

11 April 2005

Ms Gillian Gould
Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Vocational Training
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Ms Gould

Thank you for your advice regarding the national inquiry into teacher education.

Edith Cowan University welcomes Minister Nelson's decision to initiate the inquiry and would like to contribute to the deliberations of the Committee. The provenance of this University in teacher education can be traced back to the foundation of Claremont Teachers College in 1902. Edith Cowan University is the oldest and largest provider in Western Australia: teacher education is core business for this University.

The terms of reference for the Inquiry are appropriately wide-ranging and should encompass the key issues with one possible exception. Many of the challenges facing teacher educators stem from the same source as those faced by all professional faculties in higher education, indeed, in the education sector more generally. Costs of provision have escalated but so have student and community expectations. The governance and funding structures for the whole sector, including teacher education, are being transformed. Universities now provide a much more diverse range of courses for a more diverse student body than was the case in the past. This is also true of the school sectors where retention rates have increased, the curriculum has expanded and regular classroom teachers must teacher very difficult students. The school sector, on which teacher education faculties depend for support, is under such pressure that access to support of various kinds, including places for the practicum, is harder to acquire than was previously the case. The point is that many of the potential initiatives for improving teacher education cannot be accomplished by faculties of teacher education acting independently of the rest of the education sector.

The Committee may care to note that towards the end of 2003 the School of Education completed a comprehensive review of its teacher education programs and then subjected itself to an external review by stakeholders and external teacher education experts. Many issues currently of concern to your Committee were addressed by ECU's School of Education during this review process. The School has embarked on a major program of improvement and has made remarkable progress. I might mention, for example, its professional partnerships with schools and school districts, its literacy and numeracy programs that are strongly tied to the School's successful research programs, the use of digital technologies for teaching and research, the innovative middle years graduate program, the successful application of a framework of credentialed professional learning for practising teachers and new work on behaviour management in collaboration with the Department of Education.

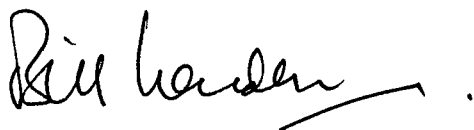
I am glad to note that the Committee will be travelling across Australia and will visit teacher education institutions. May I take this opportunity to invite the Committee to Edith Cowan University. We would be pleased to host any meetings and provide suitable amenities for the Committee. Staff and students will be available to meet with Committee members on any of the designated topics.

I have deferred preparing a general response to the terms of reference because they are so wide-ranging. However, I would be pleased to provide detailed submissions on any topic either prior to, or following, the Committee's visit to Western Australia.

May I suggest that you would liaise with Mr Lars Schmidt, the Faculty Manager. Mr Schmidt served as executive officer for the 2003 review of the School of Education and is well acquainted with the issues of interest to the Committee. He may be contacted by phone on 08-9370 6707 or by email <l.schmidt@ecu.edu.au>.

Please advise me if I can assist in any other matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bill Loudon", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Professor Bill Loudon
Executive Dean
Faculty of Community Services, Education and Social Sciences