

Entry to teacher education

- 4.1 A number of major reports in recent years have focused on the intake of students into teacher education courses.¹ These reports have explored in detail questions about whether we are attracting enough people into teacher education, whether we are attracting the most suitable people for teacher education and the appropriateness of our selection processes.
- 4.2 In the course of this inquiry the committee has also gathered evidence on these issues, particularly in relation to the need to diversify the teaching workforce so that it reflects more closely the diversity of the Australian population and the need to attract more teachers to both geographic and subject areas where there is a shortage. The data that it has gathered reinforces the trends described in previous reports.
- 4.3 Matters canvassed in previous reports include:
- the use of scholarships, repayment of HECS loans and other incentives to attract teachers to geographic and subject areas of shortage and hard-to-staff schools;
 - the improvement of career paths and salary structures for teachers in order to attract more people into the profession and retain them;

1 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004; Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers: Australian Country Background - Main Report and Update*, M. Skillbeck & H. Connell, 2004 (*Exhibit No.51*); Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future, Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics - Main Report*, DEST, Canberra, 2003; Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research*, Canberra, 2006. http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/publications_resources/profiles/attitudes_teaching_as_career.htm

- the provision of alternative entry paths to increase the diversity of entrants coming into teacher education;
- the encouragement of career-changers through fast-tracking arrangements and other initiatives designed to facilitate their transition into teaching;
- the provision of better career guidance;
- the improvement of induction and counselling in beginning years;
- the creation of more flexible school environments; and
- the promotion of the profession.

4.4 The Australian Government is already clearly aware of the nature of the challenges facing initial and on-going teacher education including the following that specifically relate to workforce planning:

- career incentives to retain high performing teachers;
- better management of the link between teacher education enrolments and areas of need;
- increasing the diversity of the teaching profession in order to better reflect the contemporary diversity of Australian society;
- the need for better data collection; and
- new models for entry to teacher education courses to encourage mature age and career change entry.²

4.5 Given the breadth of the terms of reference for this inquiry, it has not been possible for the committee to undertake an assessment of the extent to which the various stakeholders have developed and implemented effective strategies in response to these challenges and opportunities. MCEETYA's 2004 report on supply and demand for primary and secondary teachers outlines a number of initiatives in place to attract and retain teachers.³ Some strategies are listed in DEST's recent report on attitudes to teaching as a career.⁴ DEST also provided the committee with details on some of the scholarships and other strategies in place in

2 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. x.

3 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004.

4 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attitudes to teaching as a career; A synthesis of attitudinal research*, Canberra, 2006.
http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/research_sector/publications_resources/profiles/attitudes_teaching_as_career.htm

different jurisdictions to attract and retain teachers particularly in rural and regional schools. (See Appendix E).

- 4.6 The committee is broadly supportive of the recommendations made in previous reports and of the initiatives that have been drawn to its attention.
- 4.7 In this report, the committee will focus its attention on the following key issues concerning the entrants into teacher education:
- the need to ensure that the teaching workforce reflects the diversity of the Australian population;
 - selection criteria for entry into teacher education courses;
 - minimum academic scores for entry;
 - minimum requirements in terms of literacy and numeracy skills; and
 - workforce planning.

Diversity

- 4.8 According to researchers Skilbeck and Connell,

...teaching does not seem to be drawing fully on the multi-ethnic/multi-cultural diversity of Australia... [the] conventional image of teaching [is] as largely a lower middle class, Anglo-Celtic profession, feminine in the primary and lower secondary years and some subject areas (humanities and languages) and masculine in upper secondary years, some subject areas (science, mathematics) and senior leadership positions in schools. Teaching is in danger of being stereotyped through these features of the teaching force. Selection should draw upon the rich cultural diversity of Australian society.⁵

- 4.9 Increasing the diversity of the current teacher education student population to better reflect the contemporary diversity of Australian society is a creditable objective.⁶ The importance of diversity and the need for it to be reflected in the teacher education student make-up was asserted by many contributors to this inquiry.⁷

5 Connell Skilbeck International Education Research and Consultancy, *Submission No. 24*, p. 5.

6 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, pp. x & 36.

7 Mr Andrew Ius, Victorian Institute of Teaching, *Transcript of Evidence*, 10 February 2006, p. 12; University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 98*, p. 3; University of Queensland, *Submission No. 147*, p. 3.

- 4.10 Australia's universities have a more diverse population than universities in many other countries,⁸ and numerous universities maintained that their teacher education courses attracted quite a diverse group of students.⁹ However, both the Northern Territory and Tasmania reported that they are currently unable to recruit the required numbers of graduates from diverse cultural backgrounds to provide a teaching workforce representative of the general community.¹⁰

Indigenous entrants

- 4.11 According to the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education:

Prospective Indigenous teachers need to be attracted to the profession in greater numbers. Such teachers serve as role models, infuse a broader range of cultural perspectives into schools, and bring a capacity for closer rapport and identification with students from Indigenous backgrounds.¹¹

- 4.12 Australia-wide, the proportion of Indigenous students enrolled in initial teacher education is approximately 2%,¹² just below the 2001 estimate that 2.4% of the Australian population identify as an Indigenous Australian.¹³ However, the success and retention rates for Indigenous students fall well below average,¹⁴ and the proportion of Indigenous people in the Australian teaching workforce is much lower than the proportion of

- 8 Department of Education, Science and Training, 2004, as quoted, Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, *Submission No. 35*, p. 5.
- 9 University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 98*, p. 3; University of Sydney, *Submission No. 133*, p. 3; Deakin University, *Submission No. 60*, pp. 2-3; University of South Australia, *Submission No. 40*, p. 2; Prof. Vaughan Prain, La Trobe University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 44; Prof. Ure, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 78; University of Ballarat, *Submission No. 55*, p. 2; Australian Technology Network of Universities, *Submission No. 66*, pp. 3-4; Griffith University, *Submission No. 70*, p. 4; University of Queensland, *Submission No. 147*, p. 3; Prof. Toni Reid, Charles Sturt University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 March 2006, p. 49; Monash University, *Submission No. 105*, pp 2-4; University of Adelaide, *Submission No. 114*, p. 2; Dr Faye McCallum, University of South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 September 2005, p. 32; University of Wollongong, *Submission No. 136*, pp. 3-4; Queensland University of Technology, *Submission No. 72.1*, pp. 4-6; University of Southern Queensland, *Submission No.146*, p. 2; Curtin University of Technology, *Submission No. 158*, pp. 4-5; Murdoch University, *Submission No. 159*, p. 2; Flinders University, *Submission No. 126*, p. 3.
- 10 Northern Territory Government, *Submission No. 124*, p. 1; Tasmanian Government, *Submission No. 127*, p. 10.
- 11 Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future: Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics – Agenda for Action*, DEST, Canberra, 2003, p. 21.
- 12 Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)
- 13 AESOC Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education, *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*, 2005, p. 3.
- 14 Department of Education, Science and Training, pp. 2-3. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

Indigenous people in the Australian population. In 2004, approximately 0.7% of all teachers in Australia were Indigenous.¹⁵ In 2003, Indigenous students represented almost 4% of total school enrolments across Australia¹⁶ and this proportion is growing.¹⁷

- 4.13 In the Northern Territory, Indigenous Australians make up approximately 30% of the population,¹⁸ with 40% of the student cohort identifying as Indigenous.¹⁹ In 2004, approximately 15% of initial teacher education students in the Northern Territory were Indigenous,²⁰ and 15% of teachers in the Northern Territory were Indigenous.²¹
- 4.14 Education has the second highest proportion of Indigenous students of all fields of tertiary education.²² Between 1997 and 2002, approximately 20% of all award course completions by Indigenous students were in Education.²³ So while numbers of Indigenous pre-service teacher education graduates are not high enough to provide the requisite number of Indigenous teachers, teaching is an area of study with relatively strong participation of Indigenous people.²⁴
- 4.15 According to the Australian Teachers Education Association:
- where there are specific programs of pre-service teacher education built around indigenous issues and related to indigenous communities, universities have been quite successful in increasing significantly the number of indigenous graduates in teacher education as elsewhere.²⁵

15 Department of Education, Science and Training – IESIP performance reports, 2003 and 2004.

16 AESOC Senior Officials Working Party on Indigenous Education, *Australian Directions in Indigenous Education 2005-2008*, 2005, p. 3.

17 Mr Russell Jackson, Anangu Education Unit, Department of Education and Children's Services, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 September 2005, p. 40.

18 NT Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Submission No. 124*, p. 1.

19 NT Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Submission No. 124*, p. 1; Mr Kenneth Davies, NT Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, p. 5.

20 Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

21 Department of Education, Science and Training – IESIP performance reports, 2003 and 2004.

22 Department of Education, Science and Training, *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training*, pp. 90 & 162-163, (*Exhibit No. 55*); Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission No. 31*, p. 30.

23 Department of Education, Science and Training, *National Report to Parliament on Indigenous Education and Training*, Canberra, 2003, pp. 164-165. (*Exhibit No. 55*)

24 Senate Employment, Workplace Relations, Small Business and Education Committee, *Katu Kalpa - Report on the inquiry into the effectiveness of education and training programs for Indigenous Australians*, Canberra, 2000, p. 112.

25 Australian Teachers Education Association, *Submission No. 46*, p. 6.

- 4.16 By designing new pre-service teacher education programs specifically for Indigenous students, as well as adapting some current programs, universities could attract and retain a higher number of Indigenous teachers. Programs should be attractive and relevant to Indigenous people and include adequate support mechanisms to assist in the retention of Indigenous students.
- 4.17 In order to be attractive and relevant to Indigenous people, it is important that pre-service teacher education courses:
- adopt culturally-appropriate pedagogy, for example, through the 'Both Ways' philosophy at Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education (BIITE) in the Northern Territory, students are taught Indigenous culture and language alongside Western disciplines, ensuring the content is relevant to the Indigenous learner;²⁶
 - allow community connectedness, particularly for remote Indigenous students, by encouraging community input into the design and content of teacher education courses, as well as allowing the student to continue to live and work in their community whilst studying;
 - offer flexible and appropriate delivery modes, particularly for remote students, for example, BIITE has a unique mixed-mode delivery model, where students combine community-based study and research, field study and supervised work experience with short, intensive residential workshops at a number of sites, including Batchelor and other regional locations,²⁷ individual study at home between workshops is supported through materials and tutorial support within the communities;²⁸
 - allow equitable selection methods, for example, a number of universities already have procedures in place, such as interviews or written assessments, to facilitate Indigenous student entry to teacher

26 Mrs Robyn Ober, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 August 2005, pp. 5-6; Ses Zaro, Student, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 August 2005, p. 23.

27 Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Submission No. 88*, p. 1.

28 Ms Valerie Bainbridge, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 August 2005, p. 4; Mr John Ingram, Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 30 August 2005, p. 11. Another example of a flexible delivery program is the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) which provides teacher education courses on-site to Indigenous students in Northern Queensland, primarily in remote locations, but also in urban areas such as Cairns and Mackay: see Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future: Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics – Main Report*, DEST, Canberra, 2003, p. 133; Dr Jennifer Rennie, Charles Darwin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, pp. 44-45.

education courses in the case that the student did not meet the standard entrance requirements;²⁹ and

- offer varied pathways, for example, there should be more encouragement and assistance for Aboriginal and Islander Education Workers (AIEWs) to study and formalise their professional learning in order to qualify as teachers.³⁰

4.18 Important support mechanisms to assist in the retention of Indigenous students include:

- financial assistance by offering Indigenous teacher education students scholarships and providing targeted funding schemes, such as reserving HECS places for Indigenous students;
- adequate pastoral and academic support, including counselling, for example, the Remote Area Teacher Education Program (RATEP) in North Queensland boasts very low attrition rates due to the supported nature of learning³¹ which involves the provision of a generalist tutor within a community who provides tutorial support for those who are studying whilst working as an AIEW;³² and
- committed Indigenous staff, for example, Charles Darwin University has a program which involves Indigenous lecturers working specifically with Indigenous students to increase retention³³ and at BIITE, it is paramount that lecturers have cross-cultural awareness and sensitivities, including the capacity to work effectively in cross-cultural contexts.³⁴

29 University of Western Sydney, *Submission No. 152*, p. 3; Prof. Sandra McLean, Queensland University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, p. 50; Flinders University, *Submission No. 126*, p. 2; Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Submission No. 88*, p. 2.

30 Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future: Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics – Agenda for Action*, DEST, Canberra, 2003, p. 22.

31 Mr Gary Barnes, Department of Education and the Arts, Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, p. 6.

32 Mr Kenneth Smith, Department of Education and the Arts, Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, p. 4.

33 Dr Suzanne Parry, Teacher Registration Board of the Northern Territory, *Transcript of Evidence*, 31 August 2005, p. 21.

34 Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, *Submission No. 88*, p. 3.

Male entrants

4.19 Research indicates that boys without a strong male role-model are at greater risk of educational failure.³⁵ Hence it is of some concern that there is a relatively low proportion of men in both teacher education and the teaching workforce:

The gender imbalance is particularly strong in the primary and lower secondary sectors. Furthermore, statistics tend to show that the imbalance if anything may get worse as the proportion of males among new graduates in teaching is declining. While not all agree, some researchers have argued that the lack of male teachers as role models may impact negatively on boys' education.³⁶

4.20 Men make up only around 25% of students studying initial teacher education.³⁷ This is fairly consistent throughout Australia, except in the Northern Territory, where they are an even lower proportion (15-20%), and in the ACT, where the proportion of male students is slightly higher than average (around 30% of students are men).³⁸ The retention and success rates for men in initial teacher education courses are slightly lower than for women.³⁹

4.21 A similar trend can be seen within schools. Data show that at 2001, 79.1% of primary teachers and 55.3% of secondary teachers across Australia were women.⁴⁰ This proportion has grown since 1992, when 74% of primary teachers and 51% of secondary teachers were women.⁴¹

4.22 The situation is similar in both the Independent Schools and Catholic Schools sectors.⁴² Internationally, many countries are concerned that the proportion of men in teaching is declining, with OECD trend data clearly showing that teaching has become more feminised in recent years.⁴³

35 Mr Peter West, *Submission No. 95*, p. 7.

36 Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, Canberra, 2004, p. 4.

37 Department of Education, Science and Training, p.1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

38 Department of Education, Science and Training, p.1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

39 Department of Education, Science and Training, pp.2-3. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

40 Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Schools Australia* series, 2001.

41 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers: Australian Country Background – Main Report and Update*, M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, 2004, p. 13. (*Exhibit No. 51*)

42 Independent Schools Council of Australia, *Submission No. 116*, p. 13; Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 134.1*, p. 1.

43 OECD, Directorate for Education, Education and Training Policy Division, *Teachers Matter: Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers*, Synthesis Report, 2005, p. 54.

- 4.23 In 2002, this committee's predecessor concluded that teaching is not an attractive career option for men for reasons including concerns about "the status of teachers in the community, salary, career opportunities and child protection issues".⁴⁴ The committee also found that "salary progression and promotional opportunities for teachers do not keep pace with the opportunities available outside teaching".⁴⁵
- 4.24 There appear to be three main explanations for the lack of men entering teacher education and remaining in teaching:⁴⁶
- salaries and status overall are lower relative to other professions, especially for men;
 - teaching is often stereotyped as 'women's work', especially in the primary area, and a DEST study found that students, parents and teachers viewed teaching as a more 'natural' choice for women, given their perceived biological affinity for children and family orientation;⁴⁷ and
 - a fear that they may be wrongly accused of child abuse is a deterrent to men entering teaching, particularly at primary level.
- 4.25 The Australian Government already has a number of actions in place which aim to increase the number of men entering teaching:
- the Australian Government has proposed an amendment to the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* (SDA) to provide protection from legal challenge under the SDA for education authorities to offer male teacher scholarships ... [and] has also committed \$1 million to provide teacher scholarships for men training to become primary school teachers. DEST has begun preliminary planning for introducing scholarships for qualifying male teacher education students.⁴⁸
- 4.26 The Australian Government also supports the MATES (Male Teacher Support) Project, which is being undertaken by Central Queensland

44 *Boys: Getting it Right*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002, pp. xxii & 155.

45 *Boys: Getting it Right*, House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training, 2002, p. 157.

46 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers: Australian Country Background - Main Report and Update*, M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, 2004, pp. 14-15 (*Exhibit No. 51*); Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, 2004, pp. 94 & 106.

47 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research*, 2006, p. 4.

48 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. 42.

University (CQU) in partnership with the Queensland Department of Education and the Arts and the Queensland Catholic Education Commission.⁴⁹ The MATES project:

- promotes teaching as a viable career to male school students;
- provides support for male teacher education students (including encouraging male candidates to continue into the teaching profession); and
- supports existing male teachers.⁵⁰

4.27 However, an issue with the MATES program identified by the Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools of Queensland is the lack of male teachers available to be mentors.⁵¹

4.28 Recent attempts to provide scholarships aimed at attracting men to the profession have not achieved overwhelming support and in some cases scholarships are not fully taken up.⁵² The committee would like to see the development and implementation of a range of innovative programs in order to increase the number of male applicants and entrants to teacher education.

4.29 While the committee encourages initiatives aimed at increasing the proportion of men in teaching positions, it recognises that this is a difficult area to effect change, gender imbalances in primary schools teachers having existed for quite some time.⁵³ Further, the committee recognises that the quality of a teacher is more important than whether the teacher is male or female.⁵⁴

49 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. 42.

50 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. 42; Mr Garry Everett, Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools of Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, p. 35.

51 Mrs Dianne Reardon, Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools of Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, p. 38.

52 Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, *Submission No. 35*, pp. 4-5.

53 In Victoria gender balance of primary school teachers is as it was in 1870. Mr Tony Bugden, Department of Education and Training, Victoria, *Transcript of Evidence*, 25 May 2006, p. 11.

54 For commentary on de-gendering the teaching body, see Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, Canberra, 2004, pp. 102-103.

Rural/Remote/Isolated entrants

- 4.30 A 2004 study found that for rural school students, teaching appeared to be an attractive career option.⁵⁵

Low SES and rural/regional students were more likely to consider teaching as an attractive option than high and middle SES students in metropolitan areas. Some regional students perceived teaching as an attractive option because it would enable them to live in their region and play a rewarding role in their community.⁵⁶

- 4.31 In each of the years between 2001 and 2004, approximately 26% of all students enrolled in initial teacher education courses were from a rural area of Australia, and 2% were from an isolated area.⁵⁷ This compares to 2001 Census data which estimated 66.3% of Australians lived in major cities, 20.7% lived in inner regional Australia, 10.4% lived in outer regional Australia and 2.6% lived in remote or very remote Australia.⁵⁸

- 4.32 While retention and success rates for students from rural backgrounds are the same as for all students studying initial teacher education, the retention and success rates for students from isolated backgrounds are significantly lower.⁵⁹ This may be due to what DEST describes as a 'city-centric' preparatory model for teaching professionals:⁶⁰

Potential country teacher education students can find access to university study in cities problematical due to location and costs.⁶¹

- 4.33 Similar concerns about access and the financial burden caused by relocation in order to study were raised by other contributors to this inquiry.⁶² In South Australia,

teacher training and education ... is still only accessible in Adelaide. There are no variations to the standard semester-based,

55 Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, Canberra, 2004, pp. 105-106.

56 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research*, 2006, p. 4.

57 Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

58 ABS, 2001 Estimated Resident Population, p. 19.

59 Department of Education, Science and Training, pp. 2-3. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

60 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 59*, p. 37.

61 SA Department of Education and Children's Services, *Submission No. 157*, p. 11.

62 Social Justice Research Collective, Flinders University of South Australia, *Submission No. 109*, pp. 3-4; South Australian Primary Principals Association, *Submission No. 86*, p. 3; Mr Adam Piccoli MP, *Submission No. 20*, p. 1; Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission No. 100*, p. 2; Mr John Halsey, Rural Education Forum Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 September 2005, p. 60.

on-campus university programs. Opportunities to study and gain school-based experience and complete practicum requirements by distance or mixed mode program delivery, summer school intensives and other flexible packages are still not available. Such options would be a productive option for those who reside in country areas and whose family interests mean relocation is not possible.⁶³

- 4.34 Living and relocation costs are prohibitive for rural and isolated students, who may need to relocate in order to study. Many rural and isolated students are ineligible for Youth Allowance, and only a limited number are able to gain a scholarship.⁶⁴ They are often forced to work to support themselves or to supplement incomes from parents, scholarships/grants or Youth Allowance/Austudy:⁶⁵

Many young trainee teachers from rural and remote Australia are unable to sustain the financial rigors of living away from home for the years of their course, and hence do not complete their studies.⁶⁶

- 4.35 State governments already provide some assistance for rural and isolated students to complete teacher education. For example:
- in South Australia, up to \$10,000 is provided to students from country locations who are completing a teacher education course in South Australia as part of the Country Teaching Scholarships program and at the successful completion of their studies, scholarship holders are offered permanent employment in a country school for a minimum of two years following the completion of their teacher education program;⁶⁷ and
 - in Queensland, the Bid O'Sullivan Scholarship Scheme offers scholarships valued at \$20,000 each to aspiring teachers in rural and remote areas who undertake full-time undergraduate teaching degrees at Queensland universities.⁶⁸

63 South Australian Primary Principals Association, *Submission No. 86*, p. 3.

64 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission No. 100*, pp. 2-3.

65 Social Justice Research Collective, Flinders University of South Australia, *Submission No.109*, p. 3.

66 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission No. 100*, p. 2.

67 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, 2004, p. 41; Ms Wendy Teasdale-Smith, Australian Secondary Principals' Association, *Transcript of Evidence*, 2 June 2005, p. 20.

68 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, 2004, p. 41.

- 4.36 Certain universities are also supporting rural and isolated students. Charles Sturt University has a policy of trying to provide for those who are disadvantaged geographically,⁶⁹ while Flinders University:
- provides bonus points for Year 12 students from Remote and Rural backgrounds in recognition of the fact that their educational choices are likely to have been limited by lack of access to a full range of year 12 subjects.⁷⁰
- 4.37 Curtin University of Technology allows potential teachers in rural and regional areas of Western Australia to access Early Childhood and Primary courses via Curtin College for Regional Education (CCRE):
- The College makes the Curtin (Bentley) degrees available in their regional centres in Western Australia, for example Kalgoorlie, Esperance, Geraldton, and, in a new collaboration with the University of Western Australia, in Albany.⁷¹
- 4.38 The issue is not necessarily about attracting regional, rural and isolated students to teacher education, but rather about providing them with better support to ensure their retention and successful completion of their studies. The committee would like to see more innovative initiatives in this area. Some suggestions include:
- the preservation of existing faculties of education in regional and remote areas;⁷²
 - the establishment of regional tertiary campuses or programs at which country/rural students (especially school leavers) can complete at least the first year of their tertiary education;⁷³
 - delivery of programs in situ for rural and remote areas, perhaps through local TAFE campuses, and school-based internship models of teacher education which allow people to train with minimal disruption to family location;⁷⁴
 - further creation of flexible delivery, including improving online access and delivery of teacher education;⁷⁵

69 Prof. Jo-Anne Reid, Charles Sturt University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 March 2006, p. 49.

70 Flinders University, *Submission No. 126*, p. 3.

71 Curtin University of Technology, *Submission No. 158*, p. 4.

72 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission No. 31*, p. 32.

73 Teachers Registration Board of South Australia, *Submission No. 38*, p. 3.

74 South Australian Primary Principals Association, *Submission No. 86*, p. 3; Mr John Halsey, Rural Education Forum Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 September 2005, p. 60; Mr Adam Piccoli MP, *Submission No. 20*, p. 1.

75 Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Submission No. 31*, p. 32; Open Universities Australia, *Submission No. 33*, p. 2.

- making available some form of tertiary access allowance for students who come from rural and remote areas of Australia;⁷⁶ and
- making available specific scholarships for rural and remote students.⁷⁷

Non-English Speaking Background entrants

- 4.39 Overseas-trained teachers and teachers from non-English speaking backgrounds “bring a range of experience, cultural perspectives and languages to... schools, and are important in a multicultural school context. Many overseas-trained teachers are employed to fill vacancies in subject areas of shortage, such as mathematics and science.”⁷⁸
- 4.40 From 2001 to 2004 approximately 2% of all students enrolled in initial teacher education courses were from non-English speaking backgrounds.⁷⁹ This is lower than the proportion of all Australian tertiary students from non-English speaking backgrounds which, between 1998 and 2003, was 3-5%.⁸⁰ In addition, students from non-English speaking backgrounds had slightly lower retention and success rates when compared to the entire initial teacher education cohort.⁸¹
- 4.41 English is the only language spoken at home by approximately 79% of the population.⁸² Only 13% of teachers are from non-English speaking backgrounds compared with 23% of school students.⁸³ However, some universities have reported an increase in the number of their teacher education students from non-English speaking backgrounds.⁸⁴
- 4.42 Several universities offer a wide range of language curriculum units, designed to encourage students from non-English speaking language and community backgrounds to enter pre-service teacher education courses. For instance, the University of Sydney offers Chinese, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Hebrew and Modern Greek to secondary

76 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission No. 100*, p. 3.

77 Isolated Children's Parents' Association of Australia, *Submission No. 100*, p. 3.

78 NSW Legislative Council, Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Recruitment and Training of Teachers*, Report 35, October 2005, p. 71. (*Exhibit No. 90*)

79 Department of Education, Science and Training, p.1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

80 Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, *Key Statistics – Students*, 2005, Table C.8: Number of Non-Overseas Enrolments by Equity Group, 1998-2003, at <http://www.avcc.edu.au/documents/publications/stats/students.pdf> (accessed 22/1/07)

81 Department of Education, Science and Training, pp.2-3. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

82 ABS, *Census of Population and Housing, Selected Social and Housing Characteristics Australia*, 2001, p. 94.

83 NSW Legislative Council, Standing Committee on Social Issues, *Recruitment and Training of Teachers*, Report 35, 2005, p. 71 (*Exhibit No. 90*)

84 University of Western Sydney, *Submission No. 152*, pp. 3-4.

pre-service teachers, as well as a primary languages course.⁸⁵ The University of Sydney also maintains a support program for Polynesian students and offers units of study in both undergraduate and postgraduate pre-service education courses to respond to their needs.⁸⁶

- 4.43 The committee welcomes further initiatives within teacher education programs designed to attract more students from non-English speaking backgrounds into teaching. In addition, the committee believes it is necessary for reliable and valid data on why teaching appears to be an unattractive career option for students from non-English speaking backgrounds be collected in order to better inform policy decisions in this area:

Anecdotal evidence would suggest that relevant factors include migrants' expectations about the status and remuneration of their professional futures, and perceptions of the difficulties of entering a profession demanding high levels of English language proficiency.⁸⁷

Low Socio-Economic Status entrants

- 4.44 Statistics indicate that in each of the years between 2001 and 2004, approximately 20% of all students enrolled in initial teacher education courses were from low Socio-Economic Status (SES) backgrounds.⁸⁸ While this is slightly below the Australian population proportion of 25%, it compares favourably to the overall proportion of Australian tertiary students from low SES backgrounds, which in each of the years between 1998 and 2003 was approximately 15%.⁸⁹
- 4.45 Research in 2004 found that low SES and rural/regional students were more likely to consider teaching as an attractive option than high and middle SES students in metropolitan areas:⁹⁰

85 University of Sydney, *Submission No. 133*, p. 4.

86 University of Sydney, *Submission No. 133*, p. 4.

87 Queensland Association of Teachers of English to Speakers of Other Languages, *Submission No. 57*, p. 2.

88 Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (*Exhibit No. 119*)

89 Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee, *Key Statistics – Students*, 2005, Table C.8: Number of Non-Overseas Enrolments by Equity Group, 1998-2003; and see, for example, Monash University, *Submission No. 105*, p. 4; and Ms Miriam Parsons, University of Adelaide, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 September 2005, p. 21.

90 Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, Canberra, 2004, pp. 105-106; DEST, *Attitudes to Teaching as a Career: A Synthesis of Attitudinal Research*, 2006, p. 4.

there seemed to be something of an inverse relationship between the socio-economic status of the school and the number of students who were considering teaching as a career opportunity.

Specifically, the higher the socio-economic status of the school, the fewer the number of students who claimed that they were interested in teaching. In high and middle SES metropolitan schools, for instance, students tended to be more dismissive of teaching as a desirable career. By comparison, in lower SES schools, and in the rural school, more students claimed that they were considering teaching as a likely career.⁹¹

- 4.46 Some universities offer financial assistance to increase the participation of low SES students in teacher education. For example, at QUT, a scholarship is awarded annually to a student from a low SES background enrolled in the BEd Primary program, and a \$2,500 one-year scholarship is offered to a final-year student who is experiencing financial hardship.⁹² The committee commends such initiatives and encourages similar schemes in States and Territories where the proportion of low SES students is below the Australian population proportion, particularly in the Northern Territory, where only 10-15% of students enrolled in initial teacher education are from low SES backgrounds.⁹³

Funding to increase diversity

- 4.47 The committee is committed to enabling universities to do more to reach out into communities and down into schools, to attract and encourage more people from under-represented groups to apply for places in teacher education, and, if necessary, provide them additional support to enable them to succeed.

91 Department of Education, Science and Training and James Cook University, *School Students Making Education and Career Decisions: Aspirations, Attitudes and Influences*, Canberra, 2004, p. 82. (Exhibit No. 12)

92 Australian Technology Network of Universities, *Submission No. 66*, p. 4.

93 Department of Education, Science and Training, p. 1. (Exhibit No.119)

Recommendation 4

The committee recommends that:

- (a) the Australian Government establish a Teacher Education Diversity Fund of \$20 million per annum for universities to access, possibly in partnership with other bodies, to develop and implement innovative programs in order to increase the number of applicants and entrants to teacher education from under-represented groups;
- (b) the granting of funding from the Teacher Education Diversity Fund for programs targeting disadvantaged groups be conditional on the use of diagnostic testing of students with a view to identifying their individual needs so that they can be provided with the support necessary to succeed; and
- (c) the Australian Government monitors closely the impact of the Teacher Education Diversity Fund on the enrolment of students from under-represented groups in teacher education across Australia.

Selection criteria for teacher education courses

- 4.48 Applicants for teacher education places predominantly fall into two groups – school leavers who enter straight from school and university graduates who go straight into end-on teacher education programs, and mature-aged and career-change entrants.
- 4.49 Submissions to the inquiry indicate that many entrants to universities are non-school leavers. For instance, Flinders University reported that 60% of its teacher education students were mature age⁹⁴ and the University of Tasmania reported that 30% of its teacher education students were over 25 years of age.⁹⁵ According to the Board of Teacher Registration in Queensland, there has been “a shift in recent years towards a substantially larger proportion of mature-age and career-change entrants in teacher education programs compared with school leavers. In some Queensland

94 Prof. Faith Trent, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 27 September 2005, p. 23.

95 University of Tasmania, *Submission No. 119.1*, p. 1.

institutions the proportion is reported to be 50% and higher. This changing demographic is influencing the design of programs".⁹⁶

- 4.50 Figures showing the bases of admission into universities for 2004 confirm that there is a wide range of bases for admission into teacher education courses.

Table 3 **Bases for Admission to Teacher Education Courses 2001-2004**

	2001 Number of students and percentage of total	2002 Number of students and percentage of total	2003 Number of students and percentage of total	2004 Number of students and percentage of total
Satisfactory completion of final year of secondary education at school	6035 (28.8%)	5668 (26.4%)	5261 (25.2%)	5205 (23.9%)
Incomplete higher education course	2543 (12.2%)	2675 (12.4%)	2772 (13.3%)	3159 (14.5%)
Completed higher education course	6283 (30%)	6687 (31.1%)	7009 (33.5%)	7377 (33.8%)
Mature age or other special provisions	1685 (8.1%)	1997 (9.3%)	1770 (8.5%)	1745 (8%)
Complete or incomplete TAFE course (other than a secondary education course)	1588 (7.6%)	2034 (9.5%)	1895 (9.1%)	2089 (9.6%)
Examination or assessment by institution	1144 (5.5%)	1282 (6%)	1283 (6.1%)	1286 (5.9%)
Employment experience, professional qualification or completion of Open Learning Studies	345 (1.6%)	440 (2%)	447 (2.1%)	377 (1.7%)
Satisfactory completion of final year of secondary education at TAFE or other institution	111 (0.5%)	93 (0.4%)	87 (0.4%)	129 (0.6%)
Other basis	1187 (5.7%)	634 (2.9%)	374 (1.8%)	456 (2.1%)
TOTAL	20,921	21,510	20,898	21,823

Source Department of Education, Science and Training, correspondence, 2006

- 4.51 While there is a range of selection processes already in use to select applicants for teacher education, applicants who enter straight from school are selected primarily, and most often solely, on the basis of academic achievement, as represented by the TER score or equivalent while university graduates who go straight into end-on teacher education programs are selected primarily on their Grade Point Average (GPA).
- 4.52 There are some exceptions to this. For instance, both the University of Notre Dame⁹⁷ and Tabor College⁹⁸ reported interviewing applicants as

96 Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland, *Submission No. 37*, p. 4.

part of selection procedures. The Victoria University reported that it once interviewed all students but now interviewed only marginal students. Written personal applications form a significant part of the selection process.⁹⁹

- 4.53 A wider range of processes is used in the selection of mature-aged or career-change applicants including interviews, referee reports and the recognition of industry recognised qualifications and experience.¹⁰⁰
- 4.54 Many universities also have a range of special entry provisions under equity and access programs. For instance, Deakin University's equity and access program gives special consideration to applicants from a wide range of designated groups including mature-aged applicants and applicants from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds.¹⁰¹ The University of South Australia interviews applicants from low SES backgrounds, and gives extra entry points to students from particular targeted areas where the university is trying to build up longer term relationships.¹⁰² Flinders University provides bonus points for Year 12 students from remote and rural backgrounds.¹⁰³

Should selection processes be based on broader criteria than academic achievement?

- 4.55 Selection procedures are one of the most contested areas concerning the intake of students into teacher education. Central to this debate is the question: should selection procedures be based on academic performance or should they draw on a wider range of criteria?

Academic aptitude is not enough

- 4.56 Many contributors to this inquiry questioned the adequacy of using academic performance as the primary means of gaining entry into teacher education courses at Australian universities. It is not enough to have

97 University of Notre Dame, *Submission No. 15*, p. 4.

98 Mr Frank Davies, Tabor College Adelaide, *Transcript of Evidence*, 29 September 2005, p. 57.

99 Dr Brenda Cherednichenko, Victoria University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 84.

100 See, for example: University of Notre Dame, *Submission No. 15*, p. 4; Mr Russell Matthews, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 8 June 2005, p. 25; University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 98*, p. 2; Queensland University of Technology, *Submission No. 72.1*, Appendix A.

101 Deakin University, *Submission No. 60*, p. 1.

102 University of South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 28 September 2005, p. 38.

103 Flinders University of South Australia, *Submission No. 126*, p. 3.

academic aptitude to be an effective teacher nor is academic performance a reliable indicator of whether a student possesses the wide range of other attributes required of a teacher. The other attributes cited include: a knowledge and enjoyment of the subject they teach; an ability to acquire new knowledge and understanding; 'other directedness' or recognition of and responsiveness to the distinctive, individual needs and interests of others; favourable attitudes to children; a sense of calling and a strong motivation to teach; and, specified levels of literacy and numeracy.

4.57 In support of arguments for broader selection criteria for teacher education, the review *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future, Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics* stated: "clear evidence of aptitude for teaching as a criterion for selection and enrolment in a teacher education program is important... Aptitude is certainly assessed as a criterion for entry to the profession on completion of initial training; it requires attention also in selection for entry to training".¹⁰⁴

4.58 Many contributors to this inquiry were concerned that a reliance on academic scores could disadvantage some applicants and result in the exclusion of potentially excellent teachers. For example, a student from Victoria University told the committee:

The reason I did choose Victoria Uni is that they did not look at my TER. My TER was average. It was not great. They did not look at it. I was happy to have an interview. I was happy to write an application piece on why I wanted to be a teacher because it was something I was passionate about and it was something that I could show the panel that I could do. They could look at the experience I had had working with kids and take me on my merit as a person, not on my score of what I did in high school.¹⁰⁵

4.59 The committee received other anecdotal evidence about students performing well in teacher education despite not possessing the requisite academic entrance score:

A young man wanted to do a graduate diploma in primary education at QUT and he had grade point average of 3.9 from his previous degree. He drove down from Currimundi and he was on his knees pleading, "This is all I have ever wanted to do." I took a risk with him and let him come into the course. I said, "I am going

104 Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future, Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics – Main Report*, DEST, Canberra, 2003, p. 136.

105 Student, Victoria University, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 100.

to watch you carefully.” He is now one of the best teachers in the Queensland education department.¹⁰⁶

- 4.60 Most of the contributors who argued that academic achievement is not enough were generally in favour of a ‘balanced approach’ to selection which combined academic achievement with other strategies such as interviews, personality schedules, reports of relevant work experience, personal statements, psychological testing, structured references, principal or school reports, role play exercises, and questionnaires.

Current selection processes are the most pragmatic choice

- 4.61 Many other contributors, including the majority of universities, argued for the continuation of the current procedures used for selecting students for teacher education courses. Many course providers pointed out the immense costs that would be incurred using other strategies as the primary method for selecting students.

We get over 2,000 applicants for the Graduate Diploma of Education. We take 600. We go for the highest scoring students. In the BEd (Primary), again, we had about 1,900 applicants this year. We took 153.¹⁰⁷

I had 1,700 applicants for 200 places. I calculated that if we spent only 15 minutes, which meant a seven-minute interview and the rest of the time on the administration of the process – and that is a fairly efficient administration, I can tell you – we would wipe out 25% of the fees that we get for the 200 we enrol.¹⁰⁸

The interview process is expensive. With the limited resources I have got, I would not invest in that. I would rather put them into the practicum.¹⁰⁹

- 4.62 Many contributors who argued for the status quo pointed out that the value of alternative strategies has not been proven. Moreover, they suggested, assessing a student’s personal attributes, is a difficult and subjective process. As a representative from the University of Southern Queensland explained:

106 Prof. Tania Aspland, University of the Sunshine Coast, *Transcript of Evidence*, 6 July 2005, pp. 67-68.

107 Prof. Ure, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 76.

108 Prof. Susan Willis, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2005, p. 18.

109 Prof. Denis Goodrum, Australian Council of Deans of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, 13 October 2005, p. 18; and see University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 98*, p. 2; Faculty of Education, La Trobe University, *Submission No. 65*, p. 2.

A number of years ago we used to interview every candidate for the primary and secondary graduate diploma. We stopped doing it because we were finding that, for the students we had interviewed, there was no predictor we could use. It did not really matter. So we stopped doing it simply because of the time and expense. We used to keep the records and we found no predictors. In fact, probably one of the better candidates that we interviewed turned up to the first day of lectures with a machete strapped to his leg and a flagon of wine under his arm. He did not turn up for the interview with those things.¹¹⁰

- 4.63 Teaching is generally a four year degree, and it is often during the course of those four years that students develop the qualities and attributes of a good teacher.

When we select people on the basis of what they are now... we may actually be making a very unjust decision because what people are when they enter, often at 17 or coming from another profession or something, and what they are when they leave should be two different things. The role of a program of education is to get people to experience that personal growth.¹¹¹

- 4.64 Some applicants for teacher education courses do not intend to teach but wish to acquire the broad range of skills which studying for an education degree will afford. It would be unfair to exclude them from courses because they did not possess some of the attributes considered necessary for teaching.

- 4.65 Effective teachers bring to their role a wide range of qualities and attributes that are not assessed in any way by an academic score. These are arguably as important as academic capacity. Teachers need both. Intuitively, the idea that interviews, portfolios, written statements and other evidence of "understanding and acceptance that teaching is a vocation, not just a job"¹¹² should be used in combination with academic scores as the basis for selection, resonates with the committee. However, to use these strategies in a way that does not in itself exclude candidates requires a significant investment of time and resources. In the absence of firm evidence that these strategies are better predictors of who will be successful students, let alone teachers, the committee understands the reluctance of some universities to adopt such processes.

110 Ms Lesley McAuley-Jones, University of Southern Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 July 2005, p. 34.

111 Mr Mark Dawson, University of Southern Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 July 2005, p. 34.

112 Hobart Forum on Teacher Education, *Submission No. 171*, p. 3.

- 4.66 Clearly, traditional selection processes should be supplemented by interviews and other strategies for applicants who may otherwise be disadvantaged by sole reliance on a TER score. From the evidence presented to the committee, it would appear that universities are already expanding pathways to entry and broadening selection criteria in response to employers' promotion of the value of and the need to attract people from a diverse range of backgrounds into teaching. The committee does not have evidence about the extent to which the current arrangements are still excluding people who wish to enter teaching and who would be effective teachers.
- 4.67 The evidence received by the committee on this issue simply reinforces the need to establish whether there are links between specific requirements for entry to teacher education programs and the quality of teachers prepared within those programs, both at graduation and over time.¹¹³ The longitudinal study recommended in Chapter 2 should provide the data necessary to inform future policy development in this area.

Should a minimum academic score be set for entry?

- 4.68 A second issue regarding selection processes for teacher education courses is whether, in cases where academic entrance scores are used as the basis for selection, there should be a minimum score set.
- 4.69 While there is evidence that the academic entrance scores for teacher education have risen in recent years as the demand for places has grown, there is significant variation in the ENTER scores of applicants and there are still some instances where they are low. (*see* Appendix F) Moreover, in a system in which the level of the academic minimum score for entrance is driven by the demand for places, the prospect of a shortage of teachers is of significant concern.

...if we are looking at a situation in the next few years where there is a need to increase the number of people coming into teacher education, we absolutely must avoid what happened in the late 1980s and early 1990s, when some teacher education programs simply filled up their quota and they went down, down, down in terms of the TER scores, well below 50 in many cases. You live with that problem for the rest of their careers. The ones who are more likely to stay in teaching are the ones with the lower TER entrance scores. Our research is clear on that. That is not fair to kids.¹¹⁴

113 Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland, *Submission No. 37*, p. 4.

114 Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, Research Director, ACER, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 18.

- 4.70 There is some concern among those who favour a minimum score being set for entry that low cut-off scores for university admission equates with low professional status and diminishes the likelihood of successfully recruiting high achieving students into the field.¹¹⁵
- 4.71 While noting that many universities impose a minimum score, the committee is not comfortable with a system in which the level of demand for places determines the minimum level of academic performance of students entering teacher education, especially given the tendency for this to fall in times of low demand. However, the qualities of students when they graduate are more important than their academic achievement when they entered the course. It is at graduation that no compromise on standards should be made. Earlier in this report, the committee has called for the development of national professional standards for teaching at graduate level (as well as for other levels) and for the use of these standards in the processes for registering teachers and accrediting courses. A requirement for graduates and courses to demonstrate that they meet these standards should address concerns about entrants' tertiary ranking scores.
- 4.72 The committee's focus on the outcomes of teacher education courses is also more consistent with initiatives to diversify pathways into teaching and to encourage the entry of people into teacher education courses who are involved in other professions or occupations but who have a desire and the capacity to be teachers.
- 4.73 While the committee acknowledges that there is a perceived link between academic entrance scores and the status of the teaching profession, it is confident that the status of the profession will rise once all beginning teachers have had to demonstrate that they have had to meet high professional standards to achieve their qualification and be registered as a teacher.

Minimum requirements for literacy and numeracy

- 4.74 A third issue regarding selection processes for teacher education courses is whether there should be minimum requirements for literacy and numeracy skills.

115 N. Alloway, L. Dalley, A. Patterson, K. Walker & M. Lenoy, *School students making education and career decisions: aspirations, attitudes and influences*, DEST, Canberra, 2004, p. 87. (Exhibit No. 12)

- 4.75 A number of submissions stressed the importance of teachers having high level literacy and numeracy skills and favoured some form of entry level testing.
- 4.76 The literacy and numeracy prerequisites varies considerably between universities. For instance, in respect of mathematics, data provided by the Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute (AMSI) shows that only four of 31 universities state that they require Year 12 mathematics of any type, while another eight indicate that they require Year 11 mathematics. The remaining 19 do specify any level of mathematics as an entry requirement or have not stated it on their course information websites.¹¹⁶
- 4.77 There is some concern that high academic scores do not necessarily reflect literacy and numeracy skills and can “sometimes disguise a student’s literacy and numeracy problems”.¹¹⁷
- 4.78 A number of submissions expressed concern that raising the mathematics pre-requisites for entry may lead to the exclusion of some students.¹¹⁸ The Faculty of Education at the University of Melbourne claimed that if it increased the pre-requisite from Year 11 to Year 12 mathematics for its teacher education courses, half of the currently accepted applicants would be lost. This included 50% of students with an ENTER score above 95.¹¹⁹
- 4.79 Monash University also claimed that “mandatory pre-requisite requirements would have the effect of excluding many people”.¹²⁰ It does not require students to achieve minimum standards in any particular courses before being eligible for selection, and has not chosen to require English or mathematics pre-requisites at senior secondary school level. Monash agreed that “it is important that teachers graduate with the necessary suite of content skills for teaching, rather than that they should enter with those necessary skills”. Accordingly, Monash requires students to pass particular units which have embedded content requirements in areas of Maths, English and Science.¹²¹
- 4.80 Although the committee recognises that it is imperative that teachers have high level literacy and numeracy skills, it agrees that the focus should be on the skills that graduates have at the end of their teacher education course rather than at the beginning. For this reason, it is also desirable that students’ literacy and numeracy skills are assessed when entering courses,

116 Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute, *Submission No. 58*, p. 3.

117 University of New England, *Submission No. 111*, p. 1.

118 Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, *Submission No. 76*, p. 6.

119 University of Melbourne, *Submission No. 62.1*, p. 2; Prof. Kaye Stacey, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 75.

120 Monash University, *Submission No. 159*, p. 2.

121 Monash University, *Submission No. 159*, p. 2.

not in order to exclude students from teacher education courses, but as a diagnostic tool to assist universities to support students to develop the required level of skills.

- 4.81 In this context, the committee was interested to learn that the Australian Council for Education Research (ACER) is working with the Department of Science and Mathematics Education at the University of Melbourne to develop the ACER Teacher Education Mathematics Test (TEMT). The developers reported that the TEMT will test the mathematical attainment of beginning primary teacher education students and uncover errors, misconceptions and strategies in order to provide diagnostic feedback.¹²² Professor Stacey from the University of Melbourne stressed that the TEMT should be used to indicate where people need help in mathematics and numeracy and that it should not be used to filter people out of teacher education.¹²³ The committee considers that the TEMT would be highly useful as a diagnostic tool, and would welcome a similar test being developed for literacy if one is not already available.
- 4.82 The committee believes that students entering teacher education courses should undergo diagnostic testing of their literacy and numeracy skills. On the basis of the results, teacher education programs should address any identified deficiencies to assist students to develop skills to the required level. Teacher education courses should guarantee that all students who graduate with a qualification in education have thoroughly demonstrated that they have high level literacy and numeracy skills. Accreditation authorities should develop rigorous methods for determining that this is the case as part of their accreditation procedures.

Workforce planning

- 4.83 Supply and demand issues have been addressed in a number of recent reports¹²⁴ and are not a key focus of this report. The committee has no

122 Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers, *Submission No. 76*, p. 6.

123 University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, 7 June 2005, p. 75.

124 Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future: Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics*, DEST, Canberra, 2003; R. Ballantyne, J. Bain & B. Preston, *Teacher education courses and completions; initial teacher education courses and 1999, 2000 and 2001 completions*, DEST, Canberra, 2002; Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers: Australian Country Background - Main Report and Update*, M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, Canberra, (Exhibit No. 51); M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, *Teachers for the future, the changing nature of society and related issues for the teaching workforce*, MCEETYA, 2004, (Exhibit No. 50); B. Preston, *Teacher supply and demand to 2005: Projections and context*, Australian Council of Deans of Education, 2000.

wish to duplicate the considerable work that has been undertaken in this area.

- 4.84 Since 1999 MCEETYA has published reports on supply and demand on a bi-annual basis. MCEETYA's most recent report, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia 2004*, provides an overview of the main characteristics of the Australian teaching workforce in the preceding decade as well as an overview of the state of the teacher labour market in Australia and in selected overseas countries. It also provides a future outlook of demand for and supply of teachers, including an analysis of factors affecting the supply and demand, projections of teacher supply and demand to 2014, and an analysis of longer term pressures on the teacher labour market coming specifically from the trends in the student enrolments and the ageing of the teacher workforce.
- 4.85 MCEETYA's 2004 report concluded that although the national labour market for the supply of *primary* teachers was broadly in balance, jurisdictions were having some recruitment difficulties in certain geographical areas and for primary teachers in LOTE and Special Education.¹²⁵ At the *secondary* level, jurisdictions were having recruitment difficulties in rural, remote and difficult-to-staff metropolitan schools. They were also having difficulty recruiting teachers of mathematics, science, technology and LOTE.¹²⁶
- 4.86 The report also found that "based on broad-brush calculations using national data, there is the potential for significant teacher shortages between now and 2014".¹²⁷ It suggested that the extent to which the shortages may occur will depend on the success of initiatives to both attract new teachers and retain current teachers in the profession.
- 4.87 MCEETYA's report outlines numerous initiatives that jurisdictions are taking to promote teaching as a career and to address the shortages in particular subject areas and locations.¹²⁸ DEST also provided the committee with further information on such strategies. Some of these initiatives and others also were mentioned in evidence to the committee during this inquiry. The committee encourages continued efforts in this area.

125 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 5.

126 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 5.

127 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 6.

128 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, pp. 38-44.

- 4.88 It is difficult to remedy under- or over-supply problems, in part because of forecasting difficulties, but also because the policy levers available are not always sufficient.¹²⁹ As noted in MCEETYA's 2004 report on the supply and demand of teachers, there is no guarantee that entrants will end up teaching in the areas of need.¹³⁰ Targeted enrolments may be of limited value if, as pointed out by some universities, there is a lack of interest in teaching in some areas and hence a lack of interest in the places.¹³¹ Making the places available does not ensure that they will be taken up or that they will be taken up by students with an appropriate level of academic aptitude.
- 4.89 While appreciating the difficulty of remedying under- or over-supply problems, the committee is concerned by the extent to which the lack of collaboration between the three main parties involved—the Australian Government, the employing authorities and the course providers—may have contributed to the problem. Previous reports and contributors to this inquiry have attributed the mismatch between enrolments and areas of need to a lack of collaboration. Many appear frustrated that the supply and demand data which is available does not appear to feed into the process of workforce planning effectively, as illustrated in the following comments from the ACT Department of Education and Training:
- ...the data is available and is fairly explicit as to where the needs are. But there does not seem to be a coordinated response or a response from the universities to that. I am not too sure where the disconnect is between the data, the courses and the funding... The worry for me is that we are not using what is available to us to tell us what to do.¹³²
- 4.90 There are tensions in the relationship between the Australian Government, as funding provider, the State and Territory governments, as the primary employers, and the universities, as the providers of courses.

The Commonwealth Government controls the purse strings for the funding of universities which, in turn, determine their own teacher education priorities and programs: the Commonwealth employs not one teacher nor administers one school. It is the

129 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Attracting, Developing and Retaining Effective Teachers: Australian Country Background - Main Report and Update*, M. Skilbeck & H. Connell, Canberra, p. 30. (*Exhibit No.51*)

130 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 128.

131 Ms Diane Gardiner, University of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, 26 October 2005, p. 69.

132 Mr Michael Bateman, ACT Department of Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, 1 December 2005, p. 8.

States/Territories which have to ensure that schools under their jurisdiction have an ongoing supply of properly qualified, effective teachers. But the States/Territories have no effective financial – and hence policy – leverage in this situation. There is no policy nexus between quality teacher demand as required by public and non-government systems in the States/Territories, and quality teacher supply as driven by Commonwealth funding and policy.¹³³

- 4.91 MCEETYA'S 2004 report describes some of the arrangements between State governments and universities concerning workforce planning.¹³⁴ Notwithstanding the value of such developments in some jurisdictions, there have also been calls for more tripartite collaboration. The 2003 review *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future* advocated coordinated national planning, collaboration and action by the Australian Government, State and Territory governments, government and non-government teacher employers, higher education institutions and the profession itself.¹³⁵ Similarly, in evidence to the committee, the NSW Department of Education and Training suggested that an effective formal mechanism be developed to link more closely the three critical partners in the supply of teacher education.¹³⁶
- 4.92 Concerned about the apparent lack of the use of available data and the lack of collaboration between the three parties, the committee asked DEST whether there was any formal mechanism which linked the Australian Government, the State and Territory governments and the universities in workforce planning matters.

A Multilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been put in place recently by the Council of Australian Governments. The process set out in the Memorandum of Understanding for consultation is as follows:

The Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) will agree on workforce priorities and provide advice on education and training that addresses skills shortages.

133 P. Brock, *Two Decades of 'Sound & Fury' But What's Changed...? Critique of Recommendations made in 21 National & NSW Reports reviewing teacher education 1980-1999*, NSW Department of Education and Training, 2000, p. 97. (Exhibit No. 91)

134 MCEETYA, *Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia*, Melbourne, 2004, p. 47.

135 Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future: Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics – Main Report*, DEST, Canberra, 2003, p. 96.

136 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission No. 135*, p. 11.

The Australian Government will then advise the State and Territory Ministers of the number of new higher education places and seek the Ministers' advice on priorities for allocation.

Once advice is received from State and Territory Ministers, the Australian Government will inform universities of the priorities and invite universities to apply for places.

Once applications are received, the Australian Government will provide information on the applications to State and Territory Ministers for further discussion.

A final decision is made by the Australian Government once advice is received from the States and Territories.¹³⁷

4.93 In the committee's view, the MOU process for identifying workforce priorities is not specific enough to address shortages in teaching. The process should be tightened in order to align the allocation of teacher education places with workforce requirements and, in particular, specific teacher shortages. This could be achieved as follows:

- when MCEETYA agrees on its workforce priorities and provides advice on education and training that addresses skills shortages under the MOU process, it should use its teacher supply and demand data to provide advice on areas of shortage in the teaching workforce including specific subject areas;
- when the Australian Government advises State and Territory Ministers of the number of new higher education places and seeks their advice on priorities for allocation, it should provide information in respect of the total number of teacher education places in areas of identified teacher shortage;
- when the Australian Government receives advice from State and Territory Ministers, it should inform the universities of the priorities in areas of identified teacher shortage and invite them to apply for places to specifically address teacher shortages; and
- in making its final decision on the allocation of teacher education places, the Australian Government should align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet the teacher shortages identified during the consultations.

137 Department of Education, Science and Training, pp. 2-3. (*Exhibit No. 120*)

Recommendation 5

The committee recommends that the Australian Government, in making its final decision on the allocation of teacher education places, should align the allocation of places across the teacher education system to meet the teacher shortages identified during the consultations on workforce priorities.

