



Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
House of Representatives
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Ms Holmes,

Re: Inquiry into Teacher Education

Christian Schools Australia (CSA) is a national association of over 150 protestant member schools from across Australia. All member schools are registered by their state education authorities and in receipt of commonwealth funding for non government schools. The schools are in all Australian states and the ACT. 40% of the schools are primary only the rest are a combination of either primary and secondary with a few being exclusively secondary. **All schools are coeducational and educate in excess of 45,000 students and employ over 3,000 teachers.**

CSA member schools serve middle class and working class Australian families as can be seen from their SES (Socio Economic Status) Index. Over 40% of the schools are in regional, rural or remote communities. Some member schools, particularly in Western Australia, serve predominantly if not exclusively indigenous communities.

The numbers of students attending Christian schools has increased annually since 1989 from between 4% and 10%. The pupil teacher ratio in Christian schools is approximately 1 teacher per 15 students. **In the CSA member schools with growth, retirements, replacements and resignations we need approximately 300 'new' teachers each year.**

The Terms of Reference for the Inquiry are wide ranging and CSA wants to focus on the connection between its schools, teacher needs and pre-service teacher education.

Currently there are three accredited Christian tertiary teacher education institutions with direct relationships with CSA. Christian Heritage College in Queensland and Tabor College in South Australia have accredited courses in pre-service teacher education. If all of these institutions were to provide all of their graduates for CSA member schools at the beginning of any year they would only meet half the need. Christian schools therefore need to attract graduates from public universities or teachers from government or other non government schools. Avondale College in New South Wales also has a long standing pre-service teacher education faculty. Graduates from Avondale mainly but not exclusively work in Seventh Day Adventist schools throughout Australia or the South Pacific.



The Australian Government is to be applauded in its recent higher education legislation for the provision of 'Fee-Help' to approved and accredited private tertiary institutions meeting stringent quality assurance provisions. If Christian schools are to meet their own needs in teacher education then the extension of commonwealth support is going to make access to Christian tertiary teacher training institutions more affordable for many young Australians. As noted above Christian schools serve dominantly middle and working class Australian families. Any support that can be provided by government to these students at the tertiary level will greatly assist teacher provision in our sector.

The graduates of the colleges named above are widely sought each year from government and non government education authorities in their states. Their courses have an appropriate mix and balance of academic and practical experience. Students are introduced to schools in their first year of teacher education so that they can get a feel for the demands, challenges and opportunities in their chosen career.

Consideration is also being given in our sector by Southland College, an accredited tertiary institution, to a Mentoring Model in pre-service teacher education. This model would see teacher trainees working in blocks in schools and tertiary institutions. They would be individually under the supervision of master teachers with appropriate qualifications and experience who would carefully select supervising teachers for practicums. Both the master teacher and the supervising teacher would act as mentors to the trainees. The model is not unlike that used in nurse education prior to the tertiary based nurse education introduced nearly 20 years ago. This mentor model should be given support to see if an earlier and more integrated academic and practical program better suits the needs of teachers for the 21 century.

Thank you for the invitation to make a submission on behalf of Christian Schools Australia.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Crimmins
Executive Officer, Policy and Government Relations
Christian Schools Australia