



**RESPONSE TO TEACHING AUSTRALIA'S
CONSULTATION PAPER
"NATIONAL PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS
FOR ADVANCED TEACHING AND SCHOOL
LEADERSHIP"**

June 2007

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1. Introduction

1.1 The AEU

The Australian Education Union (AEU) is a national body representing the teaching profession. It has approximately 170,000 members nationally in public schools, TAFEs and Early Childhood Centres. This response is prepared in consultation with that membership through the eight Branches and Associated Bodies of the AEU. This response therefore represents the views of a significant majority of teachers.

1.2 AEU position regarding teaching standards

The AEU Position on Teaching Standards is at Attachment 1. In particular we emphasise:

- The AEU strongly supports the development of appropriate professional standards for all involved in teaching in early childhood, school and TAFE. Their development provides an opportunity for professional recognition and public support and will enhance the status of the profession. It is also consistent with AEU support for teacher registration and the maintenance of high level qualifications.
- Professional standards are correctly the work of MCEETYA through the various registration authorities and education departments at state and territory level, with the Australasian Federation of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA) playing a coordinating role nationally.
- The AEU supports the MCEETYA National Framework for Standards¹ which describes four career dimensions (Graduation, Competence, Accomplishment, and Leadership) and describes the work of teachers through four categories (Professional Knowledge, Professional Practice, Professional Values and Professional Relationships).

1.3 Role of Teaching Australia

1.3.1 Within this context, we are concerned that Teaching Australia is again seeking to lead and dominate an agenda which is more legitimately the work of AFTRAA and its constituent bodies.

1.3.2 As the Consultation Paper notes (p.2):

Employers and teacher registration and accreditation authorities have also developed or are developing standards for teachers and principals in their own jurisdictions.

However, beyond that it does not appear to attach any significance to this fact by recognising the nature of this work and its relationship to the proposals in the paper.

1.3.3 The reality is that MCEETYA has established a national framework for professional standards of teaching, and that all accreditation authorities have

¹ MCEETYA, November 2003, A National Framework for Professional Standards for Teaching

- agreed to come into line with it. There have been no major objections to this framework, and the AEU accepts the desirability of operating within such a framework, and the authority of MCEETYA in establishing it.
- 1.3.4 The standards landscape is made even more complex by the fact that in some states and territories teachers are already having to meet employer standards as well as registration standards. It is not desirable that teachers be confronted with a multiplicity of standards.
- 1.3.5 Given this situation it is difficult to see the purpose in Teaching Australia proceeding with the work that it is proposing, adding yet another layer to an already overcrowded and undesirably complex agenda.
- 1.3.6 This is further confused since the paper does not make clear the proposed status of the standards. Presumably, since Teaching Australia has no authority unless the Federal Minister decides to enforce its standards by tying them to funding, they are intended to be voluntary. This then creates a situation in which teachers may have to meet some compulsory standards, but are also offered some on a voluntary basis. This does not seem worthwhile. Alternatively, if the Teaching Australia standards became compulsory, teachers have to meet at least two sets of standards, which is even more undesirable.
- 1.3.7 Therefore any role that Teaching Australia might play must take account of what is happening in states and territories, be in collaboration with AFTRAA and its constituent bodies, and recognise them as the legitimate bodies with the legislated responsibility for developing standards. We repeat what was said in our response to the proposals around teacher accreditation:
The only appropriate role for Teaching Australia to play in this area, as in other areas, is as a facilitator and catalyst for action in ways which enhance existing authorities and organisations, rather than seeking to enhance and justify its own existence.
- 1.3.8 Similarly, the AEU is unlikely to support any form of standards for teaching which are not supported by AFTRAA and its constituent bodies and in which they do not play a central role.
- 1.3.9 The remainder of this response will comment on specifics within the paper, but should be understood in the context of the above reservations.

1.4 The Proposed Model (Section 4)

- 1.4.1 The relationship of the charter to the standards is not clear. It appears to more appropriately be a self-standing document rather than integral to the development of standards.

2 Answers to Questions

Q1 To what extent does the draft Charter capture the core values and commitments of members of the teaching profession?

2.1 In its response to the original draft charter, the AEU said:

- The purposes of a Charter should therefore be to:
 - Clearly define goals and values of the teaching profession.

- Promote the profession and its value to Australia.
 - Advocate for the professional growth of teachers.
 - Promote the professional, industrial and civil rights of teachers.
- The Charter should be constructed by teachers for teachers – the wider community is a secondary audience.
 - Within this context, it would be able to assert the broader role that teaching should play, assert professional qualifications, experience and judgement, and the right of teachers to play a key role in educational decision making at all levels, and provide a document to broaden community understanding of the higher aspirations of teachers.
- 2.2 The new draft has gone only a small way to meeting these conditions. It remains “service oriented” in tone and perspective and is about the expectations of teachers rather than their place in society and their professional role in curriculum and what goes on in schools. It remains more in the category of an “Oath of Office” than an assertion of professional role, rights, and responsibilities.
- 2.3 It still concentrates more on the obligation of teachers to individual students, and now their immediate colleagues, and ignores the obligation to wider society and the future of that society. As part of an ethical profession, teachers have a responsibility to promote professional, industrial, civil and human rights and to support colleagues in the defence of these rights.
- 2.4 The AEU is sceptical whether a document produced without reference to operational arrangements with an employer actually serves a purpose, and suggests any such document needs to be negotiated from the ground up with a constituency of teachers and their organisations.
- 2.5 As a minor point, the words “instil” and “shape” in paragraph two are inappropriate. It would be better expressed as “facilitate the development of knowledge, principles and values”.

Q2 How would you amend the wording of the draft Charter to better meet its purpose?

- 2.6 It should be negotiated with a wide cross section of the profession and their organisations, and be based on the principles outlined at 2.1 above.
- 2.7 It is noticeable that the word “pedagogy” does not appear. The use of the word “learning” as in “Good learning...” is also inappropriate. Whist teachers are responsible for facilitating the learning of students, what they do is teach using appropriate pedagogy.
- Q3 What are the pros and cons of adopting three organising categories rather than the four MCEETYA categories?
- Q4 What areas of expertise expected in advanced teaching and school leadership, if any, are not adequately covered by these categories?
- 2.8 The AEU can see no good reason to collapse the four MCEETYA organising categories into three and believes the MCEETYA framework should be adhered to.

- 2.9 The use of the word “commitment” to combine values and relationships underlines the points made at 2.2 and 2.3 above regarding the “service orientation” of the document.
- 2.10 The word “Values” is of particular significance, providing an opportunity to include some of those things noted above. It is the view of the AEU that this is a very important concept which must be included separately as in the MCEETYA Framework.

Q5 What are the critical areas of professional expertise to be captured in the capabilities for advanced teaching?

- 2.11 As noted above, the AEU does not support the three categories and therefore it is difficult to comment on the subdivisions of those categories.
- 2.12 Whilst acknowledging this is only an outline subject to further development, the MCEETYA Framework does elaborate well on the categories and should be cross checked in regard to the final draft.
- 2.13 There should be recognition of the importance of teachers having a broad repertoire of pedagogical practices.

Q6 What are the critical areas of professional expertise to be captured in the capabilities for school leadership?

- 2.14 As noted in previous responses, the AEU does not accept the definition of “leadership” which Teaching Australia seeks to apply. In its response to the then NIQTSL “Standards for School Leadership Project” Consultation Questionnaire, the AEU made the following points, which are still pertinent:
- It is generally recognised that the term “Leadership” should not be applied solely to those in formal leadership positions. The recent Report “Australia’s Teachers: Australia’s Future”, emphasises this. The section on school leadership is very supportive of dispersed leadership, democratic styles, and the involvement of all teachers (and the wider school community) in decision making. The AEU commends this section of that report.
 - Such a view of leadership raises a number of issues about the place of “School Leadership” within the Institute, especially given the history of the formation of the Institute, the role of principal’s associations in that, and proposals to fast track these elements of the Institute.
 - The AEU believes that it is highly desirable that the elements of the Institute be integrated from the beginning. It should not be perceived as two related but partially separate parts, one dealing with quality teaching and the other with educational leadership. Rather these two aspects must be viewed as part of a single function.
 - Even were they to be viewed separately, it would be inappropriate for principals to “own” the leadership function. Leadership is an issue for all the profession, and all in the profession should have an equal say regarding it.
- 2.15 These comments are given added weight by the broader interpretation of “leadership” in the MCEETYA document, and again it is puzzling why Teaching Australia should be seeking to vary from the accepted framework.

Q7 What are the specialised areas of professional practice in advanced teaching that require specific descriptors?

2.16 The AEU believes that all teachers do similar work and that therefore standards can generally be expressed generically. It is therefore important that the emphasis be on maximising the generic standards (capabilities) and minimising the specific ones. Given that much of the initial development has been within specific subjects it is important that these be examined to ascertain what can be expressed generically and therefore incorporated into the generic standards. Specific standards should then be subject or age related specific elaborations of the generic.

Q8 What are the specialised areas and/or levels of school leadership that require specific descriptors?

Q9 Is there a need for different descriptors for school leadership and advanced school leadership?

2.17 As noted, the AEU does not agree with the Teaching Australia definition of leadership and sees formal school leadership in a context of broader school leadership.

Q10 What guidelines would be useful for the development of descriptors of accomplishment to make them useful and relevant for teachers and school leaders?

2.18 This requires broad consultation with the profession. Both the guidelines and the descriptors should be developed by teachers for teachers.

Q11 What gaps or inefficiencies are there in the roles proposed for the Standards Drafting Group, the Standards Council and professional associations?

Q12 What skills and expertise should be sought in selecting members of the Standards Drafting Group?

2.19 As noted above, the AEU does not believe that Teaching Australia is the appropriate body to appoint the Standards Drafting Group, unless in collaboration with AFTRAA. The Group should report to AFTRAA.

2.20 The Drafting Group, working under the auspices of AFTRAA, should have genuine professional representation and accountability back to the profession. It should draw its membership from bodies directly representing the profession which can assure this, as well as other relevant stakeholders.

Q13 What should the composition of the proposed Standards Council be?

2.21 This should be discussed with an appropriate AFTRAA body when it is established.