

## **Submission to the ITE Review Discussion Paper**

### **Area 1:**

A key element in this process is to recognise the professionalism of the teaching profession. Unlike most other professions there is a very high degree of government based regulation rather than professional based regulation. Greater emphasis should be given to seeking the voice of the profession in decision making. The creation of a professional body, external to government, as other professions have, for example the AMA, the medical college system, CPA etc would ensure that the status of the profession is elevated to a higher level.

Careful selection of potential education students should also be encouraged. This should include aptitude testing rather than simply looking at marks and other arbitrary factors.

The casualisation of the teaching workforce is a major issue within the profession leading many to leave or not even consider it as a viable career pathway. Consideration of scholarships with guaranteed employment may assist with this as would a review of current employment practices of government systems where the majority of teachers work. A transparent working party across all 3 sectors to examine best approaches, actively seeking the advice of the profession may be a good starting point for this. Prioritising scholarships in key areas, including Indigenous Australians, those from diverse linguistic backgrounds as well as in hard to staff subject areas would also be of benefit here.

Finally considering more flexible retraining options should be a key priority. Previously many teachers used post graduate diploma of education qualifications to enter the profession. Taking 12 months this was a relatively simple and fast way to retrain and enter the profession. Now most universities only offer a 2 year MTeach program which inhibits many from retraining.

### **Area 2:**

Yes, low completion rates are a major issue and indicate that too many students are entering undergraduate programs unprepared or unsuited for the demands of the profession. Adopting a more nuanced selection program that includes aptitude testing is important to address this.

Ensuring that university courses are well aligned to the Graduate standards of the Professional Standards is crucial to ensuring that there is more uniformity in the standard of graduates. There has been a large increase in online courses for teaching degrees. I find this very concerning and from my experience in teacher recruitment and leadership such graduates are often very poorly equipped. Such online courses must include, at the very least, considerable residential programs where quality teaching, collaboration with peers and a focus on teaching skills through micro-teaching lessons and assessments are conducted. Teaching is not simply a series of competencies that can be ticked off through an

online course structure. A greater focus on the quality of practicum experiences should also be considered. Universities are constantly struggling to place ITE students for practicums, reflecting the reluctance of time poor and over-worked teachers. Creating greater incentives amongst more experienced teachers to take on the supervision of prac teachers is important. This would include recognising their expertise by increasing the payment for the work and also importantly other strategies such as professional recognition through incorporating this as an optional pathway to HALT, advanced standing with post grad qualifications and maybe opening access to post grad scholarships etc.

### **Area 3:**

Yes, in my work in teacher recruitment as a school leader for the last 16 years I have always had challenges in recruiting staff in certain subject areas – notably STEM based subjects, Geography and Languages teachers. This has meant that many teachers end up teaching well outside their teaching area resulting in poor student outcomes. This is particularly true in Mathematics and Geography. Many schools limit their language programs due to challenges in staffing as well.

In more recent times, especially the last 12 months there has been a substantial increase in the challenges of recruiting across most areas, including subjects like English that used to be quite easy to find staff in. Primary remains relatively easy to recruit in. My belief is that there are now many teachers reaching retirement, too many teachers with 3-5 years experience exiting the profession. Furthermore in the short term due to COVID many international teachers are not in Australia to fill the gaps as was the case in the past hence the increase in staffing problems. Similarly, the over-regulation of the profession (for example in NSW the recent changes to the process of maintaining professional accreditation was done with zero consultation and announced mid-pandemic) are resulting in many teachers leaving the profession earlier than they might otherwise.

Creating a cross-sector review with genuine input from the profession to identify key staff shortage areas will be the first step in addressing some of these issues. Targeted scholarship programs and other incentives, such as mentoring, would assist in addressing some of the shortage issues.

### **Area 4:**

Creating more genuine and enduring links between the school sector and the university sector would help to improve graduate readiness for the work ahead. There needs to be a balance between academic and professional staff in ITE courses. For example, in some Swiss jurisdictions teachers are employed in both school and universities at the same time having a shared teaching role across both sectors. This model brings currently practising teachers into the ITE courses to deliver practically focussed learning. This is a model the medical profession long ago adopted and could work well in education. At present some teachers, I included, do some work on a casual basis in university education programs. However, this is

in addition to working fulltime as a teacher and this limits the capacity of many to undertake such work. An opportunity to work in each sector part time or to have secondments of 12 - 24 month blocks from the school sector into the tertiary sector would bring professional practitioners into the courses to compliment the work of academic staff. This is particularly useful in components of the ITE courses that focus on the process of teaching – eg classroom management, lesson planning, things are not subject area specific etc.

Higher levels of accreditation are an important part of the process. However, at present there are too few HALT and even fewer Lead teachers. This will change over time as more teachers move through the system. However, there needs to be greater accessibility to HALT, it is a long and arduous process with limited support offered and some greater incentive to undertake the accreditation. Incentives for schools to employ HALT teachers could also be considered by supporting a funded mentoring program lead by such teachers.

Support for graduate teachers from the university sector is an interesting area to consider. I think schools and sectors are better placed to do this but must be supported with realistic funding and also support in other areas, such as teacher release time.

Teacher workload is the single biggest reason for the flight from the profession. There are three key areas to address this:

1. Limit the amount of administration teachers are required to do. A genuine examination on a cost/benefit basis of much of the non-teaching work that teachers do would show that much is not required and that which is, would be better done by less skilled (and therefore less expensive) administrative staff.
2. Limit the amount of regulatory compliance. A great deal of time, energy and stress goes into dealing with regulations set by government agencies which seek to control education very tightly. Reducing this and recognising the skills and expertise of the profession would reduce workload as well as increase morale within the profession.
3. Limit expectations that schools are there to deal with every issue that arises in society. The curriculum is extraordinarily crowded, constantly changing and things are being added to it all the time with very little coming out.

Supporting teachers in further study is crucial. There are virtually no Commonwealth Supported places (CSP) for post graduate programs now. Masters programs (outside of MTeach) are very expensive and teachers do not have the income to support their cost. Yet these qualifications are very important to the ongoing professionalisation of teaching. Unlike other professions where employers often pay for MBAs or other post grad education this does not happen in schools. Consideration to returning CSP to post grad courses in education or related disciplines for teacher is key to opening this area.

