

SECTION 1 INFORMATION ABOUT RESPONDENT

DATE: 14 October 2005

A. DETAILS OF ORGANISATION

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B. Does the organisation consent to being identified in the report from the consultation for NIQTSL? **Yes**

C. Does the consultation response contain any confidential information? **NO**

D. Please note that we may contact you during the consultation process to clarify or seek further information arising from your responses. If you do not wish to be contacted please check (X) this box



Australian Education Union

Response

to the NIQTSL

“Standards for School Leadership Project”

October 2005

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Australian Education Union (AEU) has a membership of 166 000, covering teachers and other education workers in public schools. It is the major organisation covering principals and other administrators in schools. As such, it has a legitimate role to play in the introduction of any standards and expects to be closely involved in all stages of their development.
- 1.2. The AEU believes that the questionnaire prepared as part of this consultation is too narrow and restrictive and does not provide adequate opportunity for a broad range of concerns to be raised. Therefore, the AEU is submitting its response in the following form:
 - Section 2 considers the general context of NIQTSL work.
 - Section 3 deals with the context as it applies to this specific project.
 - Section 4 will consider the sections, though not the specific questions, in the questionnaire.
 - Section 5 draws some conclusions.

2. Context of the Consultation

- 2.1. The AEU believes that at this stage NIQTSL has not yet established its legitimacy to act “by the profession, for the profession”. It remains an organisation created by the Federal Minister for Education, with a Board whose composition has been significantly influenced by him and which has yet to establish its independence from him.
- 2.2. Its agenda has also been largely determined by the Minister.
- 2.3. Since the announcement of its creation, activities around NIQTSL have been characterised by an unnecessary urgency in which getting something done seems to be more important than doing things correctly or well. This was certainly the case with the initial consultation led by the Allen Consulting Group, which was conducted with considerable haste at a time in the year when it was difficult to involve “the profession” widely. Consequently, it did little to build a consensus of support for the creation of NIQTSL. This pattern of assumed urgency has continued with the Interim Board.
- 2.4. Ultimately, the credibility of NIQTSL depends upon the confidence it engenders in “the profession” through its consultation and development processes and the accuracy with which it represents the views of practicing educators. However, the processes being adopted to this point are already raising concerns.
 - 2.4.1. Many of the projects seem to be proceeding despite there being no agreement from educators about basic aspects of their direction.
 - 2.4.2. A heavy reliance on private consultants has already become evident. There appears to be little control by the Board as to how these consultancies operate. For example the consultants appear to have considerable control over the direction of the projects, and/or are operating under briefs which do not have broad support. Also whilst steering groups and reference

- groups have been created, they are not always being given opportunities to genuinely influence the direction of the projects sometimes not being convened until after the project parameters have been well and truly set.
- 2.4.3. If consultants are to have a major role in the work of NIQTSL, it is important that NIQTSL develops project management techniques which ensure it retains control of the directions and conduct of the projects and that they operate in ways that have broad acceptance amongst educators.
 - 2.4.4. Such techniques must ensure that the Board is fully aware of what is happening under its auspices. There are inherent weaknesses in allowing consultants to control the process of responses to their work and otherwise allowing them to direct the project.
- 2.5. In order to establish both its legitimacy and the validity of its agenda it is preferable NIQTSL to take a more considered approach. There needs to be broader consultation about the agenda itself. There is growing feedback to the AEU that people feel the agenda is one constructed by government rather than educators. That is to say that it is being portrayed as having broad acceptance when in reality it often does not; rather it is perceived as being the agenda of the Minister and a select few, with no steps having been taken to validate this as the view of “the profession”.
 - 2.6. Inadequate attention is being given to work taking place in the states and territories in relation to statutory bodies and Enterprise Bargaining Agreements. This detracts from NIQTSL’s stated intention not to duplicate work being done by other groups within the profession.
 - 2.7. Within each project there is a need for earlier and wider consultation about the directions of the project itself.
 - 2.8. Since the initial announcement of NIQTSL, the fundamental relationship between the Federal Minister and the states and territories and teachers in general has been changed by the new powers the Minister has assumed by tying his policies to school funding. This makes the role of NIQTSL and its pursuit of independence even more difficult. Because NIQTSL cannot be certain that the Federal Minister will not enforce compliance with the outcomes of its projects through tying them to funding agreements, as has occurred in other areas recently it is vulnerable to being used in an ongoing conflict about commonwealth-state relations.

3. The Context as it applies to Leadership Standards

- 3.1. Most of the comments above apply specifically to the project on Leadership Standards.
- 3.2. The support within the profession to create a set of leadership standards has not been established. The paper seeks to construct a level of support which does not exist in reality by exaggerating interest, ignoring caveats placed around previous statements, and assuming in principle conditional support is support for the project as it is progressing.
- 3.3. For instance, the paper notes “there is widespread support from ... teacher unions ... that there are advantages to be gained by all from the development of a

national framework for school leadership standards” (p.16), but does so in a way that this implies support for the proposals in the paper. There is no attempt to examine the conditional nature of this support.

- 3.4. The AEU took part in the consultations led by the Allen Consulting Group prior to the creation of NIQTSL. In its submission to that consultation it outlined its position on leadership standards (Attachment 1). This cannot be interpreted as unconditional support for them. In this submission the AEU also noted:
 - *In regard to the first three (proposed roles and functions, as in “Development of school leadership capabilities”), the use of the word “Development” or “Developing” requires some comment. The guiding principle above that the Institute must “Complement without duplicating existing relevant activities” is extremely relevant to all areas. Therefore, it must be clearly understood that the functions are primarily about the coordination and support of existing and desirable activities, rather than a role which would see future activity monopolised within the Institute. As is noted in the relevant sections below, there is already considerable activity in most of these areas, and any assumption that there are vacant niches in which the Institute could become dominant is incorrect.*
- 3.5. Therefore, even if the need for Leadership Standards is established, the role that NIQTSL should play in their development must itself be considered.
- 3.6. It should be noted that there is considerable relevant work already underway within most states and territories. For instance, New South Wales and Queensland have specific work around leadership standards underway. In Western Australia there is a Leadership Centre, a well developed Leadership Framework arising out of collaborative work between DET, AEUWA and a range of professional associations, and a growing professional learning program. In South Australia there is structured training and mentoring available for those who wish to apply, and there is a centre for leadership. In Victoria, the Victorian Institute of Teachers specifically includes reference to leadership standards within their teaching standards, for re-registration.
- 3.7. Leadership Standards are also specifically recognized as one of four levels within the MCEETYA Standards Framework. No attempt is made in the paper to relate these to the proposed leadership standards.
- 3.8. Any process should also accord with the “National Statement from the Teaching Profession: Teacher Standards, Quality and Professionalism” (available from the ACE website at <http://www.austcolled.com.au/dbimg/516natstmtfromteachingprofmay2003.pdf>)
- 3.9. There was a clear understanding in the consultations around NIQTSL that it would work with existing bodies, not seek to take over from them.
- 3.10. The AEU is therefore strongly of the view that the mandate for NIQTSL to develop and administer a set of leadership standards along the lines suggested in the paper has not been established.

- 3.11. There is a need for some initial consultations which seek to determine a consensus view about the definition and scope of leadership standards and the way they should develop. This phase appears to have been overlooked.
- 3.12. The project steering group is small and unrepresentative of the profession, consisting apparently of a NIQTSL representative and two representatives of minority principals associations. It is not clear whether there has been a reference group with wider representation, but if this is the case the AEU is not involved or aware of it.
- 3.13. Whilst the AEU welcomes the inclusion of representatives from the AEU National Principals Committee at the national meeting in November, it remains concerned that this meeting seems to include a less than representative grouping of the profession as a whole.
- 3.14. Widespread concern and suspicion about the purpose of the standards has been expressed at several face-to-face meetings of principals in most states/territories. School leaders are concerned that the work which they have been involved with to date will be overridden by the work being undertaken by NIQTSL. This is of particular concern given the direction of the NIQTSL project to date, which is not supported by the majority of school leaders who have attended “consultation” meetings. Further, the uncertainty around whether compliance with NIQTSL standards will be tied to funding in the near future is adding to a growing sense of disquiet.

4. AEU Response to Issues Raised in the Consultation Questionnaire

4.1 The Idea of a Standards-Guided Professional Learning System

- 4.1.1 A standards framework which made more explicit the professional learning which might encourage and support leadership at all levels may have a number of benefits, and such a framework could be national.
- 4.1.2 However, such a Framework would need to be developed in conjunction with the states and territories and statutory bodies and other interested parties, including the education unions, and build a consensus amongst all stakeholders. It would build on work already under way in a number of states and territories. Achieving genuinely “profession defined” standards requires considerable consultation and effort.
- 4.1.3 The framework would need to give answers to a set of key questions around matters such as “What are they?”, “Who provides them?”, “How will they be used?” “Who owns the standards?”, “How is equity achieved?”, “What will be the cost and who meets it?”.
- 4.1.4 It must be based on a broad understanding of leadership, and not see “leadership” as synonymous with “principals”.
- 4.1.5 There would need to be funding directly tied to its implementation for professional learning.
- 4.1.6 In the context of NIQTSL and the Federal Government, as outlined above, there are considerable concerns that maintaining any system as “voluntary” may prove very difficult.

4.2 Standards Development

- 4.2.1 The AEU is opposed to the concept of a set of “principal standards” as implied in the paper. Calling them “Leadership Standards” whilst confining their scope to principals and aspiring principals adds further to the disquiet.
- 4.2.2 It is unclear whether the leadership standards being proposed in the paper are within the MCEETYA Framework or in addition to it.
- 4.2.3 Both the potential and the reality of educational leadership involve a conceptualisation of it as flowing through all “levels” of teaching and administration in a school. The paper itself notes this (p. 7). However, it does not deal adequately with the contradictions of then pursuing a set of “principal standards”.
- 4.2.4 The link between leadership and teaching and learning is core to a view of educational leadership. Any definition which perceives educational leadership in schools as a generic skill separate from teaching and learning is inappropriate in a context of enhancing the teaching profession and must be avoided.
- 4.2.5 Similarly, the AEU rejects the linear, hierarchical model of school organisation implied in the discussion paper.
- 4.2.6 There are concerns that at times the word “profession” is used in the paper to imply the collective of educational leaders rather than the whole teaching profession.
- 4.2.7 Equally, leadership flows through the system beyond the school to the most senior positions within that system.
- 4.2.8 It also includes other related activities such as work in professional associations.
- 4.2.9 Therefore to see leadership standards as primarily focussed around a principal in a school is to narrow their scope to an unacceptable point.
- 4.2.10 A set of leadership standards should therefore concern itself with the qualities associated with educational leadership, not the role of particular positions within schools.
- 4.2.11 If the standards envisaged in the paper are in addition to those included in the MCEETYA framework, the AEU can see no reason for them. The MCEETYA Framework is intended to be fully comprehensive and no case has been made that this is not so.
- 4.2.12 The AEU notes that the paper claims “peak principal associations spoke with a common voice in recognising the importance of delineating the role of teacher and schools leaders “(p.4). The AEU has received contradictory advice from members of these associations. In any case it is not appropriate that these bodies be the sole voice of principals or the teaching profession.

4.3 Professional Certification

- 4.3.1 The AEU does not support the concept of “Certification” of leadership standards by NIQTSL. As pointed out in our submission to the Allen

Consulting Group “The AEU does not envisage the Institute as having regulatory powers.” (2.6)

- 4.3.2 The paper appears to equate professional learning with certification. This is not the case, and it is possible and desirable to have a set of professional standards to guide professional learning without this leading to a process of certification.
- 4.3.3 Since the consultation questions on this refer specifically to “principals” this implies that NIQTSL should assume the power to decide who is and is not appropriate to assume such positions in schools.
- 4.3.4 As again noted in our original submission:

The AEU would not support a system of accreditation that conflicted with the right of states and territories to implement agreed promotion systems. Nor would it necessarily be healthy for all potential formal leaders to go through exactly the same process. However, there would seem to be merit in the Institute coordinating and facilitating the evolution of appropriate courses for leaders and potential leaders, and for successful completion of such courses to be a valued consideration in relevant promotion processes. (3.2.5)

- 4.3.5 Within this context “coordinating and facilitating” should be understood to mean working closely with the relevant statutory authorities, including the Australasian Forum of Teacher Registration and Accreditation Authorities (AFTRAA), MCEETYA, the education unions, and other stakeholders.

4.4 Creating an Infrastructure for Standards-Guided Professional Learning

- 4.4.1 As noted above, the AEU would support the development of a framework for leadership standards with certain provisos. Such a framework should guide the creation of an infrastructure.
- 4.4.2 It should lead to the provision of opportunities for those interested in developing their leadership skills through formal courses, developing networks, and provision of appropriate materials and research.
- 4.4.3 It should be recognized that much of the best professional learning is site based and collective.
- 4.4.4 The most important element in the creation of an infrastructure is the provision of adequate funding, and the Federal Government could assist NIQTSL in this area.
- 4.4.5 The issue of costs is raised in the paper, though not the questionnaire. Provision of proper professional learning is a responsibility of governments and employers. It should not be a personal expense.

4.5 Building Support and Recognition for Certification

- 4.5.1 Since the AEU does not support the concept of certification, it has no comment on this section.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The AEU has considerable concerns about the project on leadership standards. To date it has been developed with too much haste and inadequate consultation.

5.2 NIQTSL is urged to take time to reflect on the initial directions and to re-direct the project in line with the comments made in this response.

5.3 This must include:

- a broader definition of educational leadership;
- recognition of what is already taking place in state and territory based situations and build on this;
- more focus on the development of a framework which can be used in a variety of circumstances, especially professional learning, rather than proposing certification and a regulatory role for NIQTSL;
- ensure adequate funding and other matters to do with the provision of professional learning.

5.4 The AEU will continue to monitor, evaluate, and seek to be involved with ongoing developments.

Attachment 1

Extract from AEU Submission to the Allen Consulting Group

3.2 Development of school leadership capabilities

- 3.2.1 The generational changes that are under way within the teaching force are exacerbated in regard to leadership. The current high level of experience and expertise in the teaching force will be replaced by a higher proportion of teachers in the early years of their careers, placing increased demands on those capable of leading. At the same time, both the formal and informal leadership will itself be in a process of renewal, possibly at an even greater rate, and in a context where there appears to be growing difficulty in attracting teachers to formal administrative positions.
- 3.2.2 Within this context leadership has become an extremely important issue. This is further emphasised by changes in the role and expectations of those in formal leadership positions. At the same time, preparation and development for leadership is generally not well defined.
- 3.2.3 It therefore seems appropriate that the Institute play a key role in exploring and defining appropriate leadership preparation and development.
- 3.2.4 However, the way in which this might be done needs consideration. It has been suggested that it might “accredit potential leaders before they can become leaders”.
- 3.2.5 The AEU would not support a system of accreditation that conflicted with the right of states and territories to implement agreed promotion systems. Nor would it necessarily be healthy for all potential formal leaders to go through exactly the same process. However, there would seem to be merit in the Institute coordinating and facilitating the evolution of appropriate courses for leaders and potential leaders, and for successful completion of such courses to be a valued consideration in relevant promotion processes.
- 3.2.6 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.
- 3.2.7 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.
- 3.2.8 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.
- 3.2.9 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.
- 3.2.10 The AEU therefore believes it appropriate that the profession more generally be involved in discussions about the nature of the Institute as it applies to educational leadership as well as other activities, and that no decisions that would pre-empt the creation of a model which integrates this more fully into the Institute as a whole be taken in advance of final decisions simply on the grounds that a particular sectional group has developed firm views on what it wants.