary benefit because schools are about education. If that is not being achieved then we would have to question the rapid rollout of almost a third of our public schools becoming independent public schools.<sup>138</sup>

3.118 Clearly further research into school autonomy and its impact on student performance is required.

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135 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 8.

136 Mr Geoff Metcalf, Acting Executive Director of Early Childhood Development and former principal of Roseworth Primary School, 'A year and more on', 5 August 2011 (speech given at the launch of the third intake of independent public schools). Available online: <http://www.det.wa.edu.au/independentpublicschools/detcms/independent-public-schools/news/ips-.en?oid=NewsItem-id-11871304> (accessed 6 May 2013).

137 Save Our Schools, Submission 52, p. 22.

138 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 42.

## Recommendation 10

**3.119 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood conduct research into whether public schools participating in school autonomy programs have improved student results.**

### *Access to technology*

3.120 Technology can be a useful tool in classrooms, particularly when it works and adequate technical support is provided. However, witnesses submitted that what is important is that teachers know how to use the technology for teaching and learning, and that 'good teaching needs to underlie...technological possibilities'.<sup>139</sup>

3.121 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute reported research indicating that computers and technology were not the primary determinant of how well particular countries did in the OECD PISA tests. Indeed, the 'researchers suggested...that an overreliance on technology can be counterproductive and that there can be unintended consequences'.<sup>140</sup>

3.122 Mr Anish Badgeri, a recent graduate of Perth Modern School, acknowledged that access to technology can be good 'in terms of enriching our educational experience', however he 'did not feel that they were that essential towards the final outcome in year 12'.<sup>141</sup> Mr Jonathan Israel preferred tablets to laptops, submitting that:

You would move into a class, you would take out the laptop and productivity would decline dramatically...You just do not have the attention of the students so much. In my experience tablets and iPads are better than laptops. With the full-time use of laptops in every single class, I believe that people lose attention and the ability to write—quite literally. Handwriting got progressively worse. Mine was awful. Mine is still awful. I think they can be a very, very good tool but the attitude needs to be there and they cannot be taken out in every class.<sup>142</sup>

3.123 The continued spread of technology can be a helpful resource for teachers and students in rural areas. For example, in western New South Wales a class of gifted and talented students in remote and rural areas do accelerated lessons in maths, English and science lessons together as a class through videoconferencing. This program enables students to study at a high level that would not others be able to access these advanced programs because of a lack of critical mass in their own schools.<sup>143</sup>

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139 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 18.

140 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 29.

141 Mr Anish Badgeri, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 13.

142 Mr Jonathan Israel, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, pp 12–13.

143 Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parent's Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 21.

3.124 Mr Christopher Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, described the challenges faced by schools when technology fails to work:

Whilst equipment has become more portable and robust, in most schools where I talk to teachers the fact is that from time to time the stuff just does not work. Maybe things are different here, but I know that in my office on a regular basis the IT does not work, for whatever reason—the net goes down or the printer does not work. In a school, which is a fairly large organism, whose responsibility is it? Who is resourced to make sure that the server is working? If the internet is down, how and why is it down? Teachers want to access it and they have got lesson plans based on doing something on Google maps, for instance, on that day and you cannot get the internet—and the printer does not work and the electronic whiteboard is not working. There is a whole raft of high quality IT going on, but not necessarily the support structures to assure that it keeps going. So that is one element of stress in terms of resourcing.<sup>144</sup>

3.125 Technologies, including high speed broadband, have the capacity to enhance student learning when utilised by quality teachers to achieve educational outcomes. These benefits will be experienced particularly by students in rural and remote locations.

## Conclusion

3.126 Australian students are performing well when measured against students overseas, particularly on the sophisticated OECD PISA tests.<sup>145</sup> Australia is maintaining its high standard – however there has been little improvement.

3.127 The evidence presented to the committee and outlined in this chapter leads to the inevitable conclusion that Australian education policies – at both a federal and local level – are failing the lowest performing students in Australia, and, these students are predominantly from disadvantage backgrounds. The committee has made particular recommendations to address these weaknesses.

3.128 Within the school, teachers, principals, support staff and infrastructure all have an impact on student performance. These factors are more easily managed by governments, provided that sufficient resources are available and strategic policies are implemented.

3.129 Parents and caregivers play a very important role in each child's education, particularly in the years prior to commencing school. It is critical that all parents believe that their child will do their best at school, experience success and move onto trade training or university. Schools must work to assist parents in this important role, and government programs should be expanded to support parents to support their children.

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144 Mr Christopher Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2012, p. 5.

145 The committee has given more weight to Australia's performance in tests that examine creativity and problem solving and not just rote learning, such as OECD PISA.

3.130 Teachers and parents also need to support those students who elect to undertake trades training rather than complete Year 12. Trades training can provide useful skills to assist young people to join the workforce and make a positive contribution to the community. For some students, early access to trades training will be much more beneficial than pursuing Year 12 academic studies. Government policies need to reflect this reality.

3.131 High teacher and parent expectations of children can be undone by poor behavioural management practices and poor student behaviour. Teachers must receive appropriate training to ensure they are equipped to effectively manage student behaviour, and teachers need to feel supported by the principal and the relevant authorities. Parents and students must also respect the important role that teachers have in teaching and learning.

3.132 While some targeted programs will be required, and have been recommended in this chapter, the answer is not simply to spend more money. The remaining two chapters examine how strategic approaches to improving teacher quality can contribute to improved educational outcomes for Australian students.

# CHAPTER 4

## Selection, training and registration of teachers

### Introduction

4.1 A key focus of this inquiry has been the selection, training and registration of teachers. This Chapter will analyse trends and concerns in the selection, training and registration of teachers. It will begin by defining the term 'quality teachers' before looking more closely at the issues of entry into education courses; training courses for pre-service teachers at university and ensuring a quality supply of teachers through registration management.

4.2 Although witnesses and submitters agreed that standards for the teaching profession are necessary, the committee heard a variety of perspectives on what those standards should be and whether or not current arrangements are appropriate. Opinions varied on the question of when candidates should be selected: at entry to teaching courses, at graduation or at registration.

4.3 A number of submitters called for an overhaul of the entire system of selection, training and registration. For example, Dr Ben Jensen, Grattan Institute, told the committee during the Melbourne hearing that in his view:

[F]ewer people should go into either a Bachelor of Teaching or whatever you want to call the particular courses. I believe we should train fewer. We should set much tighter requirements coming out and put some resources into seriously assessing students who come out the other end.<sup>1</sup>

4.4 Incept Labs reached a similar conclusion, submitting that recruitment, selection, retention and preparation of teachers is a key area for improvement in Australia because:

What our work indicates, is that a key driver of educational outcomes is the spectrum of beliefs the teaching workforce hold in relation to teaching and learning, and the proportions in which these beliefs are held by the teaching workforce.

4.5 However, Incept Labs warned that simple measures that only address one issue – such as changes to ATAR scores – will have limited impact because they do

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1 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

not account for the fundamental influence that a teacher's beliefs have on performance.<sup>2</sup>

### Quality teachers

4.6 Before we turn to the key focus of this chapter, it is important to first consider the qualities that make a 'good' teacher – because once the desired attributes are identified, selection processes can be informed and targeted.<sup>3</sup> A number of witnesses and submitters described quality teaching, and the most helpful descriptions follow.

4.7 Professor Geoff Masters, Australian Council for Educational Research, reported that the feedback he had received from principals was that the most important attribute a teacher can possess is the ability to work with children. Combined with this, teachers also need to be able to know their subject and how children learn that subject.<sup>4</sup> It is crucial then that teachers only teach subjects that they are qualified to teach.

4.8 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, agreed that quality teaching is more than a good education and intelligence, as teachers also need to have a passion and desire for teaching. During the Sydney hearing Ms Catto observed that:

Something that is hard to measure is a person's attitude and their desire or their love of teaching, and those kinds of things. There is no point having an extremely intelligent person going into teaching who has no desire to work with children and invest in those children.<sup>5</sup>

4.9 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, considered if a teacher is not 'very strong with relationships' and 'passionate' about their work, then :

[It] does not matter how much training and how much set curriculum you feed them on a plate—they will not be effective in the classroom.<sup>6</sup>

4.10 A quality teacher will also see his or her role as a profession, not just a craft. Professional teachers are equipped to examine evidence and determine what action will promote learning for each student in their particular context.

2 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 19 – 20. The authors of the Supplementary Submission, coordinated by Incept Labs, are: Dr Chris Goldspink and Dr Robert Kay of Incept Labs, Professor Terry Lovat, Newcastle University, Professor Martin Westwell, Flinders University, Teaching and Learning Services (Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia), and Human Resources and Workforce Development (Department for Education and Child Development, South Australia).

3 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission.

4 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 50.

5 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 43.

6 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 9.



Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, described the difference between those who practice the craft of teaching and those who are professionals:

There will be many, many teachers who see [teaching] only as a craft and they are not in any position to evaluate what are the evidence based interventions that are going to work. When it becomes a profession, teachers are available to evaluate data but also evaluate evidence and say, 'Here is the evidence base that says this is going to work,' and are able to implement it.<sup>7</sup>

4.11 Incept Labs suggested that quality teaching should include the capability to support students in achieving the Melbourne Goals, particularly Goal 2, discussed in Chapter 2. Incept Labs cited and endorsed the following description of quality teaching:

Accomplished teachers...treat students equitably. ...They...adjust their practice based on observation and knowledge of their students' interests, abilities, skills, knowledge, family circumstances and peer relationships...they foster students' self-esteem, motivation, character, civic responsibility and their respect for individual, cultural, religious and racial differences.<sup>8</sup>

4.12 Quality teachers will also have pedagogical content knowledge – that is, expertise in the subjects they teach, and an understanding of how students from a range of backgrounds and abilities learn that subject. Incept Labs explains that:

It is a teacher's [pedagogical content knowledge] that provides for the use of multiple representations of concepts (e.g. analogies, metaphors, models, experiences) and multiple entry points into an idea so that each of the students in every classroom have a way into a concept that is meaningful to them. PCK transforms discipline content knowledge into a school subject that is constructed in such a way so as to meet the needs of the diversity of students (Panizzon, 2011, Shulman, 1986).<sup>9</sup>

4.13 These descriptions give a sense of the sort of qualities that applicants for education programs should possess, and also indicate that the attributes of a quality teacher are multiple and are not limited to academic ability.

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7 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 19. See also, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*.

8 The USA National Board for Professional Teaching Standards, 1999, pp 3–4, cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 2.

9 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14 (see pp 22 – 24 for full references of works cited).

## Entry to education courses

### *Admission policy*

4.14 The federal government introduced demand-driven funding for undergraduate education at public universities in early 2012: this means that university places are no longer capped and that each university sets its own entry standards and decides how many students it will enrol in each course. This policy was introduced following a recommendation of the Bradley Review of Higher Education<sup>10</sup>. The federal government advises that this reform is designed to promote growth in the education sector and ensure that Australia has sufficient quality graduates to meet its skill needs.<sup>11</sup>

4.15 A natural consequence of this policy has been a further drop in entrance requirements for teaching courses at some institutions. With a view to preventing a corresponding fall in the quality of teaching graduates, the federal government introduced new Accreditation Standards for teaching programs that have applied from the beginning of this year to all new teaching programs and programs due for reaccreditation.<sup>12</sup> The Accreditation Standards include a requirement that universities demonstrate that graduates from teaching programs have attained the level of proficiency required for a Graduate under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers.<sup>13</sup> The standards also require that entrants to teaching courses have personal literacy and numeracy levels in the top 30 per cent of the population either prior to commencing studies or prior to graduating.<sup>14</sup>

### *Current entry standards*

#### *Background*

4.16 The committee was surprised at the range of entrance requirements of teacher training courses. For example, the University of Melbourne graduate teacher training course has rigorous entry standards: students must achieve either second class honours or a distinction average in their undergraduate studies.<sup>15</sup> In contrast, some universities have much lower entry standards, indeed one institution admits students with ATAR

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<sup>10</sup> Australian Government (Denise Bradley, Peter Noonan, Helen Nugent, Bill Scales), *Review of Australian Higher Education – Final Report*, December 2008, p. xxiii.

<sup>11</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

<sup>12</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10. See also, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> A public statement that outlines what constitutes teacher quality: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

<sup>14</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10. See Chapter 2 for recent government announcements in relation to teacher entry standards.

<sup>15</sup> Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

scores as low as 43 and other universities have alternate entry points where some students have not even completed year 11 and 12. The result is a variance in teacher quality and 'the differential between the top and the bottom is widening at a rapid rate'.<sup>16</sup>

4.17 The Australian Council of Deans of Education submitted that despite minimum entry requirements many education entrants do have high ATAR scores, many are postgraduate entrants and a high ATAR score is more an indicator of the suburb the student lives in, the school they attended and the family and/or community support they received.<sup>17</sup> The Deans further submit that education faculties provide appropriate support to students who need to improve in mathematics and literacy.

4.18 Nevertheless, many submitters connected the low entry standards with a drop in teacher quality and status of the profession. A New South Wales government discussion paper illustrates this point neatly. The paper reported that in 2012 more than 20 per cent of undergraduate entrants to teacher education courses had a Year 12 score below 60, and that university education courses were the least popular choice for students who achieved Year 12 scores above 90.<sup>18</sup> Based on this evidence, teaching would appear to be a back-up option for many middling students, rather than a profession that Australia's top performers aspire to. In relation to this phenomenon, Ms Kylie Catto observed that students who see teaching as a back-up option 'are not necessarily passionate about teaching or passionate about developing young children to the best of their capacity'.<sup>19</sup> Such students may also lack other important attributes, such as aptitude for learning.

4.19 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership submitted that diverse pathways into teaching should be encouraged, however these pathways must 'meet the rigour of the agreed Standards'. AITSL acknowledged that analysis of data about the impact of entry reforms must be collected and published.<sup>20</sup>

### *Graduate entry*

4.20 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education submitted that teacher quality would improve if teaching programs became a graduate course only, as is the case in high performing countries such as Finland. Such a measure would address the 'major oversupply' of teachers seeking employment and also serve to raise the profile of the teaching profession, prevent universities enrolling students who are 'unlikely to be competent in the classroom' and 'ensure that students are more prepared through their

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16 Professor Stephen Dinham, Professor of Teacher Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 15.

17 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 14.

18 NSW Government, 'Great Teaching, Inspired Learning'. Cited in Anna Patty, 'Teaching bar raised: 70% of applicants would be rejected', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 March 2013.

19 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 43.

20 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 9.

undergraduate degrees'.<sup>21</sup> In its experience, the decision to improve the quality of its program and move to a graduate level has 'raised the quality of candidates both coming into and exiting from our programs'.<sup>22</sup>

4.21 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education has cited evidence that 90 per cent of its graduates feel prepared for the classroom, compared to the national average of 40 per cent nationally. The high level of preparedness is attributed in in part to the length and quality of its practicums.<sup>23</sup>

4.22 The Australian Council of Deans of Education argued against a mandatory standard of graduate entry to education courses on the basis that this would exclude many of the diverse people who enter undergraduate degrees, in particular people who are the first members of their family to enter university. Professor Brenda Cherednichenko argued that graduate teachers continue to grow as teachers throughout their careers and that quality teaching should be viewed as 'a whole-of-career journey, not just a teacher education journey'.<sup>24</sup>

4.23 The Australian Mathematical Science Institute expressed doubt that a graduate degree in Primary Teaching will make primary school teachers better at mathematics:

It is all very well for recent graduates to report that they feel more prepared, the reality may be that they feel more prepared, but are not. Janine McIntosh has taught in the University of Melbourne two-year masters (at a time when the university engaged sessional lecturers to cover their courses). The mathematical content knowledge of the primary teaching cohort was a little higher than in previous years under the old system of a four year undergraduate degree, but there were still quite a number of poorly prepared teachers graduating with a less than acceptable standard of mathematics understanding and confidence. The worry here is that Melbourne University's course is considered to be one with the highest standards in the country. There are many primary teachers graduating from other universities who are quite wobbly on their legs mathematically.<sup>25</sup>

### *Prerequisites*

4.24 In addition to higher entry requirements, the committee heard that the quality of primary school teachers would improve if Year 12 mathematics was a prerequisite subject to enrol in teaching programs. This is because students who do not study Year 12 mathematics have 'self-selected' out of the subject generally by year 11, and are not

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21 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

22 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

23 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

24 Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 20.

25 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Response to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013).

'competent' or 'comfortable' with the subject.<sup>26</sup> While students at university are required to study mathematics, the quality of mathematics training varies across institutions and some prospective teachers get a very good foundation and others do not.<sup>27</sup>

4.25 Changing prerequisites will have financial consequences for universities. Dr Alan Finkel, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, explained that if one university raises its standards but others do not, it will be disadvantaged and this is not a problem particular to teaching programs:

If you look at it with that cynical viewpoint, it affects every university. I am not picking on any university. One university cannot take on a whole spectrum of prerequisites without risking losing its opportunity to recruit really smart students who just have not chosen those prerequisites. So the lack of prerequisites is a uniform problem across the whole university space and it leads to consequential problems. If you take engineering, if students were to enter engineering without any calculus background, they would struggle to keep up.<sup>28</sup>

4.26 The absence of confidence and solid grounding in mathematics will have flow on effects on the performance of teachers once they graduate and are in front of classes. It is clear from the evidence that any change to pre-requisites would need to be made by all universities, as the costs are too high for individual faculties.

4.27 It is against this backdrop that during the course of this inquiry a number of Australian governments have responded to calls to increase the minimum entrance requirements for teaching courses by raising ATAR scores and introducing entry and exit testing.<sup>29</sup>

4.28 However, any initiative to improve admission standards must not focus only on Year 12 results. This is for two reasons. Firstly, only a third of entrants to teacher education courses enter on the basis of their Year 12 results. The remaining two thirds of entrants do so as graduate students or on alternate pathways.<sup>30</sup> Secondly, as there are many attributes an individual must possess in order to become a quality teacher, any remedy that focuses only on academic ability is unlikely to select the best candidates.

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26 Ms Janine McIntosh, Schools Manager, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 5.

27 Professor Geoff Prince, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 4.

28 Dr Alan Finkel, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 4.

29 See Chapter 2 of this report.

30 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 12.

### *Selection on the basis of attributes*

4.29 While many submitters called for an increase to minimum ATAR scores, other submitters rejected this measure on its own, and instead recommended a more sophisticated entry process to select the best applicants. Incept Labs provided a particularly well argued and evidence based submission supporting just such an approach and this chapter uses their model as a basis for reform. A number of other submitters made suggestions that are not inconsistent with those made by Incept Labs. For example, Mr Hart, Australian Primary Principals Association, suggested that applicants should be interviewed to determine if they have 'a collaborative approach to working and learning' and whether they are 'suited to the profession of teaching'.<sup>31</sup>

4.30 Many countries have a sophisticated selection process that includes assessing whether the applicant possesses the relevant attributes to enable them to be a good teacher. The Australian Council for Educational Research advised that the education systems that perform highly are selective about whom they will admit into teacher education courses and ensure that the number of teachers trained matches the number of teachers required.<sup>32</sup> This approach takes into account academic ability and a range of other factors so that the right people become teachers – and the wrong ones do not.

4.31 Incept Labs' research concludes that a key driver of teacher quality is the belief that individual teachers have about teaching and learning. Teachers also need to have strong pedagogical content knowledge, as described at the beginning of this chapter. Efforts to improve teacher quality that focus only on ATAR scores or exit tests will not ensure that the best people become teachers, because these:

[S]imple and uninformed formulas are not designed to do the essential job of discerning and discriminating in order to find the kinds of candidates most likely to be disposed to be effective teachers of 21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills.<sup>33</sup>

4.32 Incept Labs' evaluated the Teach SA program. The program was designed increase the number of skilled mathematics and science teachers in South Australia. Incept Labs' findings demonstrate the value of using multiple methods to test suitability for the teaching profession, including: psychometric testing, interviews, role-plays and teaching practice.<sup>34</sup> Each of these tools is inadequate on its own, but contribute to build an image teaching candidate.

4.33 The types of questions in interviews and psychometric testing and the style of role-play need to be calibrated to test the particular attributes that are sought. If this is not done correctly, then the process is expensive and of little use. Incept Labs explains that:

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31 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 13

32 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 45.

33 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14. (21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills are referred to Goal 2 of the Melbourne Goals).

34 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

Interviews can be powerful tools if they ask the right questions; equally, they can be useless if they ask the wrong ones. University entrance scores tell us something about the student, though arguably not much about their disposition towards teaching and learning. Entrance scores might simply tell us that they themselves have been very good at following the scripts their teachers asked them to follow rather than being good at thinking and learning for themselves. Role-plays, teaching observations and psychometric testing all reveal different elements of the picture, however, none provide the overall picture if done alone.<sup>35</sup>

4.34 The results of all the screening processes must be collated and weighted to provide an overall picture of the teaching applicant. A fascinating outcome of this process is that some applicants that have performed highly in some selection criteria have performed very poorly in others. Incept Labs is quick to point out that 'this doesn't mean they lack intelligence, the appropriate motivation or reasonable people skills – but it probably does mean they are not suitable candidates for teaching.'<sup>36</sup> This research highlights the weaknesses of an admission standard that looks only to entry or exit scores. In order to confidently select teaching candidates, a more sophisticated approach is needed.

### **Teacher training courses**

4.35 Teacher training courses across Australia are diverse in quality. At some faculties graduates reported feeling very equipped to teach in a classroom. However, this was the exception and generally the sense of preparedness was quite low. Some witnesses called for strict limits to the number of graduates who receive practical training and are registered to restrict oversupply. Universities, on the other hand, submitted that teaching degrees are highly valued qualifications that are useful in a range of occupations.

### **Coursework**

4.36 As discussed earlier in this chapter, the federal government introduced new Accreditation Standards for teaching programs to ensure that the uncapping of university places (and lower entrance standards) did not result in a corresponding drop in quality of education graduates.<sup>37</sup> All university courses have also been accredited by the Tertiary Education Quality Standards Agency. And the Accreditation Standards include a requirement that universities demonstrate that graduates from teaching programs have attained the level of proficiency required for a graduate under the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers<sup>38</sup> In this regard, at least in theory, the outcomes of teacher training across the country should be the same.

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35 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

36 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 11.

37 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

38 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 12 April 2013), Q10.

4.37 However, there is great variance in teacher training courses across Australia and concerns persist that low entry standards to teaching courses will result in a reduction of teacher exit standards.<sup>39</sup> While the programs provided by the Melbourne Graduate School of Education have been singled out for their innovation and high quality, these are not typical of the types of programs offered by the majority of education institutions.<sup>40</sup> As a testament to this, some principals have also expressed some concern about the quality of some teaching graduates.

4.38 Incept Labs reported a consistent theme emerging from more than 120 interviews recently conducted with a 'wide range of teachers' at different career stages (early, mid and late). The results indicate that 'By and large' teachers interviewed were 'highly critical of the pre-service education experience, particularly with respect to preparing teachers for the real world of the classroom'.<sup>41</sup> Incept Labs concluded that the consistency of experience:

[S]uggests strong systemic influences acting to constrain universities' willingness or capacity to respond to what are, beyond the post-course evaluations, widely recognised problems with pre-service teacher education.<sup>42</sup>

4.39 The Australian Council of Education Deans considers that there have been improvements to teacher standards as a consequence of the introduction of the National Graduate Teacher Standards and the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs Professional Standards.

### ***Engagement between schools and universities***

4.40 The committee heard that universities have advisory committees with employer representation. These groups meet a few times a year to consider the courses, outcomes data and to provide feedback.<sup>43</sup> Dr Ben Jensen criticised the flow of information between universities and schools, describing it as 'miniscule' and 'rarely leading to actual action'.<sup>44</sup>

4.41 If relationships between universities, schools and governments improved, the impact could be substantial. One reason why it is difficult to achieve change in this sector is because of the number of competing interests. Professor Cherednichenko, from the Australian Council of Deans of Education, called for national cohesion to improve educational outcomes overall:

39 See for example, Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 5.

40 For example, Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

41 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 13.

42 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 13.

43 Professor Diane Mayer, Teacher, Education Specialist, Australian Council of Deans of Education, 4 March 2013, p. 25.

44 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 41.



The fix is that we actually need to get together and get cohesion happening nationally. We have various interest groups with different priorities...We actually need some sort of systemic, structural way of continuing to build the relationships between schools, systems and universities so that we are all aligned, trying to get the right outcomes for kids. We are all in it for the same reason, but I do think there are a lot of competing interests that go on.<sup>45</sup>

4.42 On a local level, the committee was pleased to hear that a recent initiative by the University of Canberra has seconded teachers to assist academics to deliver university tutorials to student teachers. The aim of this reform is to create a learning relationship between teachers and academics that also benefits students. Ms Misty Adoniou explained that:

[T]he general feeling was that we wanted it to be a two-way, reciprocal, relationship. We both wanted to learn from each other. There are obvious advantages to bringing seconded teachers in, and there are some inherent things to watch for. If we had a perfect education system at the moment, then it would be fine to just replicate it; but we do not, so we cannot afford to just have people come in and replicate that and talk about the practice they currently use—because we do not have a perfect education system. So we want something that is transformative.<sup>46</sup>

4.43 In response to further questioning by the committee, a number of witnesses and submitters detailed engagement with universities and schools.<sup>47</sup> For example, the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) has strong engagement with universities, particularly in relation to its support program for teachers of mathematics and science (STELR). This organisation has formal arrangements in place with thirteen universities to include the STELR program as part of teacher education programs. ATSE also has strong relationships with universities to ensure that the STELR program has ongoing quality academic input. A number of universities also formally sponsor the work of ATSE, as do a number of state governments and corporations.<sup>48</sup>

### ***Committee view***

4.44 The network between principals, teachers and universities should be strong. The committee was surprised to learn that this is not the case. These examples demonstrate that efforts are being made by some peak groups and universities to

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45 Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 23.

46 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private Capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 29.

47 See for example: University of Melbourne, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013); Deakin University, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 10 April 2013); Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, Answer to questions taken on notice, 4 March 2013, (received 27 March 2013).

48 Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, Response to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 28 March 2013).

actively work with stakeholders to improve outcomes for students, teachers and children. However more can be done in this area. To take a simple example, teachers have practical insights from the classroom to offer university academics and university academics have the latest research and evidence to share with teachers. Similarly, school principals can provide valuable feedback to universities about the quality of teaching graduates, and areas of strength and weakness. The difficulty is ensuring that the right networks are in place for these conversations to occur and that time is found for those networks to operate effectively.

### ***Practical training for pre-service teachers***

4.45 National accreditation standards outline the national standard of practical training for pre-service teachers. Education providers and employers are responsible for the specific arrangements of practicum placements. Supervised teaching practice must:

- mandate at least a satisfactory formal assessment of the program's students against the professional practice elements of the Graduate Teacher Standards as a requirement for graduating from the program;
- be undertaken mostly in a recognised Australian school setting over a substantial and sustained period that is relevant to an authentic classroom environment; and
- include a designated role for supervising teachers in the assessment of the program's students.<sup>49</sup>

4.46 The quality of practical teaching training is impacted by both cost and the oversupply of pre-service teachers. In metropolitan areas, and regions close to a university, demand for placements is extremely high and this impacts the quality of practical training available to students in these areas. Many schools are 'swamped' with requests for practical placements. While schools endeavour to accommodate these requests, sometimes there is 'a compromise' and some of the 'models of teacher educator that students are exposed to are not optimal'.<sup>50</sup>

4.47 The funding issues are structural and arise from an oversight many years ago, where the cost of practicum was not included in university funding for teacher education. In particular, provision was not made for the payment of teachers who supervised practical training. (In contrast, funding was provided for the practical components of other programs, for example nursing and social work).<sup>51</sup> A brief respite was provided in 2004 when Howard government directed \$129 million over three

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49 Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia – Standards and Procedures, National Program Standards, 5.6: AITSL, Response to question taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), Q7.

50 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 14.

51 Research prepared by the NSW Council of Deans of Education cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 17 – 18.

years to cover university practicum costs. However, the current funding on a per capita basis is approximately a third of the previous rate.<sup>52</sup>

4.48 Ms Lorraine Wilson, a former teacher and Deputy Principal in Victoria, described the difference between practical training she received and the current arrangements, submitting that this may explain the low confidence levels of many graduate teachers:

I know that when I trained and even not that long ago it was the university lecturers who came out to supervise teaching practice in schools. They do not have the money to do that anymore. So if anyone comes to see the students in their teaching rounds in the classrooms it is casually employed and usually retired teachers. They are paid at a much lower rate. I know that there is no contact between that casual person and tutors of the undergraduates at university. So the teaching practice is not nearly so valued. They cannot learn from their mistakes by talking about them back at the university.<sup>53</sup>

4.49 Incept Labs' interviews with teachers found that the majority of teachers felt that their university education ill-prepared them for the realities of the classroom. However, there were two exceptions to this overall negative response. One teacher who had experienced two months of practical training was full of praise for the benefits of a longer training and a teacher who entered teaching after an external career felt that wider life experience was a good combination with the theoretical aspects taught at university.<sup>54</sup>

4.50 The Melbourne Graduate School of Education has cited evidence that 90 per cent of its graduates feel prepared for the classroom, compared to the national average of 40 per cent nationally. The high level of preparedness is attributed in part to the length and quality of its practicums.<sup>55</sup>

4.51 Melbourne University and Deakin University have specialised approaches to ensuring that students participate in quality pre-service practical experience in schools. Professor Field Rickards explained:

The model we set up was to have 42 base schools and early childhood networks. We pay for half a teacher's salary in each of those schools and early childhood networks. They are called teaching fellows. They work in partnership with the people based at the university who are teaching experts and who teach the disciplinary subjects and the core learning subjects—they are called clinical specialists. But it is all about building the bridge metaphorically. Do you remember that stuff that John Hattie was speaking about last night? Here it is in practice. So you see the practice, you

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52 Research prepared by the NSW Council of Deans of Education cited by Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, pp 17 – 18.

53 Ms Lorraine Wilson, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 66.

54 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 17.

55 Melbourne Graduate School of Education, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

understand the theory and you understand why the practice is like it is. This is no different really to any other clinical model.<sup>56</sup>

4.52 But it should be noted that these models are very expensive. The Melbourne model, which costs \$2million a year, was initially funded by start-up grants and support from the Catholic education system and still operates with support from the university. Other universities may not have the resources to replicate its model.<sup>57</sup>

4.53 The Productivity Commissioner reported that the current funding for practical training is adequate and meets the needs of pre-service teachers. However Professor Ure, Deakin University, challenged this conclusion, arguing that the current funding is only adequate for antiquated training:

The Productivity Commission decided that teacher education actually had enough money to survive. It does if you look at it at 80 days and 60 days in your program and you send them out in an old model of teacher preparation, but deep teacher preparation requires a close working relationship between the university and the school sectors. Neither sector at the moment is adequately funded to support teacher education in that way, so when these extra funding models run out we scratch and think: 'How are we going to continue to provide that type of program?'<sup>58</sup>

### ***Committee view***

4.54 The quality and length of practical training for pre-service teachers varies across the country. In general terms, demand for practical placements is too high, and neither schools nor universities are adequately funded to provide the support and training required. Action needs to be taken to ensure that pre-service practical training is of high quality and bridges the gap between theory and practice, regardless of the teaching program in which a student is enrolled. Consideration must also be given to capping the number of pre-service teachers who are eligible for pre-service training.

## **Registration of teachers – managing supply and ensuring quality**

4.55 State and territories have set registration standards for many years. Recently, through COAG, the National Professional Standards for Teachers have been developed and include standards for determining the professional requirements for registration to practice.<sup>59</sup>

4.56 However, there is a sense amongst school principals that some graduates entering the teaching profession lack competency and that some universities are

56 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

57 Professor Field Rickards, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

58 Professor Christine Ure, Head of School, Deakin University, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 17.

59 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 5.

passing a small number of students who have 'inadequate levels of literacy and numeracy'.<sup>60</sup> Professor Geofferey Masters, Australian Council of Educational Research, reported that some principals had expressed concern 'about the extent to which some teachers do have minimum levels of grammar, numeracy and so on'.<sup>61</sup> Mr Hart, Australian Primary Principals Association, advised that many principals when discussing the quality of teaching graduates 'will talk to you with concern in their voice'.<sup>62</sup>

4.57 Ms Kylie Catto, President of the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, emphasised the importance of having minimum registration standards, and submitted that robust registration standards will raise the status of the teaching profession.<sup>63</sup>

4.58 Dr Kevin Donnelly of the Education Standards Institute was sceptical of the capacity of the new registration process administered by AITSL to improve quality standards:

[They] are going down the wrong pathway, because all they are doing is imposing a whole new series of constraints on schools and teachers which are making it difficult if not impossible, for teachers to do their job and leaders to their job.<sup>64</sup>

4.59 Dr Ben Jensen offered guarded support for the standards, reminding the committee that states and territories have had standards for many years. He stated that the real test is whether or not the new standards have an impact on practice:

I believe the quality of the standards has increased. I think the national standards are better. But I do not think we should believe that now that we have national standards the world is suddenly going to change.

The real change that comes with teaching, as in improving teaching and therefore improving learning in schools, will come with how those standards are applied in practice. There is a tendency in education to believe that, if we have centrally determined standards, that will naturally appear as significant changes in schools and classrooms—and I do not see that happening. I believe we need standards. I believe it is important to have a benchmark but I also believe there are other things that are perhaps much more important. For example, there is a tendency for some to believe that we need standards and that we need some sort of centralised mechanism for

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60 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 46.

61 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 50.

62 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 10.

63 Ms Kylie Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 41.

64 Dr Kevin Donnelly, Director, Education Standards Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 33.

assessing how teachers reach those standards by various year levels—years of experience. I think the evidence is quite clear that what we want is school leaders and teachers working with each other, observing each other's work, providing feedback on how they can improve their work and therefore improve learning to emphasise that aspect of reform, rather than saying that we need a centralised approach to reform.<sup>65</sup>

4.60 An alternative to increasing entry standards for teachers, particularly given the recent deregulation of university entrance scores, is to introduce a cap on the number of students who can participate in practical training and ultimately on the number of pre-service teachers who can register. Dr Ben Jensen suggested this solution, submitting that graduates who are unsuccessful will still emerge with a university qualification that may serve them well in the marketplace with only the highest performing graduates qualifying to become teachers.<sup>66</sup> Ms Lorraine Wilson, a former teacher and deputy principal, also rejected the suggestion that pre-service teachers should undergo testing prior to registration.<sup>67</sup>

4.61 Professor Masters submitted that filters should be in place both at entry, and at registration:

Many other countries have systems in place for ensuring that, before they are registered to practice, teachers demonstrate minimum standards in particular areas like literacy and numeracy, but in some cases assessments of their teaching skills as well—their pedagogical content knowledge. I think there is international evidence to support stronger systems for ensuring that, before teachers enter classrooms and practice in Australia, they demonstrate minimum standards that we set. In my view, that needs to be done in a nationally consistent and rigorous way.<sup>68</sup>

4.62 Testing at registration provides an incentive for universities to increase the standards of teaching courses and to ensure that students who are not meeting the minimum standards do not pass. Dr Jensen described the registration process in South Korea:

[In] Korea you have a very, very difficult exam process after you graduate but before you are registered. If you want to be registered, you have to pass a really comprehensive examination process. It is a three-tier process: a multiple-choice exam, a longer short essay exam and then a demonstration

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65 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 41.

66 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 37.

67 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Response to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 20 March 2013).

68 Professor Geofferey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 45.

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of teaching in front of a panel. Very few people pass. You have to be very good to get through. Most people will fail their first time.<sup>69</sup>

4.63 Students in South Korea who fail can reapply, and the success rates of each institution are made public. As a consequence, universities who have a high success rate attract more and better quality students, and universities with a very low success rate will have to change their programs or lose students.<sup>70</sup> If applied to the Australian context, this may informally result in feedback to universities where the quality of graduates is not adequate.

4.64 Professor Cherednichenko, of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, advised that her organisation is working closely with AITSL to develop the graduate standards for registration. However, she did not recommend a single registration test, describing such an approach as 'incredibly limiting and not at all rigorous in the sense that we would want it to be'.<sup>71</sup> Professor Mayer agreed, suggesting that a simple test is inadequate because a more sophisticated measurement at the end of the practicum is required:

It might be a whole range of things, using artefacts and cohesive portfolios. I hesitate to use the word 'portfolio' because it is invariably this sort of box that you just throw everything in, but there are examples throughout the world of highly structured, very rigorous and valid ones that have been through all sorts of technical validity and reliability tests to show that these are really good measures against particular sets of standards. I think that is the work we need to do in Australia.<sup>72</sup>

4.65 The federal government was unable respond to questions by the committee about the number of pre-service teachers who applied for registration who were unsuccessful, as it 'does not collect this type of information from state and territory registration authorities'.<sup>73</sup> It is concerning that the federal government, who through AITSL has developed new teacher registration standards, does not collect data to assess the effectiveness or otherwise of training courses preparing graduates for registration.

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69 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

70 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 42.

71 Professor Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 25.

72 Professor Diane Mayer, Teacher, Education Specialist, Australian Council of Deans of Education, 4 March 2013, p. 26.

73 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Response to questions taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 27 April 2013), Q11. See also, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, Response to questions taken on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), Q4.

**Committee view**

4.66 This chapter has provided an analysis of the selection, training and registration of teachers. The evidence presented to the committee, and summarised in this chapter, offers strong support for the argument that teacher selection processes should be more robust and targeted, to ensure that selected applicants possess the requisite academic skills and personal attributes necessary for quality teaching.

4.67 Particular attention also needs to be given to the quality of teaching education courses and practical training in the classroom. Witnesses agreed that there must be a systemic approach to quality standards. While there has been some progress recently in articulating education standards, there remain a number of disparate institutions who act with 'an element of self-interest'.<sup>74</sup> The committee is particularly concerned about the ability of primary school teachers to teach literacy and mathematics.

4.68 To prevent an over-supply of teachers and to ensure that only the most competent teachers are registered, thought must also be given to capping registration places and introducing robust selection processes. Work must also be undertaken to ensure that students studying mathematics and sciences at university are aware of the pre-requisites required in order to become teachers of these disciplines.

**Recommendation 11**

**4.69 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education consider the research conducted by Incept Labs and the conclusion that multiple methods should be used to select entrants to teaching programs. These methods may include: academic ability; psychometric testing; behavioural based interviews; role-plays; and teaching practice.**

**Recommendation 12**

**4.70 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood and the Australian Council of Deans of Education work to ensure that adequate funding is directed to schools to provide quality mentoring and support programs for pre-service teachers during practicum.**

**Recommendation 13**

**4.71 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood work to ensure that demand for quality teachers is high and consider:**

- **restricting the number of places available to pre-service teachers for practical training;**

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74 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 37.



- capping the number of graduates who can register as teachers (any cap imposed should be reviewed each year and reflect the expected demand for teachers in particular disciplines); and
- introducing a registration exam to be used in conjunction with the current registration standards to assess graduate suitability.

#### **Recommendation 14**

**4.72** The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency conduct an audit of literacy teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers have an appropriate level of literacy and are equipped to teach the English language. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

#### **Recommendation 15**

**4.73** The committee recommends that the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, in consultation with the Australian Mathematic Sciences Institute, conduct an audit of mathematics teaching programs at education faculties in universities to establish whether graduating primary school teachers are equipped to teach mathematics and numeracy to students. This may indicate a need to moderate student assessment across faculties.

#### **Recommendation 16**

**4.74** The committee recommends that the Australian Council of Deans of Education liaises with the relevant Deans of Sciences and Mathematics to ensure that students in those disciplines receive timely and accurate advice about the pre-requisites required to become secondary mathematics and/or science teachers.



# **CHAPTER 5**

## **Career development, retention and professional learning of teachers**

### **Introduction**

5.1 In this chapter the committee examines career development and progression for teachers, retention issues, and what constitutes effective professional learning.

5.2 Teacher career development and progression is influenced by a number of factors. These include the pay structure of teaching, the nature of incremental salary advancement, and the limited availability of leadership positions in schools. This chapter considers how to recognise and use high performing teachers in the classroom.

5.3 Retention is an issue for all workforces and teaching is no different. Schools need to be able to retain competent and skilled teachers and ensure adequate support is provided to new teachers. This chapter examines the impact contract work and the pay structure of teaching has on retention, why teachers are leaving the profession and the need to retain the best teachers.

5.4 Effective professional learning is vital to creating a high quality teaching workforce. Teachers need ongoing professional learning and support to adapt to the shifting education environment, respond to students' learning needs, and improve their performance. For these reasons, the committee considers the value of in-school professional learning activities, classroom observation and feedback, the need to devote time and resources to professional learning, and training for teachers teaching 'out of field'. The committee also briefly discusses the role universities have in professional learning, and the potential of online tools.

5.5 While the committee resolved that any requests for confidentiality from submitters for their name or that of a school would be granted, the committee only received one submission from a current teacher (submission 35). The committee nonetheless received evidence from former teachers, schools leaders and teacher representative organisations about their teaching experience.<sup>1</sup>

### **Teacher career development and progression**

5.6 When considering the career development of teachers, it is worthwhile starting with an examination of the employment profile of the teaching profession. In April 2012 the Productivity Commission tabled a report on the Schools Workforce in Australia. The Commission found there are over 320,000 full-time equivalent workers in schools, including teachers, principals, teacher's assistants and administrative

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1 See for example Ms Lorraine Wilson, *Submission 41*; Dr David Hornsby, *Submission 39*; Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*.

workers.<sup>2</sup> It noted that the workforce is increasingly feminised and more teachers are being employed on temporary contracts.<sup>3</sup>

5.7 The committee heard evidence that there has been a demographic shift in the teaching workforce in the last few years because of the global financial crisis. Professor Cherednichenko said 'we had massive retention in the system right across the country in 2009, 2010 and 2011...the shift out of the profession did not occur'.<sup>4</sup> Mr Gavrielatos agreed the GFC had an impact on retirements arguing 'teachers are hanging on more so than in previous times because of superannuation'.<sup>5</sup>

### ***Career progression of teachers***

5.8 Significant issues raised on career progression for teachers included limited opportunity for leadership and pay structures that did not reward experience or performance.

5.9 From the range of evidence provided, submitters noted the limited opportunities available for attaining leadership positions. The Queensland Association of State School Principals said:

Primary Education in Queensland has a very limited career path as there is an abundance of teachers and very few Heads of Curriculum, Coaches, Deputy Principals and Learning Support positions. An increase in these will not only provide equity with the secondary sector but would provide other options for teachers, greater opportunities for professional growth and improved career paths.<sup>6</sup>

5.10 The pay structure in teaching is quite flat, in the sense that there is very little difference between the salary for beginning teachers and very experienced teachers. A recent OECD study highlighted the limited range of pay available for teachers: in Australia a teacher at the top of the pay scale only earns approximately 150 per cent of the salary of a beginning teacher. As a consequence, the 'most able' teachers receive the same salary as the 'least able'.<sup>7</sup>

5.11 Professor Stephen Dinham, agreed that the salary structure is incremental and fails to reward high performers. What is needed is a transition to a career-long salary structure, which the new national standards will contribute to. During the Melbourne hearing Professor Dinham explained that:

...we have got an industrial sort of salary structure, and we need to move beyond that and have a career-long salary structure, where the most able

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2 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 54.

3 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 49.

4 Professor Brenda Cherednichenko, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 22.

5 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 61.

6 Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Submission 8*, p. 3.

7 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

people continue to develop and demonstrate their capabilities and be rewarded. This is where the new national standards can come in, to provide people with another salary scale beyond the incremental scales. Seventy-five per cent of teachers in Australia are at the top of those incremental salary scales. They are all clustered there at the top.<sup>8</sup>

5.12 The issue of how to reward high performing teachers and develop meaningful career progression is a key concern of this report. The effect of pay structures on retention rates will be considered later in the chapter.

### ***How to provide career development for high performing teachers***

5.13 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL) is seeking to improve the way highly effective teachers are identified and rewarded. AITSL has established a national certification process for 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers, agreed to by Education Ministers from every state and territory.<sup>9</sup>

5.14 AITSL advised the committee it is up to state and territory governments to decide what this certification will mean in terms of salary or career progression. The submissions received from the Queensland, South Australian, Tasmanian and Victorian governments did not address this issue.<sup>10</sup>

5.15 Western Australia has a certification process for recognising high performing teachers which leads to a 'significant salary increase'.<sup>11</sup> While the Western Australian Government did not make a submission, Ms Catto from the Western Australian Council of State School Organisations described the process:

...we have a level 3 teacher, which is the top of the profession they can go to as a classroom teacher. For a longstanding teacher who had entered as a classroom teacher and then developed and undertaken the training and assessment to go through what I believe is quite a rigorous process to become a level 3 classroom teacher, that is something we would see.<sup>12</sup>

5.16 Although the ACT Government did not make a submission to the inquiry, the committee is aware of the Executive Teacher (Professional Practice) classification/position that has been created in the ACT public school system with a salary just over \$100,000. The role involves mentoring first year teachers, leading

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8 Professor Stephen Dinham, Professor, Teacher Education, University of Melbourne, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 12.

9 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

10 Ms Margery Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 55.

11 Ms Margery Evans, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 55.

12 Ms Kylie Rae Catto, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 41.

professional development in their schools, and co-teaching.<sup>13</sup> It focuses on 'exemplary teaching and building capacity in teaching practice at the school'.<sup>14</sup>

5.17 Dr Jensen, Director of the School Education Program in the Grattan Institute, explained that currently most teachers reach the highest pay point after seven or eight years of teaching, and some teachers leave at this point.<sup>15</sup> Dr Jensen suggested that the pay structure of teaching could be changed to reward high performing teachers without necessarily spending more money, by deciding that not everyone reaches the top of the salary structure:

There are numerous things we can do there. I think it is actually sad that we have a discussion about having a six-figure salary in teaching as though it is some obscure, crazy thing, when our best teachers should be on \$150,000 or \$180,000 a year. And we can do that, everyone. We can afford that if we want to change the salary structure and if we say that not everyone reaches the top of the salary structure. We can do that, and I think that will have serious consequences for addressing some of those shortages that we talk about.<sup>16</sup>

5.18 A career structure which rewards 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers and ensures that teacher advancement is merit based will encourage the best teachers to stay in the profession. Extra remuneration should be accompanied by job differentiation – with responsibilities like mentoring, coaching and leading change.

### **Committee View**

5.19 Many witnesses and submitters have expressed concern that there is relatively little difference between the pay of a graduate teacher and a teacher at the top pay scale. Furthermore there is very little job differentiation between the scales. Such a structure does not encourage good teachers to remain in the classroom, nor does it encourage continual learning and development.

5.20 The committee believes that there needs to be greater recognition of experienced and highly effective teachers. The Teacher Standards and certification process developed by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership are a significant step in the right direction. It is encouraging to see some jurisdictions using these standards to create new roles and classifications for teachers that recognise high performance, as discussed in Chapter 2. Evidence provided by Dr Ben Jensen suggests that these changes can be made without a huge injection of funds.

13 Emma Macdonald, 'Teacher goes to top of her class', *Canberra Times*, 2 April 2013, p. 2; Ms Joy Burch, MLA, Minister for Education and Training, '100,000 reasons for top teachers to stay in the classroom', Media release, 3 April 2013.

14 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Teacher Performance and Development in Australia: A mapping and analysis of current practice*, March 2012, under heading 'Performance and development approach – ACT government system: Processes'.

15 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, pp. 43–44.

16 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, pp. 43–44.

5.21 Further work is required by state and territory governments to ensure that Teacher Standards have a meaningful impact on teacher career progression and recognise 'Highly Accomplished' and 'Lead' teachers. However, it is too soon to assess the effectiveness of these initiatives.

### **Recommendation 17**

**5.22 The committee recommends that state and territory governments and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider rewarding Highly Accomplished and Lead teachers with meaningful remuneration and an improved salary structure under the new national certification process (consistent with initiatives already undertaken in some jurisdictions).**

### **Teacher retention**

5.23 Chapter 3 of this report discussed the difficulties schools have in retaining staff in remote and rural areas, as well retaining teachers qualified to teach subjects like maths and science. This section addresses the issue of retention more generally, looking at the impact of increased casual work on the profession; which teachers are leaving the education sector and why they are leaving; and the importance of retaining the right teachers.

#### ***The impact of increased casual and contract work on the profession***

5.24 Teachers can be employed in a number of ways: as permanent employees, casuals, or on fixed term contracts of varying lengths. The committee heard anecdotal evidence about a recent rise in the use of short term contracts and casual positions.

5.25 The University of Melbourne submitted that graduates of their two year Masters of Education course generally have higher rates of permanent employment than other graduates, with 20 per cent being employed on contracts, 10 per cent as casuals, and the rest being permanent. They advised that:

...other universities and authorities report that 30-40% of beginning teachers in Victorian schools – especially state schools – are on some form of fixed contract, with a similar proportion working as casual teachers.<sup>17</sup>

5.26 The trend towards casual employment and contracts has been noted in earlier inquiries. A previous Senate inquiry into the status of the teaching profession argued that casual employment had the most harmful effects on new teachers because they were the ones most likely to be offered short term contracts, and it meant they were not always offered induction or support.<sup>18</sup> The committee recommended 'a reversal of the trend to casualisation of the teaching force'.<sup>19</sup>

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17 University of Melbourne, answer to question on notice (received 27 March 2013).

18 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act – Report on the Status of the Teaching Profession*, 1998, p. 205.

19 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *A Class Act – Report on the Status of the Teaching Profession*, 1998, p. 126.

5.27 More recently the Productivity Commission also noted that 'contract and casual employment of school workers has reportedly been increasing'.<sup>20</sup> The Commission's report included data from a 2010 Staff in Australia's Schools survey showing the extent of contract employment. A table of this data is reproduced below.<sup>21</sup>

<b>Table Basis of employment for teachers and school leaders, 2010</b>		
<i>Basis of employment</i>	<i>Primary</i>	<i>Secondary</i>
	%	%
<b>Teachers</b>		
Ongoing/permanent	77.1	85.7
Fixed-term contract	20.5	13.0
Casual/relief	2.3	1.3
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>
<b>School leaders</b>		
Ongoing/permanent	65.2	64.6
Acting/filling a vacancy	10.9	7.5
Fixed-term contract	23.3	27.9
Casual/relief	0.6	0.0
<b>Total</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>100.0</b>

<sup>a</sup> These figures are estimates of population values based on a survey of teachers and school leaders in 2010. Numbers may not sum to 100 per cent due to rounding.

5.28 The table demonstrates that around one-fifth of primary school teachers are on a fixed term contract. Percentages of fixed term contracts are even higher for principals (around 28 per cent for secondary schools).

5.29 A number of submitters gave evidence that casual employees often have less access to professional learning. DEEWR noted:

It is an issue that is raised and that has implications for things like support for beginning teachers and induction programs, because a lot of the casual staff coming out of universities and going into casual positions do not necessarily have the same support that permanent employees do.<sup>22</sup>

5.30 One of the case studies provided by the Australian Council of Deans of Education demonstrated that a teaching graduate (as a casual) is unable to access the 'professional development and mentoring available to permanent staff'.<sup>23</sup> It is difficult to know how widespread this practice is; other submitters gave evidence that some schools choose to offer professional development to casuals. For example, Mrs Backus from the Queensland Association of State School Principals believes it

20 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 55.

21 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 55.

22 Ms Alex Gordon, Group Manager, Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Group, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 59.

23 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 6.



occurs on a 'school-by-school basis' and that 'some schools are very inclusive of their casual staff'.<sup>24</sup>

5.31 It is not just the teachers themselves who are impacted by short term contracts and casual employment. Ms Lorraine Wilson noted 'some teachers are applying for their own job for the fourth time in the fourth six month period'.<sup>25</sup> Such a situation can result in the principal spending less time as an 'educational leader' and more time as an administrator managing frequent recruitment processes.

5.32 The committee sought to understand why contracts and casual positions are used. Witnesses gave evidence that one of the causes of short term contracts is the need to retain positions for permanent staff on unpaid leave, which in some jurisdictions can be for 5 to 7 years. Mr Norm Hart explained:

...I believe one of the drivers for this casualisation of the teaching workforce has been the industrial agreements that allow teachers to maintain right of re-entry into the profession for quite a long time when they are on unpaid leave. On the one hand, one would want to protect somebody's industrial rights. But, on the other hand, the flow-on effect is that there has to be a position held for that person, and that can only be filled casually, sometimes for years at a time.<sup>26</sup>

5.33 Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, gave a similar explanation, submitting that leave requirements, particularly in the state system, contribute to contract work.<sup>27</sup> Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals suggested the rise was due to uncertainty in the Queensland education sector.<sup>28</sup>

5.34 The Australian Education Union argues that moves to increase autonomy for principals in selecting staff is also a factor:

In recent years, moves towards devolution and greater responsibility for principals in selection of school staff at the local level are a notable factor in the increased use of casual and fixed term employment by schools.

...Integral to this process of shifting risk from the state to individual schools, is the further shifting of risk from management to individual teachers, a direct outcome of which is a growth in insecure work.

It is no coincidence that, for example, in excess of 18% of teachers in Victoria, the most devolved system in Australia, are on fixed term contracts

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24 Mrs Hilary Backus, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, Tuesday 5 March 2013, p. 10.

25 Ms Lorraine Wilson, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 63.

26 Mr Norm Hart, President, Australian Primary Principals Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 10.

27 Professor Geoff Prince, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 9.

28 Mrs Hilary Backus, Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 10.

as opposed to ongoing employment, and there has been a rapid growth in the same in WA associated with the IPS [Independent Public Schools] and in NSW with attempts to devolve.<sup>29</sup>

5.35 The committee heard that some principals use short term contracts for new teachers as way to 'try before you buy' and that the majority of teachers who start on contract eventually obtain permanent employment.<sup>30</sup>

5.36 The Productivity Commission argued there are situations where temporary contracts and casual positions are appropriate to a school's particular circumstances at a particular time. For this reason it cautioned against restricting the use of temporary contracts.<sup>31</sup> The Productivity Commission further noted that contracts would probably decrease if employers had more flexibility to 'redeploy staff and remove underperformers'.<sup>32</sup>

5.37 This evidence demonstrates that there needs to be a balance between giving principals and schools flexibility in staffing, and giving employees certainty in employment.

***The impact of increasing casual and contract work on retention***

5.38 Submitters and witnesses expressed concern about the rise of short term contracts and casual employment, and suggested that insecure work can lead to high attrition rates in the teaching profession, particularly for early career teachers.

5.39 The Australian Council of Deans of Education provided three case studies to the inquiry that demonstrate the impact of insecure contract work on teaching graduates:

**Graduate A:** I received a University Admissions Index (UAI) of 99.70 and graduated with first class honours in 2010. After 17 applications I was so relieved to get a 12 month contract – within weeks of arriving at my school I understood why there was an average 30% staff turnover each year. Even though I had the opportunity to stay this year I am going to do a Masters in Special Education. I am hoping that this will make me more employable and provide me with opportunities for career advancement and specialization. There aren't that many opportunities for permanent employment and career progression in public schools other than this, aside from getting my annual increment or going into administration positions.

**Graduate B:** I received an UAI of 91.05. After three years of casual contracts in two large regional communities – I am throwing in the towel. I have taught everything including my subject area, Physical Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE). Shame no one told me there is an oversupply of PDHPE teachers. The mines have offered to train me up in

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29 Australian Education Union, answer to question on notice (received 28 March 2013).

30 Melbourne University, answer to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received 27 March 2013).

31 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 325.

32 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 327.

Occupational Health & Safety – they offer good pay and conditions, and think my skills in understanding different learning styles will be an advantage to their organisation.

**Graduate C:** I received an UAI of 87.00 and graduated with a Bachelor of Arts Diploma of Education (Primary). As a newly graduated primary school teacher who lives on Sydney's North Shore I knew the chance of a permanent position would be difficult. So being a traveller in search of adventure, I took myself off to a small rural town. I was never without work because I am hardworking and embrace change and opportunity. Even the local (and not so local high schools) had me on their casual relief list. I suddenly found a great enjoyment in teaching maths - supposedly a subject area where there is a shortage of teachers. I would love to do a Masters so that I could specialise in Maths, but Postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places are limited and I cannot afford the fees. There are no chances of permanent employment out here. I hope I am not a casual for the rest of my life because I love teaching. The most annoying aspect of this is that as a casual I cannot access the professional development and mentoring available to permanent staff.<sup>33</sup>

5.40 All of these high performing graduates expressed concern about their ability to secure permanent work, and in one case, one graduate is leaving the profession because of it. Other witnesses provided similar stories. For example, Mr Duncan Taylor, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, gave an example of young people who had been granted scholarships to study Indigenous education with a view to teaching in remote areas after graduation who were unable to obtain permanent employment:

Although you would imagine that there is a crying need for that sort of teacher in the workforce, at least some of the young teachers I know have only been given casual positions in western New South Wales. To me, that seems extraordinary: we know there is such a need, but we are unable to give these students the security of a permanent position when they are going into a sector of the teaching profession where they are just so sorely needed.<sup>34</sup>

5.41 These examples, while clearly anecdotal in nature, are concerning.

### ***The impact of pay structures on retention***

5.42 The relatively flat pay structure of teaching has been discussed earlier in this chapter. The committee heard evidence that this pay structure can mean high performing teachers leave the profession and retrain to seek better remuneration. The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership acknowledged that:

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33 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 6.

34 Mr Duncan Taylor, President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 18.

Current pay systems do not encourage the best teachers to remain in the classroom and many excellent practitioners move to leadership positions or leave the profession to increase their earnings.<sup>35</sup>

5.43 During the Melbourne hearing, Dr Jensen, Grattan Institute, agreed submitting that:

...we have a huge problem that basically people will reach the top of their salary scale after about seven or eight years of their careers, and then we act surprised when people quit after seven or eight years.<sup>36</sup>

5.44 Teachers who do stay in the profession tend to move out of the classroom and into management or leadership positions. The Australian Council for Educational Research argued:

[A]fter about a decade, teachers tend to either move into a greater proportion of non-teaching work or move out of the profession entirely. That has been historically related to a ceiling that teachers have reached in their pay levels. I think a challenge for us is to keep very able teachers in classrooms to work at making explicit what we understand highly effective teaching in mathematics or science or reading to be, and that we find ways of remunerating and retaining highly able people.<sup>37</sup>

5.45 Clearly the teaching remuneration structure has an impact on whether teachers choose to stay in the profession and the right incentives are not in place to encourage the best teachers to stay in the classroom.

### ***Support for new teachers***

5.46 Submitters and witnesses to the inquiry agreed that the level of support given to teachers in the first few years impacts staff retention and teaching quality.

5.47 The Productivity Commission recently noted it was a 'commonly expressed concern' that a 'significant number of teachers leave in the first few years'. The Commission concluded there is a lack of data on this issue and it is 'not clear whether the rate of exits is unduly high'.<sup>38</sup>

5.48 Nevertheless, throughout this inquiry the committee heard concerns about the poor retention rates of new teachers. For example, Mr Chris Watt of the Independent Education Union noted that 'there seems to be a large exodus of teachers from the profession in the first couple of years'.<sup>39</sup>

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35 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, *Submission 18*, p. 13.

36 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 44.

37 Professor Geoffrey Masters, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Proof Committee Hansard*, pp 45–46.

38 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 63.

39 Mr Christopher Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 3.

5.49 Ms Misty Adoniou conducted a study into the experiences of 14 teachers in their first 16 months of employment. At the end of the study seven of the 14 teachers were contemplating leaving the profession. She told the inquiry what happened to this cohort:

Of the seven that were contemplating—this is three years on now—one has definitely left. Perhaps, handily—I am not sure—four are pregnant. I do not know whether that is a decision: 'I'll do this now while I consider what I will do in the future.' Two more are hanging in there and positive about what they are doing. But it has taken three years for them to get courageous, to stay true to convictions.<sup>40</sup>

5.50 Ms Adoniou's sample size is small, however if the attrition rates present in this study are indicative then there is much cause for concern. A number of submitters link early career decisions to leave teaching to a lack of preparedness for teaching and to a sharp contrast between what was taught at university and the realities of the classroom. Ms Adoniou described how teachers have a 'spirit of teaching' when they choose to go into education, which is challenged when they first enter the classroom:

When they go out into their first year of teaching, that kind of spirit, that motivation, is tested. It is tested in difficult circumstances and by challenges that they had not expected. They are more exhausted than they ever thought they would be.<sup>41</sup>

5.51 The committee heard there is a great deal of responsibility placed on new teachers, in a way which does not occur in other professions. The Australian Primary Principals Association noted that:

In no other profession does a neophyte have exactly the same workload and responsibilities on their first day at work as their most experienced colleagues.<sup>42</sup>

5.52 To exacerbate these challenges, graduate teachers are often employed in schools that are disadvantaged where there tend to be more vacancies, and demands on teachers are higher. This does not benefit the graduate or the school. Professor Christine Ure described the detrimental effect this practice can have:

[N]ot only are you getting a concentration of disadvantage; you are also getting a concentration of inexperience, a lack of mentoring support and all the problems of casualisation and lack of stability in the workforce in those particular schools.<sup>43</sup>

5.53 However, induction programs are designed to support new teachers and acclimatise them to the classroom. The Independent Education Union believes school induction programs should:

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40 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27.

41 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 24.

42 Australian Primary Principals Association, *Submission 17*, p. 4.

43 Professor Christine Ure, Head of School, School of Education, Deakin University, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 14.

...supplement the beginning teacher's background knowledge with information of a specific kind relating to the school and its community. They should also capitalise on the beginning teacher's previous training, and assist him/her to deal in a practical way with classroom management, curriculum planning, teaching method, and other facets such as administration procedures of the beginning teacher's teaching.<sup>44</sup>

5.54 The union further argued that school induction programs should give new teachers a 'lighter load' and time away from the classroom for mentoring and support.<sup>45</sup>

5.55 The Tasmanian Department of Education is working to address this issue through the Beginning Teacher Time Release (BeTTR) Program which 'reduces the workload for teachers in their first few years of teaching'.<sup>46</sup>

5.56 The Victorian system also acknowledges the need for a reduced teaching load of 120 minutes less a week. However, there is no provision for a reduction in teaching load for experienced teachers to provide mentoring and support.<sup>47</sup> This is consistent with the results of Ms Adoniou's finding that in the Australian Capital Territory there was a lack of quality mentoring for new teachers. Ms Adoniou submitted that:

Mentoring teachers really do need to understand what kind of support they give and that they are actually matched; it is like there needs to be a matchmaking service between who your mentor is and who it is not.<sup>48</sup>

5.57 Incept Labs observed that where mentoring was available, mentors often provided a great deal of encouragement and support. However, mentors were not particularly good at providing constructive feedback and advice.<sup>49</sup> The committee heard of positive examples of in-school mentoring. Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, described how she dedicates resources to paying the best teachers extra to mentor other teachers in the school:

Within the teaching award there is a provision for something called senior teacher-2, which is an increased payment for specific roles within the school. Over the last couple of years I have been able to add three of those positions to the school to encourage teachers, our top teachers, to stay in the classroom but also to use their expertise to help other teachers. So I have two teacher mentors, and they work with the younger teachers and the new teachers in the school. They teach most of their time but they are provided with some time to do mentor. Another teacher has a different role in the

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44 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 15.

45 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 15.

46 Tasmanian Department of Education, *Submission 40*, p. 7.

47 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 5.

48 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27. The ACT Government has recently moved to address this deficiency: See Chapter 2.

49 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission.

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school. I think that has been a very successful way of keeping their interest.<sup>50</sup>

5.58 Mentoring is clearly an effective means of supporting new teachers to develop their teaching practice. Evidence to the inquiry indicates that quality mentoring relationships depend upon:

- Experienced and top performing teachers having a clearly defined role as mentors;
- Participants being given appropriate time and resources to dedicate to mentoring;
- Mentors being matched appropriately with new teachers; and
- Mentors being trained in how to provide effective feedback and support to the student teacher.

### ***The importance of retaining the right teachers***

5.59 When discussing retention rates, it is important to consider not just when teachers are leaving, but who is leaving. It is of concern to the committee that some talented teachers are reportedly not being retained. Research from Incept Lab suggests that:

We are probably losing a greater proportion of the more talented in the teacher workforce than we are of the less talented, and so we are getting this gradual skewing of skill distribution.<sup>51</sup>

5.60 The Productivity Commission also noted there is a risk of retaining less talented teachers, and this was evidenced by the very low rates of attrition after the first years in the teaching workforce:

With low rates of natural attrition, there is a risk of retaining a cohort of underperformers. This in turn serves to focus attention on the importance of good performance appraisal and feedback, including effective processes for managing underperformance...<sup>52</sup>

5.61 As discussed in Chapter 3 of this report, increasing the status of the teaching profession will help attract and retain high quality teachers, as will improving professional learning and career structures.

### ***Committee view***

5.62 The committee recognises the importance of supporting new teachers. A graduate's experience in the first few years is formative. It can influence their motivation, professional development, and the decision to stay in the classroom in the

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50 Ms Anne Hastings, Principal, Emanuel School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 7.

51 Dr Christopher Goldspink, Director, Incept Labs, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 38.

52 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 63.

longer term. The committee believes more attention should be given to the support provided to first year teachers, and finds encouraging the initiatives that are already underway in some jurisdictions.

5.63 The use of temporary contracts to employ new graduates and increasing casualisation of the teacher workforce is concerning to the committee, particularly where such staff are denied access to professional development. There needs to be a balance between maintaining flexibility for schools and providing appropriate working conditions for teachers. Short term contracts (e.g. 6 months) may be a disincentive for high quality graduates to remain in the profession. Fixed term contracts of 3–5 years provide a more reasonable level of certainty for teachers, while still providing principals and schools with a degree of flexibility.

5.64 The committee heard anecdotal evidence that exit rates for new teachers are high, and that some teachers leave when their salary plateaus after 8-10 years. The committee understands Deakin University is currently undertaking a Longitudinal Teacher Education Workforce Study funded by the Commonwealth.<sup>53</sup> It would be useful for this study to include an examination of why teachers choose to leave the profession. Further research into this issue, including through exit interviews, is required.

#### **Recommendation 18**

**5.65 The committee recommends that the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood commission research into the reasons why teachers are leaving the profession.**

#### **Recommendation 19**

**5.66 The committee recommends the Australian Institute of Teaching and School Leadership, in consultation with the COAG Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood, develop guidelines on how best to support first year teachers.**

### **Ongoing professional learning and support**

5.67 Teachers require ongoing professional learning and support in order to continually improve their teaching practice. Professional development must be targeted to the needs of each teacher and should be ongoing throughout all career stages. Melbourne University pointed out professional development should have an impact on students as well, and needs to be evaluated in this context.<sup>54</sup> The committee is aware that considerable research has been undertaken into what makes effective professional development and the submission by Deakin University (Burwood) provides a detailed literature review on this subject.<sup>55</sup>

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53 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission 57*, p. 8.

54 University of Melbourne, *Submission 20*, p. 6.

55 Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*.



5.68 In this section particular attention is given to the value of in-school professional learning, classroom observation and feedback, and training for teachers who lack subject matter expertise.

5.69 While the key focus is professional learning for teachers, the committee heard evidence that professional learning is also important for principals. Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair of the Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia told the inquiry that 'we need to keep developing and mentoring our leaders and aspiring leaders within our schools' to build leadership capacity'.<sup>56</sup>

5.70 The Victorian Government's recent discussion paper *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession* has noted the need to have specific professional development programs for principals:

High performing systems support the transition into school leadership. They provide significant support to new school leaders through development programs that address their broader roles and responsibilities, encourage a student-centred approach to leadership, and take a system-wide perspective.<sup>57</sup>

5.71 Victoria has introduced a number of programs that provide coaching, mentoring and financial training to support new principals in developing as school leaders.<sup>58</sup>

### ***The value of in-school professional learning***

5.72 A number of submitters emphasised the importance of school-based professional development and learning.<sup>59</sup> The Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia stated:

A significant proportion of teacher professional learning occurs within schools, first in pre-service practicum placement and then through coaching and mentoring of graduate teachers, peer-to-peer learning and through the delivery of targeted courses.<sup>60</sup>

5.73 CEO and Principal of Haileybury Independent School, Mr Scott, preferred in-house professional learning over external training:

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56 Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 32.

57 State of Victoria, Department of Education, Early Childhood Development, *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession: Discussion paper* (2012), p. 20. See also *Submission 43*, Attachment 1.

58 State of Victoria, Department of Education, Early Childhood Development, *New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession: Discussion paper* (2012), p. 22. See also *Submission 43*, Attachment 1.

59 See for example Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*, pp. 3–7; Mr Andrew Barr, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 31.

60 Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, *Submission 3*, p. 6.

There is an awful lot of money wasted on external professional development, where people go away for a day and come back; it is very quickly lost. They might be good ideas but they are very quickly lost.<sup>61</sup>

5.74 Submitters noted the value of teachers accessing the latest pedagogical research. Haileybury School submitted that professional development is especially important for heads of subjects and coordinators because as 'educational leaders' they should maintain an awareness of the latest research and best practice.<sup>62</sup> Deakin University similarly argues that greater investment in professional development is required to support teachers to 'use and reflect on evidence' about teaching and learning.<sup>63</sup>

5.75 The opportunity to collaborate with colleagues and discuss approaches to teaching was noted as important. Mr Gavrielatos from the Australian Education Union told the committee:

We know that the best professional development and learning occurs when teachers are given the time and space to work together to reflect on and to evaluate our teaching and learning programs and engage in that progressive refinement that we do as part of evaluation processes, all of which are aimed at improving educational outcomes.<sup>64</sup>

### ***The value of classroom observation and feedback***

5.76 Classroom observation and mentoring can have a significant impact on learning outcomes. Dr Ben Jensen submitted that:

We have a tendency to look at things like professional development as something you do for that week in summer when school is off....we have a tendency to say that mentoring is something you do when you tick the box and prepare someone to register.

If you change all of that around and put serious hours into it, where you say, 'Okay, teachers are going to meet for X number of hours per week, a mentoring program will actually mean that we are going to have three or four hours a week, and teachers will observe other people's classrooms and have their own classrooms observed at least every week'—bearing in mind that most teachers in Australia will go through the year without having their classroom observed a single time—that would be the greatest form of professional development, professional learning. The evidence is very clear: it will have the greatest impact on student learning.<sup>65</sup>

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61 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 51.

62 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 8.

63 Deakin University (Burwood), *Submission 22*, p. 1.

64 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 53.

65 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 40.

5.77 Haileybury Independent School's professional learning system includes classroom observation of teachers and regular provision of feedback.<sup>66</sup> Since 2012 all teaching staff have gone through a formal process of peer observation and the results have been encouraging:

The early indicators are that this process is something that both observers and even those being observed enjoy. Teachers are learning from one another and perhaps more importantly are having more meaningful conversations about what and how they teach. We have given specific instructions within this process for people to focus on elements of the teaching process rather than the curriculum being taught. In essence, we want to move teachers away from conversations about what is being taught, and towards conversations about how it is being taught.<sup>67</sup>

5.78 The Haileybury Independent School acknowledge that the idea of classroom observation can cause unease amongst teachers: 'of all elements of potential learning frameworks, the idea of direct observation and measurement of teaching performance causes the most anxiety'.<sup>68</sup> They argue it is nonetheless a 'valuable tool' if carefully implemented, with 'appropriate and necessary feedback' provided.<sup>69</sup>

5.79 Similarly, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association noted that teachers need opportunities 'to observe great teachers at work, develop model lessons with great teachers and have great teachers observe other teachers in real lessons with a view to providing feedback'.<sup>70</sup>

5.80 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal of the King David School in Melbourne, described how her school took part in an Australian Government Quality Teacher Program trial which involved improving pedagogy through observation. They are expanding the trial this year. She argued 'research shows that where it is done peer to peer and also where there is at least a reasonable degree of teacher willingness to engage in the task, it [observation] is most effective'.<sup>71</sup>

5.81 The Australian Education Union (AEU) supports a range of personal development opportunities for teachers, but rejected any compulsory personal development initiatives, such as peer observation. The union emphasised that the key is 'not to impose' any initiatives on teachers and to ensure that all programs are properly resourced.<sup>72</sup>

66 Mr Derek Scott, CEO and Principal, Haileybury Independent School, *Proof Committee Hansard*, p. 49.

67 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 11.

68 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 9.

69 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 9.

70 Isolated Children's Parents' Association, *Submission 35*, p. 3.

71 Mrs Michele Bernshaw, Principal, King David School, Australian Council of Jewish Schools, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 22 February 2013, p. 7.

72 Mr Angelo Gavrielatos, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2012, p. 59.

5.82 The Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership is currently developing a 'Teacher Observation Framework', which it submits is an 'important tool for improving teaching'.<sup>73</sup>

***The need to devote time and resources to professional learning***

5.83 Professional learning can be time and resource intensive for schools as teachers undertaking mentoring and collaborative learning activities need a reduction in their teaching load to participate. The AEU submitted that the costs are high:

... because it means you have to release those teachers from their day-to-day duties so they can have the experience of other classrooms, mentoring with other teachers. As soon as you take a teacher offline from their classroom work, you have to replace them—put another body in that classroom. A simple recommendation and work around something like that is, we recognise, expensive. But at some point we have to accept the fact that expense and resources are going to be required to do that and to act upon those as we see in the national interest.<sup>74</sup>

5.84 Dr Ben Jensen of the Grattan Institute submitted that education resources need to be spent more effectively and that targeting professional learning is an efficient way of doing this:

What I constantly argue is that, if you target either the Gonski or our existing resources towards freeing up teachers' time, which means reduced teaching time, and focus in on those areas—so professional collaboration, professional learning—you will have a serious impact on student learning, regardless of whether it is a low, a medium or a high SES school. I think the evidence is pretty clear on that.<sup>75</sup>

5.85 The committee heard rural and remote schools need additional support for such collaboration. The Isolated Children's Parents' Association argues that 'there is a real problem in rural and remote education as far as the outcomes go' and as such, teachers in these areas should have preferential access to professional development.<sup>76</sup>

***Training for teachers who are teaching 'out of field'***

5.86 Teachers need to know what they are teaching and how to teach it. Incept Labs describe the need for 'pedagogical content knowledge', which means having '...insights into learning, high quality discipline content knowledge and high quality pedagogical training'. Teachers who have a strong understanding of subject content

73 Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership, answer to question on notice, 5 March 2013 (received 26 March 2013), p. 4.

74 Mr Chris Watt, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 2.

75 Dr Ben Jensen, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 40.

76 Mr Duncan Taylor, President, Isolated Children's Parents Association, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 19.

can ask more engaging and open-ended questions of students. Teachers with high pedagogical content knowledge can be more 'strategic about their students' learning'.<sup>77</sup>

5.87 The concept of pedagogical content knowledge is relevant when considering the issue of teachers required to teach disciplines they have not been trained in (for example secondary maths). The Independent Education Union submitted that 'most teachers can report that during their career they have been required to teach some part of the curriculum for which they are not well qualified'.<sup>78</sup> The Australian Education Union's survey data supported this statement:

Data from the AEU's 2010 national State of Our Schools survey indicate that the majority of secondary schools have teaching staff working in subject areas for which they are not qualified with mathematics, technology, science, special education and physical education being the 'worst' areas in this respect.<sup>79</sup>

5.88 The Productivity Commission estimated that the number of teachers teaching mathematics who were not qualified to do so is between 15 and 25 per cent.<sup>80</sup> The Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) noted that this is a significant problem for mathematics as a discipline and argued that teachers teaching 'out of field' need 'special and focused support to teach mathematics'. AMSI recommends there be a 'nationally coordinated scheme' to 'qualify' these teachers.<sup>81</sup>

5.89 It is important to provide support for those teachers who are teaching mathematics or science without any subject matter expertise. The STELR program run by the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering (ATSE) is targeted at these teachers. President of ATSE, Dr Alan Finkel explained:

We recognise that there are a lot of teachers who are teaching outside their area of absolute competency in physics and chemistry. To help them we have tried to create a product that is ready to roll.

They go to the curriculum cupboard and the cupboard is filled. So even if they are not domain experts they have background material, lesson plans, student worksheets and the equipment. If you are not an expert and you are being asked to teach some lesson in physics and you do not have the equipment, you will not even know where to go out to buy, borrow or beg for the equipment.<sup>82</sup>

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77 Incept Labs, *Submission 1*, Supplementary Submission, p. 14.

78 Independent Education Union, *Submission 12*, p. 13.

79 Australian Education Union, *Submission 16*, p. 33.

80 Productivity Commission, *Schools Workforce*, Research report, April 2012, p. 90.

81 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission 5*, p. 16.

82 Dr Alan Finkel, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 4 March 2013, p. 9.

5.90 The committee notes that demand for the STELR program 'continues to exceed ATSE's financial capacity' and further funding would be needed for expansion.<sup>83</sup>

5.91 AMSI also provides training to teachers teaching maths out of field. An intensive course run in Geelong produced a strong – yet still inadequate – improvement in the teachers' knowledge.<sup>84</sup>

5.92 In relation to literacy, ad hoc support is provided to individual schools by skilled literacy practitioners, such as Ms Misty Adoniou. While such training is an important remedial measure, the ability to teach literacy should to be a core element in pre-service teacher education courses (discussed in chapter four of this report).<sup>85</sup>

5.93 Such programs are very useful for teachers facing a subject they are unqualified to teach, however the committee notes that long term solutions to the issue of teaching 'out of field' are required.

### ***The role of universities in offering professional learning programs***

5.94 Universities have a role in working with employers to develop professional learning for teachers. The Australian Catholic University is undertaking a number of initiatives with schools and school leadership to support ongoing professional development.<sup>86</sup>

5.95 Dr Griffiths from the National Catholic Education Commission described Catholic schools working closely with universities:

I think the Catholic employers, particularly the major Catholic employers, are quite forthright, if you like, in the demands or the requests that they would place on local universities in terms of what they would like them to do with regard to their professional development. A case in point is the Archdiocese of Melbourne. The Catholic Education Office in Melbourne would be the largest Catholic system in Australia, with over 300 schools, I think. They have just built a leadership centre on a school site just near the Australian Catholic University on Victoria Parade in East Melbourne.

...I understand there is quite a detailed memorandum of understanding about the contribution the university will make in terms of what the Catholic Education Office and its advisers and principals and staff have agreed they want. And I think that is the case generally. It is not, 'I have my program, come and get it'; it is, 'What can we do, what do you need and

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83 Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering, answer to question on notice (received 28 March 2013).

84 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, answer to question on notice, 4 March 2013, (received 27 March 2013), Q4.

85 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 29.

86 Australian Catholic University, *Submission 56*, pp. 17–18.

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how can we work this out together? What strengths do we have and what strengths do you have?'.<sup>87</sup>

5.96 Ms Misty Adoniou, Lecturer, stressed the need for closer relationships between new teachers and universities:

It is like the first year really needs to be the fifth year of university, and it is like the fourth year of university needs to be the first year of teaching. That final year needs to be a lovely collaboration between the two. The benefits would be enormous because universities would see what is happening in schools, and schools would benefit from the professional learning that they would get from working with educators. We may have a reputation for being up in the clouds, but really we work a lot with cutting-edge understandings of how teaching and learning happens. So there is much to be learnt from cooperating with academics.<sup>88</sup>

5.97 In response to further questioning by the committee a number of educational institutions provided details of their collaborations with schools.<sup>89</sup> While it is clear that efforts have been made to engage with schools, more work needs to be done in this area to ensure that teachers and school communities can benefit from the research of universities – and vice versa.

### ***The potential of online tools***

5.98 A variety of online tools are available to teachers for support, encouragement and professional development. The committee heard of some web resources that have been funded by governments, other useful resources include blogs set-up by teachers themselves.<sup>90</sup> The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) observed that teachers are using the internet to share knowledge:

With a lot of the online capabilities, teacher specialisation is being shared online. Language is one area in which that is happening, for regional delivery, and there are other areas in which they do not necessarily have that specialist teaching base within the schools themselves.<sup>91</sup>

5.99 This sophisticated approach to professional support and development enables a teacher located in Mildura Victoria to offer and receive professional support from a teacher located on the other side of the country for very minimal cost.

5.100 During the Canberra hearing Ms Adoniou suggested that given the range of online tools available, it may assist if all resources were grouped together on one

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87 Dr William Griffiths, Chief Executive Officer, National Catholic Education Commission, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, pp. 48–49.

88 Ms Misty Adoniou, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 27.

89 For example: Deakin University, Melbourne University, answer to question taken on notice, 4 March 2013 (received on 10 April 2013 and 27 March respectively). See also, Chapter 4.

90 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 30.

91 Ms Alex Gordon, Group Manager, Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 59.

website as this would make it easier for teachers to locate all relevant resources and 'support each other'.<sup>92</sup> Ms Adoniou's suggestion is a sensible one that requires further consideration.

### ***Committee view***

5.101 Quality professional learning is vital to improving Australia's education systems. Effective professional learning can improve a teacher's subject knowledge, improve the methods they use to impart this knowledge, and should ultimately result in better outcomes for students.

5.102 It is clear from the evidence provided by witnesses and submitters that effective professional learning activities are essential to quality teaching. Teachers need to be given the opportunity to continually improve their professional skills. Professional learning should be an ongoing activity throughout a teacher's career, indeed, 'continuous learning is essential and is everyone's responsibility'.<sup>93</sup> The committee believes there is value in professional development activities like peer observation for all teachers.

5.103 The use of online tools for professional development activities is promising, especially for students in geographically isolated locations, however this is a relatively new policy area which requires further development. There is also value in schools developing closer relationships with universities to support the ongoing professional development of new and experienced teachers. These collaborations can also contribute to ensuring that universities remain connected to the practical realities of teaching in Australia today.

5.104 The committee notes that professional learning can be costly in terms of time and resources, and that the cost-benefit of these activities can vary greatly. In-school activities like mentoring, collaboration, classroom observation and feedback are relatively inexpensive forms of professional learning that require an investment of time rather than resources. While there is inevitably a cost associated with reducing teacher workloads to facilitate in-school activities, the committee believes these types of collaborative activities have significant value.

5.105 The number of teachers teaching 'out of field' (without appropriate subject expertise) is of concern. The committee commends the Australian Academy of Technological Services and Engineering for creating science resources for such teachers. The necessary long term solution to this issue is to encourage more applicants to study these subjects, and provide pathways for existing teachers to become qualified in these areas.

5.106 The committee believes the success of professional learning should be measured not just in the benefit to the teacher, but in improved outcomes for the students.

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92 Ms Misty Adoniou, Private capacity, *Proof Committee Hansard*, 5 March 2013, p. 30.

93 Haileybury Independent School, *Submission 27*, p. 11.



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**Recommendation 20**

**5.107** The committee recommends that the Commonwealth, state and territory governments, and the Catholic and Independent school sectors consider ways to support in-house professional learning and development (including mentoring), with an associated reduction in teaching loads.

**Recommendation 21**

**5.108** The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations investigate the potential use of online tools for delivery of professional learning for teachers.

**Recommendation 22**

**5.109** The committee recommends that the state and territory governments consider creating pathways (for example scholarships) for teachers teaching 'out of field' in mathematics and science to become qualified in these disciplines. The Commonwealth Government should also consider increasing the number of postgraduate Commonwealth Supported Places in these disciplines. As an interim solution, the committee recommends that programs which assist teachers teaching 'out of field' be expanded.

**Recommendation 23**

**5.110** The committee recommends that the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations commission a study in 2016 to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives being undertaken by the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership.



# CHAPTER 6

## Conclusion

6.1 It is universally acknowledged that education is the key to our country's future prosperity. Australian governments, educators and families all want an education system that supports children to be successful. Practical and concrete solutions are needed to improve our education system and maximise our investment in schools. The committee intends that the recommendations in this report will contribute to this worthy goal.

6.2 The evidence outlined in Chapter 3 of this report demonstrates that the education outcomes for Indigenous students, poorer students, students with a disability and students in rural, remote and regional areas are not good enough. The committee rejects the suggestion that such students are destined to poor educational outcomes because of their demographic background. Indeed, witnesses and submitters provided strong examples where disadvantaged students achieved excellent outcomes through strategic support, parental engagement and quality teaching. Recommendations two and four look at how to help disadvantaged students; recommendation five is about ensuring incentive arrangements for hard-to-staff positions in schools are appropriate.

6.3 It is critical that all parents believe that their child will do their best at school, experience success and move onto trade training or university. Schools must work to assist parents in this important role, and government programs should be expanded to support parents to support their children (recommendations three and eight). Appropriate funding and programs should be in place to support those children with special needs to reach their full potential in a safe and appropriate environment (recommendation nine).

6.4 School autonomy was considered by some submitters and witnesses as the answer to many educational challenges faced by schools. In particular, independent schools appearing before the committee credited their success to school autonomy. The committee was particularly impressed by early indications of success in public schools that have trialled the independent model. The committee believes that there is merit in conducting a close examination of student achievement in these schools (recommendation ten).

6.5 Student behaviour in the classroom is also an important contributor to student learning outcomes. It is of paramount importance that teachers are equipped to effectively manage behaviour and are supported by parents and school administration (recommendations six and seven). Students must also take responsibility for their own behaviour and come to school with a desire to learn. Quality teaching can also impact student behaviour: teachers who are able to engage students with the subject matter will often find that students perform better.

6.6 Quality teaching graduates will result in quality teachers. Teacher selection, training and registration can be improved (recommendations 1, 11, 12 and 22). A number of recent announcements by the federal government, and state and territory governments, are directed at this area. The committee closely examined current recruitment practices and concluded that teacher selection processes should be robust and targeted to ensure that selected applicants possess the requisite academic skills and personal attributes necessary to become quality teachers (recommendation eleven). Teacher training courses can also be improved, particularly training in mathematics and literacy for primary school teachers and practical training for all pre-service teachers (recommendation 14 and 15).

6.7 The committee was surprised to hear of the number of teaching graduates who find it difficult to secure employment. To prevent an over-supply of teachers and to ensure that only the most competent teachers are registered, thought must also be given to capping registration places and introducing robust selection processes (recommendation 13). Prospective students should also be advised *prior* to enrolling in teaching training of disciplines that are in demand and disciplines where there is over supply (recommendation 16).

6.8 Effective professional learning is crucial to developing a quality teaching workforce. Teachers require ongoing professional learning and support to respond to a changing education environment, respond to student learning needs, and improve personal performance. In-school activities like mentoring, collaboration, classroom observation and feedback are relatively inexpensive forms of professional learning that require an investment of time rather than resources. While there is inevitably a cost associated with reducing teacher workloads to facilitate in-school activities, the committee believes these types of collaborative activities have significant value (recommendation 20 and 21).

6.9 Many qualified teachers leave the profession every year, particularly early career teachers and teachers who have reached the top of the salary scale. New teachers need to be better supported while experienced and highly accomplished teachers should be rewarded (recommendations 17 and 19). The committee was surprised to learn that exit interviews are not conducted with departing teachers and current data on why teachers leave the profession is scant (recommendation 18).

6.10 Large numbers of teachers in Australian high schools are teaching subjects they are not qualified to teach. This is particularly pronounced in rural, regional and remote areas. The committee commends efforts currently made to support these teachers, however the necessary long term solution is to encourage more applicants to study these subjects, and provide pathways for existing teachers to become qualified in these areas (recommendation 22). Incentive-based payments may also be useful to attract qualified teachers to work in hard to staff positions.

6.11 Many factors can promote student achievement: parental engagement, parent and teacher expectations, effective behaviour management, teacher quality, ongoing professional learning, appropriate support for students with special needs and school autonomy. The nature of education policy means that responsibility for these solutions is shared between the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the Catholic and independent school sectors. Universities, employers, parents and students also have important roles to play. The committee urges policymakers to consider the recommendations and issues discussed in this report.

**Senator Chris Back**

**Chair, References**



# **APPENDIX 1**

## **Submissions received**

- 1** Incept Labs
- 2** Dr Pauline Bunce
- 3** AHISA
- 4** Ms Misty Adoniou
- 5** Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute  
Additional Information 1
- 6** Mr Phil Cullen A.M.
- 7** Leslie Granville O'Gorman
- 8** Queensland Association of State School Principals Inc
- 9** Deakin University
- 10** Dr Kevin Donnelly
- 11** Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering  
Attachment 1
- 12** Independent Education Union of Australia
- 13** WA Council of State School Organisations
- 14** Australian Major Performing Arts Group
- 15** Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Inc
- 16** Australian Education Union
- 17** Australian Primary Principals Association
- 18** Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership
- 19** The Smith Family
- 20** University of Melbourne, Melbourne Graduate School of Education  
Additional Information 1  
Additional Information 2

- 21** Australian Special Education Principals' Association
- 22** Deakin University
- 23** Children with Disability Australia
- 24** Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations
- 25** Name Withheld
- 26** Australian Council for Educational Research
- 27** Haileybury
- 28** Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations  
Supplementary Submission
- 29** The Exodus Foundation  
Supplementary Submission
- 30** Queensland Department of Education, Training and Employment
- 31** P and Cs Qld
- 32** Australian Parents Council
- 33** National Catholic Education Commission
- 34** Australian Council Of Jewish Schools
- 35** Isolated Children's Parents' Association
- 36** Dr Ben Jensen
- 37** Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd
- 38** Department for Education and Child Development
- 39** Mr David Hornsby  
Attachment 1  
Attachment 2  
Attachment 3  
Attachment 4
- 40** Tasmanian Department of Education
- 41** Ms Lorraine Wilson
- 42** Ms Elly-Joan Duff



- 43** Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development  
Attachment 1  
Attachment 2  
Attachment 3
- 44** Independent Schools Victoria
- 45** Westralian Association for the Teaching of English to Speakers of Other Languages
- 46** Re-Engineering Australia Foundation Ltd
- 47** Christian Education Ministries
- 48** Mr Alan Russell
- 49** Mrs Jo Rogers
- 50** Dr Kerry Hempenstall
- 51** Professor Kevin Wheldall  
Supplementary Submission
- 52** Save Our Schools
- 53** Mr. Stuart Parfitt
- 54** MultiLit Pty Ltd
- 55** Foundation for Young Australians
- 56** Australian Catholic University
- 57** Australian Council of Deans of Education
- 58** Mr Chris Bonnor
- 59** Schools Connect Australia  
Additional Information 1

## **Additional information received**

- 1** Document tabled by Incept Labs on 5 March, 2013.
- 2** Correction to Hansard transcript from Lorraine Wilson, received 20 March 2013.

## **Answers to questions on notice**

- 1** Response to questions on notice from Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute received 12 March, 2013.
- 2** Response to questions on notice from Lorraine Wilson received 20 March, 2013.
- 3** Response to written questions on notice from Australian Council of Jewish Schools received 22 March, 2013.
- 4** Response to written question on notice from Australian Council for Educational Research received 26 March, 2013.
- 5** Response to written questions on notice from the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership received 26 March, 2013.
- 6** Response to written questions on notice from the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute received 27 March, 2013.
- 7** Response to written questions on notice from the University of Melbourne received 27 March, 2013.
- 8** Response to written questions on notice from the Foundation for Young Australians received 28 March, 2013.
- 9** Response to written questions on notice from the Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering received 28 March, 2013.
- 10** Response to questions on notice from the Australian Education Union received 28 March, 2013.
- 11** Response to questions on notice from Deakin University received 10 April, 2013.
- 12** Response to questions on notice from the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations received 12 April, 2013.

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Witnesses who appeared before the committee**

*Sydney, Friday, 22 February 2013.*

BADGERI, Mr Anish, Private capacity

BERNSHAW, Mrs Michele, Principal member, Australian Council of Jewish Schools

CAMPBELL-ALLEN, Ms Ricky, Director, Centre for New Public Education, Foundation for Young Australians

CATTO, Ms Kylie Rae, President, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.

CREWS, Rev. Dr Bill, Private capacity

EDDINGTON, Mrs Jennifer, President, Tasmanian State School Parents and Friends Association

GOULBURN, Mr Daniel, Co-chair, Australian Council of Jewish Schools

HAIN, Mr Leonard, Executive Director, Australian Council of Jewish Schools

HAMPSHIRE, Ms Anne Catherine, Head of Research and Advocacy, The Smith Family

HASTINGS, Ms Anne, Principal member, Australian Council of Jewish Schools

HOLLIS, Miss Corinda, Private capacity

ISRAEL, Mr Jonathan, Private capacity

MASTERS, Professor Geofferey Norman, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Council for Educational Research

MOHAMMADI, Mr Habib, Private capacity

O'BRIEN, Dr Lisa Joy, Chief Executive Officer, The Smith Family

RUSSELL, Mr Alan, Private capacity

***Melbourne, Monday, 4 March 2013.***

CHEREDNICHENKO, Professor Brenda, President, Australian Council of Deans of Education

CULLEN, Mr Phil, Private capacity

DEVEREAUX, Ms Jennifer, Federal Research Officer, Australian Education Union

DINHAM, Professor Stephen, Professor, Teacher Education, University of Melbourne

DONNELLY, Dr Kevin, Director, Education Standards Institute

FINKEL, Dr Alan, President, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

FLEMING, Mr John, Deputy Principal, Haileybury

GAVRIELATOS, Mr Angelo, Federal President, Australian Education Union

JENSEN, Dr Ben Joseph, Director, School Education Program, Grattan Institute

KENNEALLY, Ms Helen, Executive Officer, Australian Council of Deans of Education

MAYER, Professor Diane, Teacher Education Specialist, Australian Council of Deans of Education

McINTOSH, Ms Janine, Schools Manager, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute

PENTLAND, Mr Peter, Education Programs Manager, Australian Academy of Technological Sciences and Engineering

PRINCE, Professor Geoff, Director, Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute

RICKARDS, Professor Field Winston, Dean of Education, University of Melbourne

ROLLS, Ms Annemarie, CEO, Schools Connect Australia

SCOTT, Mr Derek, CEO and Principal, Haileybury

URE, Professor Christine, Head of School, School of Education, Deakin University

WILSON, Ms Lorraine, Private capacity

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***Canberra, Tuesday, 5 March 2013.***

ADONIOU, Ms Misty, Private capacity

BACKUS, Mrs Hilary Frances, President, Queensland Association of State School Principals

BARR, Mr Andrew, National Chair, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

CULL, Ms Kim, CEO, Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

DAVIES, Mr Matt, Group Manager, Youth and Inclusive Education, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

EVANS, Ms Margery, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership

GOLDSPINK, Dr Christopher, Director, Incept Labs

GORDON, Ms Alex, Group Manager, Curriculum, Assessment and Teaching Group, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

GRIFFITHS, Dr William Robert, Chief Executive Officer, National Catholic Education Commission

HART, Mr Norm, President, Australian Primary Principals Association

KAY, Dr Robert, Executive Director, Incept Labs

TAYLOR, Mr Duncan, President, Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW

WATT, Mr Christopher Gerard, Federal Secretary, Independent Education Union of Australia



## **APPENDIX 3**

**Prepared by Marilyn Harrington, Senior Researcher,  
Social Policy, Parliamentary Library Briefing, May 2013.**

## The teaching profession – inquiries and reports

Over the last 30 years there have been numerous inquiries, reports and policy statements relating to the teaching professions, including entrant selection, pre-service education, teacher education for specific fields of study, induction, professional development and evidence-based research—over 100 inquiries and reports from 1979 to 2006 have been identified.<sup>1</sup> Most of these were generated by federal and state governments and by parliamentary committees. The list is by no means exhaustive as it does not take into account some inquiries that were not specifically about teacher education but had significant recommendations regarding the teaching profession.<sup>2</sup> Since 2006, there have been more inquiries and reports related to the teaching profession, including a recent Productivity Commission inquiry into the schools workforce.<sup>3</sup>

These reports have recurring findings and recommendations and, as the findings from the Productivity Commission's inquiry into the schools workforce illustrate, the issues which they repeatedly identified persist.<sup>4</sup> The following selection of recommendations from some of the key inquiries and reports at the federal level since 1980 shows some of the recurring themes that are relevant to the current inquiry. These include:

- incentives to attract teacher applicants, including university fee concessions and scholarships and targeted incentives to attract Indigenous applicants and those from other under-represented and disadvantaged groups
- raising the standard of teacher entrants, including a demonstrated commitment to teaching and proven literacy standards
- pre-service education – focus on subject areas with teacher shortages; compulsory literacy teaching units of study; targeted practicums in a range of settings; review/accreditation of teacher education courses
- structured induction and mentoring programs for beginning teachers, with reduced teaching loads for beginning teachers
- professional development a prerequisite for ongoing registration, including structured programs with prescribed amounts of PD time
- professional development in specialist fields—literacy (including reading), science and mathematics
- specialist teachers to support teaching in specific fields on a school cluster basis and
- development funds for collaborative approaches to all aspects of teacher education, including evidence-based research to encourage teacher entrants, effective teacher education programs and teacher retention.

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1 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, [\*Top of the class: report on the inquiry into teacher education\*](#), Canberra, 2007, accessed 19 April 2013.

2 For example, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *The literacy challenge: strategies for early intervention for literacy and learning for Australian children*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992.

3 Productivity Commission (PC), [\*Schools workforce\*](#), Research report, PC, Canberra, 2012, accessed 19 April 2013.

4 Ibid.



Name	Key recommendations	Source document
<p>National Inquiry into Teacher Education (1978–1980)</p> <p>38 recommendations and 60 'positions'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher education entrants:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– entrants to be in top quartile of academic achievement</li> <li>– other applicant qualities determined by references, interviews and other testing to be taken into account when excess applicant numbers</li> <li>– encouragement of Indigenous and ethnic teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-service education and training:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– core studies and learning experiences</li> <li>– education to cater for individual differences of students.</li> <li>– practicums to include duties and tasks of beginning teachers</li> <li>– selection of appropriate supervising teachers with training and time allowance</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Induction:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– beginning teacher not to be appointed to difficult schools or classes</li> <li>– reduced teaching loads and professional responsibility on full salary during first year of service</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development (PD):               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– standard number of hours for PD</li> <li>– PD sabbaticals of one term after every seven years of service</li> <li>– specialist PD courses and centres of specialisation</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>National Inquiry into Teacher Education, <i>Report of the National Inquiry into Teacher Education</i>, Australian Government Publishing Service, Canberra (AGPS), 1980.</p>
<p>Joint Review of Teacher Education (1983–1986)</p> <p>7 recommendations and 12 'matters for consideration'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-service education and training:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– review of teacher education courses</li> <li>– programs to support training of Indigenous teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development:               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– post-experience study by practising teachers</li> <li>– in-service training for principals and staff working with disadvantaged students</li> <li>– in-service training for mathematics and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission (CTEC) and Commonwealth Schools Commission (CSC), <i>Improving teacher education: report of the Joint Review of Teacher Education</i>, CTEC and CSC, 1986.</p>

	<p>science teachers to enhance girls' participation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– improved consultative arrangements regarding teacher education between the Commonwealth and states</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p><i>Teacher Education in Australia</i> (1990)</p> <p>20 recommendations</p>	<p>Pre-service education and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– initial degree course to provide a strong grounding in general subject disciplines and educational principles and teaching competencies</li> <li>– initial teacher education courses to be a cooperative activity involving higher education providers, school employers and teachers</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– prior to the award of a Bachelor of Education degree, graduate teachers to be appointed as associate teacher for two years with reduced teaching loads and the support of an experienced teacher responsible for teacher development</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– incentives for PD linked with standards for continuing national registration</li> <li>– prescribed number of PD days and budget allocation for PD</li> <li>– some school discretion in use of PD funds for local purposes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– voluntary system of national teacher registration</li> <li>– National Centre of Teaching and Research for the Professional Development of Teachers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Australian Education Council Working Party, <i>Teacher education in Australia: a report to the Australian Education Council by an AEC Working Party</i>, Commissioned report, no. 6, National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1990.</p>
<p><i>Australia's Teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade</i> (1990)</p> <p>12 'key findings'</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– internships (6 to 12 months) for student teachers nearing completion of their training</li> <li>– lower teaching load in first year of teaching</li> <li>– experienced teachers to have responsibility for beginning teachers</li> <li>– ongoing training for beginning teachers provided jointly by employer and</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Schools Council, <i>Australia's teachers: an agenda for the next decade</i>, AGPS, Canberra, 1990.</p>

	<p>training institutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– performance review after first or second year of full-time independent work</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– improved coordination</li> <li>– Industry Training Fund with contributions by employers, teachers and the Commonwealth</li> <li>– four types of PD: to support system or agency initiatives; to support school needs; partnerships between education authorities and higher education institutions to support needs of individual teachers; and to enable upgrading of formal qualifications</li> <li>– periodic professional appraisal to sustain professional growth</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, <i>The Literacy Challenge</i> (1992)</p> <p>10 recommendations (3 teacher-related recommendations)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– demonstrated aptitude for teaching</li> <li>– minimum standard of mathematics and English proficiency</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– compulsory component for language and literacy teaching education</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, <i>The literacy challenge: a report on strategies for early intervention for literacy and learning for Australian children</i>, AGPS, Canberra, 1993.</p>
<p>Australian Language and Literacy Council, <i>Teacher Education in English Language and Literacy</i> (1995)</p> <p>9 recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– facilitate credit transfer pathways, articulation arrangements and recognition of prior learning</li> <li>– national guidelines for teacher employment to raise the standard of teacher entrants and retention, including a demonstrated expertise in English literacy, raising of entry requirements, and financial incentives</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-service teacher education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– compulsory English language and literacy study</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– induction and probation strategies</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Australian Language and Literacy Council, <i>Teacher education in English language and literacy: preservice and inservice teacher education in both school and adult education contexts, in the fields of English literacy and English as a second language</i>, National Board of Employment, Education and Training, Canberra, 1995.</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>career-long access to PD with salary and other financial incentives</li> <li>continued support for PD of English literacy teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>nationally consistent competency standards for teachers of English literacy</li> <li>monitoring and review of English literacy teacher education programs and courses</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession (1998)</p> <p>19 recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>national recruitment campaign to attract high quality applicants</li> <li>scholarships for university graduates to undertake postgraduate professional teaching qualifications</li> </ul> </li> <li>Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accreditation of initial teacher training programs</li> </ul> </li> <li>Induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>development of induction programs nationally</li> </ul> </li> <li>Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>accreditation of PD providers and courses</li> <li>PD to be a prerequisite for teachers' continued registration or re-registration</li> </ul> </li> <li>Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reversal of casualisation of the teaching workforce</li> <li>a national professional teaching standards and registration body</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, <a href="#"><i>A class act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession</i></a>, The Senate, Canberra, 2008.</p>
<p>Review of Teaching and Teacher Education (2002–2003).</p> <p>Focus on science, technology and mathematics (STE) education.</p> <p>54 'actions' as part of an <i>Agenda for Action</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>incentives for prospective STE teachers, including payment of HECS debt, scholarships and paid internships</li> <li>STE teachers to not pay more course fees than other teachers</li> <li>incentives for Indigenous teacher applicants</li> <li>recognition of prior learning, including facilitation of teacher entrants from other</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, Department of Education, Science and Training, 2003.</p>

	<p>specialised fields</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– focus on STE education in primary teacher education programs, including opportunities to specialise</li> <li>– high quality teacher education program and sufficient teacher education places in STE and languages other than English</li> <li>– targeted practicums in a range of settings, including in relation to teaching of Indigenous students</li> <li>– strong link to schools for teaching students and educators, with placements by highly accomplished teachers as teacher educators and teacher educators as school teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Induction: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– structured induction and mentoring for beginning teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– PD in STE for primary teachers</li> <li>– scholarships and other incentives for PD in science and mathematics teaching</li> <li>– science and mathematics coordinators for school clusters</li> <li>– PD for STE teachers to gain relevant work experience</li> <li>– subject specialist PD, including upgrading of qualifications to teach in other subject areas</li> <li>– PD opportunities for school leaders</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– national professional standards for teachers</li> <li>– national data collection relating to teachers, teacher workforce and teacher education</li> <li>– research relating to teachers' working lives and ways to enhance attractiveness of teaching career</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy (2004–2005)</p> <p>20 recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– teaching of reading a key objective of primary teacher education courses</li> <li>– literacy teaching within subject areas included in the coursework of secondary teachers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>National Inquiry into the Teaching of Literacy, <a href="#">Teaching reading: report and recommendations</a>, Department of Education, Science</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– personal literacy skills and demonstrated ability to teach literacy a condition for registration of graduates</li> <li>– projects to enhance literacy teaching</li> <li>• Mentoring: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– ‘appropriate’ induction and mentoring</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– specialist literacy teachers to provide support to staff as well as school literacy strategies</li> <li>– postgraduate studies in literacy provided by higher education providers</li> <li>– ongoing mentoring and PD related to effective literacy teaching</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– national standards for literacy teaching, initial teacher registration and accomplished teaching</li> <li>– a national program of literacy action incorporating the above</li> <li>– teaching strategies founded on evidence-based research</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	and Training, 2005.
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, Inquiry into Teacher Education (2007) 12 recommendations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– funding for universities to develop innovative programs to increase entrants from under-represented groups and programs of support for applicants from disadvantaged groups</li> <li>– align teacher education places with teacher workforce priorities and shortages</li> <li>– examine effect of student contribution rates</li> <li>– Increased Australian Government contribution amount for education places in universities</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a sound research base for teacher education</li> <li>– national system of accreditations of teacher education courses</li> <li>– Australian Government increase funding to universities for practicums and revised payment processes</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Induction:</li> </ul>	House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training, <a href="#"><i>Top of the class: report on the inquiry into teacher education</i></a> , House of Representatives, Canberra, 2007.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– a one-year structured induction program</li> <li>– reduced teaching load for beginning teachers</li> <li>– mentors assigned to beginning teachers</li> <li>– structured and tailored PD program</li> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– PD a condition of registration renewal and linked to higher levels of registration</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– funding for collaborative approaches to practicum, research, induction and professional development</li> <li>– longitudinal study into effectiveness of different models of teacher education</li> <li>– a National Clearinghouse for Education Research</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
<p>Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education, Inquiry into Academic Standards of School Education (2007)</p> <p>7 recommendations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– restructure training courses to encourage trainee secondary teachers to undertake discipline studies before commencing education studies</li> <li>– universities to draw on specialist subject expertise outside education faculties to provide specialist tuition to trainee teachers</li> <li>– focus on literacy and mathematics instruction for trainee teachers</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Professional development: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– improved PD in mathematics</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– improved remuneration and incentives to raise entry standards and retention rates</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education, <a href="#">Quality of school education</a>, The Senate, Canberra, 2007.</p>
<p>Productivity Commission, Schools Workforce Study (2012)</p> <p>13 recommendations and 10 findings</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher education entrants: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– accreditation standards revised to provide greater flexibility regarding recognition of prior learning for postgraduate entry into the teaching profession</li> <li>– cease discounts for upfront payments of course fees (a means of controlling teacher surpluses)</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Pre-service education and training: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– guidance on evidence that training providers are expected to use to</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p>Productivity Commission, <a href="#">Schools workforce</a>, Research report, PC, Canberra, 2012.</p>

	<p>demonstrate that graduates meet Graduate Teacher Standards</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– accreditation standards for initial teacher education programs revised so that two-year graduate teacher training courses optional. If maintained, governments should implement measures to limit adverse impact on teacher shortages</li> </ul> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Other: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– expansion of Longitudinal Teacher Workforce Study to enable analysis of pre-service training, induction, PD, teacher placement and retention, and thereby improve effectiveness of pre-service teacher training</li> <li>– support for school-based improvements in teacher performance appraisal—efforts to improve teacher performance should not focus on performance bonuses</li> <li>– school authority to take disciplinary action against underperforming teachers</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	
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Note: many of the recommendations have multiple parts and not all recommendations in some of the reports relate to the teaching profession.

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