

# **AEU Response to the AFTRAA draft paper “The framework for the National Recognition of Approved Pre-Service Teacher education Programs”**

## **1 Introduction**

- 1.1 The Australian Education Union is an industrial and professional organisation representing approximately 169,000 members nationally. As such, it is the largest organisation representing the interests of the teaching profession and is party in all states and territories to the industrial agreements under which the majority of teachers are employed, as well as a party to many related industrial and professional agreements. It is the major organisation to which teachers delegate responsibility for the negotiating of their salaries and conditions.
- 1.2 The AEU therefore has considerable interest in and responsibility for all matters regarding teacher education, registration, standards and similar matters.

## **2 AEU Position Regarding Teacher Accreditation**

- 2.1 The AEU supports in principle a system of nationally consistent accreditation of teacher education courses.
- 2.2 It strongly believes this is most appropriately achieved through the existing regulatory authorities in the states and territories (known variously as Boards, Colleges or Institutes) working together through the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA) to develop a framework based on an extended model of mutual recognition. It therefore welcomes this AFTRAA draft paper.
- 2.3 Such accreditation should be compulsory and administered through statutory responsibilities.

## **3 The Proposed Framework**

- 3.1 The AEU supports the proposed framework as a starting point for teacher education accreditation. In particular it notes points 19 and 20 in the draft paper as a useful place from which to begin an enhancement of recognition.
- 3.2 However, the AEU believes that it is necessary to take firmer steps towards harmonisation. The status of Appendix 1 is unclear. The AEU believes this is an important listing of areas on which inter-jurisdictional agreement should be pursued, and recommends it be more clearly integrated into the framework.
- 3.3 The AEU encourages state and territory authorities to put in place mechanisms to meet the MCEETYA agreement that is described in point 10 of the AFTRAA paper, as quickly as possible. Any delay would leave the field open to the Teaching Australia/Commonwealth Government agenda, which the AEU does not support.
- 3.4 In addition, in order to achieve a greater level of national consistency and to enhance the accreditation processes a number of further developments should occur within a reasonably short timeline.

- 3.4.1 It is desirable that those jurisdictions that do not currently have statutory responsibility for teacher education courses consider options which either lead to them gaining such responsibility or take steps based on enhancing current responsibilities which give them the capacity to implement similar measures to those jurisdictions that do have such responsibility.
- 3.4.2 It is desirable that the AFTRAA Framework include the formation of a national standing group to have specific responsibility for advising AFTRAA and its constituent bodies of appropriate measures to ensure both national consistency and measures that will enhance the quality of courses.
- 3.4.3 Such a body should consist of representatives from within the AFTRAA constituent bodies and directly from other stakeholders, such as teacher unions and the Deans of Education, with an ongoing interest in course accreditation.
- 3.4.4 It may also be desirable to have subject and age specific panels reporting to this body.
- 3.4.5 It is also desirable that steps be taken to align courses and beginning teacher standards.

#### **4 Teaching Practice**

- 4.1 The AEU believes that this is an extremely important area and notes there are currently a number of serious issues in the area of teaching practice which need to be addressed as part of the accreditation process. These are complex and diverse, but interrelated.
- 4.2 It is desirable that any accreditation process focus not only on the quantity but also the quality of supervised experience in schools. One of the objectives of teacher course accreditation must be to improve current teaching practice arrangements. This includes maintaining minimum levels of supervised experience but goes to other issues related to the quality of that experience, encompassing arrangements both within schools and within universities.
- 4.3 University departments need to dedicate greater resources to the supervision of students when in schools. But improved quality also requires a better relationship between schools and universities that addresses such issues as ensuring that supervising teachers in schools have a clearly defined, understood and productive mentoring role, and that the university and school based supervisors work together to the benefit of the practising student.
- 4.4 There must also be proper consideration of appropriate remuneration and time release for supervising teachers, and the reasons why it is difficult to find adequate places for practice students.
- 4.5 The effectiveness or otherwise of teacher course accreditation will be greatly influenced by the extent to which course accreditation is accompanied by greater resources to this area. Universities will not find it easy to re-direct resources from other parts of the university, and the problem must be seen as wider than, though including, their internal allocation mechanisms.
- 4.6 Governments and other employers must accept a much greater role in funding and organising arrangements for school experience. This must include continuing with

and enhancing the Teaching Practice Supervision Award and finding acceptable solutions to the potential teacher workload implications.

4.7 The AEU would resist any attempts to use teacher course accreditation to impose greater demands on schools and teachers without proper and adequate resourcing.