



Response to Teaching Australia Proposal

on

Teacher Education Accreditation Response

March 2007

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 But 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. Such a model would include a capacity to jointly develop and enhance standards, and could include the establishment of a national body (possibly a sub-committee of AFTRAA) to oversee it.
- 2.3 The Teaching Australia initiative takes place in a context where a number of the regulatory authorities established under state and territory legislation already have and directly exercise powers in regard to teacher education accreditation and where the other regulatory authorities are considering the issues raised and do have considerable influence over them.
- 2.4 AFTRAA is itself seeking to develop appropriate frameworks and has circulated a draft Framework for the National Recognition of Approved Pre-Service Teacher Education Programs for consultation.
- 2.5 There is therefore concern that the work of Teaching Australia could lead to duplication and even contestation over who has the appropriate authority, in a context where:
 - Constitutional responsibility for schools lies with the states and territories, and appropriate regulatory authorities have been established in all but one state and territory ;
 - the regulatory authorities are generally supported by the various AEU Branches and Associated Bodies, and are perceived in most cases as having a form of genuine teacher and union representation;
 - recent attempts by the Federal Government to gain greater powers over schools are not seen as educationally desirable;
 - Teaching Australia has yet to establish its credibility as a genuine organisation representative of the profession and accountable to teachers rather than a creature of the Federal Government.

- 2.6 As **Propositions 1 and 2** make clear, professional standards for graduates and accreditation of teacher education courses are clearly inter-related, and must therefore be connected and administered by the same authority.
- 2.7 The AEU is therefore totally opposed to **Proposition 9**. Any national body, such as an Accreditation Council, or alternatives, should be established under the auspices of AFTRAA. Whilst a number of organisations are identified as having “strong claims for membership” the dominant role to be played by Teaching Australia in establishing and determining membership of such a body goes beyond its appropriate role.
- 2.8 This strongly held view underpins all the matters expressed in this submission. The AEU does not see Teaching Australia as the appropriate body to establish and assume the powers outlined, and the subsequent responses to the propositions in the paper are made in this context.

3 Proposition 3

- 3.1 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.
- 3.2 Proposition 3 is therefore of considerable importance. The AEU is unlikely to support any form of teacher accreditation which is not supported by AFTRAA and its constituent bodies and in which they do not play a central role. For this to occur Proposition 3 would have to be implemented in the spirit in which it is written, accepting and respecting the prior and greater responsibility and credibility these authorities have in the area.

4 Proposition 4

- 4.1 This is totally unacceptable. It would create a hierarchy of institutions and consequently potentially a hierarchy of qualifications with implications for the careers of individuals as well as matters currently in contention such as performance pay.
- 4.2 It appears to contradict much of the rationale for Teacher Accreditation outlined elsewhere, and would not be contemplated in regard to teacher registration.

5 Proposition 5

- 5.1 This requires some clarification and elaboration before it can be accepted. There must be a balance between a generic qualification and the need for specialisation in schools.
- 5.2 For instance, whilst a division between primary and secondary qualifications is well established and reflects practice in schools in general, other divisions such as early childhood and middle school are less established and it is important that any divisions in accreditation reflect practice and are not used as a means of re-structuring the profession and schools.
- 5.3 Any stages must not serve to restrict teacher career options by creating qualifications that have limited applicability to the existing structure of schools.
- 5.4 Similarly, a distinction must be made between stages in teacher education course accreditation and teacher registration. It is not desirable that registration become staged.

6 Proposition 6

- 6.1 The AEU agrees with points 32 and 33 regarding the importance of school experience and the partnerships between schools and universities. 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. This will not, however, automatically flow from a system of accreditation, and accreditation should not be seen as the “silver bullet” that will deal with this important 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 just their internal allocation mechanisms.
- 6.2 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.
- 6.3 The AEU would resist any attempts to use teacher course accreditation to impose greater demands on schools and teachers without proper and adequate resourcing.

7 Proposition 7

Such panels should be formed by the relevant statutory body under a framework developed by AFTRAA.

8 Proposition 8

The AEU concurs with a period of five to six years.

9 Proposition 10

The AEU agrees with Proposition 10, subject to further examination and detail.

10 Further points

- 10.1 At point 4 the paper refers to “voluntary” accreditation standards. Given that some state and territory jurisdictions have legally imposed standards, this would actually be a lesser compliance requirement than currently in those jurisdictions, at least. This, then, raises the problem of institutions having to comply with more than one set of requirements.
- 10.2 The AEU also notes that Teaching Australia cannot guarantee that any standards it creates will not be made compulsory by the Federal Government through tying funding to compliance, a course of action the AEU firmly rejects.
- 10.3 The paper does not make clear whether the proposals refer to courses or institutions. The AEU assumes it is the former.
- 10.4 On a number of occasions the paper refers to “employers”. The AEU takes this to mean teacher employers.