

AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNION

SUBMISSION TO THE

STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION
AND
VOCATIONAL TRAINING

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

INQUIRY INTO TEACHER EDUCATION

April 2005

Introduction

The Australian Education Union has a membership of 164,000 educators who work in public schools, colleges, early childhood and vocational settings in all states and territories of Australia. Members include teachers and allied educational staff, principals and administrators mainly in government school and TAFE systems.

The core business of the AEU is the maintenance of comprehensive industrial protection and effective representation on professional issues as they affect members as employees. The Committee should note that collecting detailed information of the kind needed to address the very large agenda of the Terms of Reference is a task which requires more time than that allowed on this occasion.

Terms

The Committee should note that the term 'teacher education' replaced 'teacher training' many years ago and this is the term favoured in this submission.

While the word 'practicum' replaced the term 'practice teaching' some time ago, 'practicum' is now being termed 'professional experience'. This submission has stayed with the word 'practicum', which we believe is less likely to be confusing in a document such as this.

Resources

We are aware that the AEU's insistence on an examination of resource bases when looking at any issue concerning schools is irritating and challenging for the political process. However, once again we remind the Committee that teachers and schools are no different from other humans and human organisations in that the surrounding constraints cannot always be ascribed to a failure of will, or to organisational problems, or to inappropriate work practices. Often the problem is simply one of the nature and supply of the resources that are available to assist the daily work of the practising teacher in the classroom.

The Terms of Reference

The Terms of Reference do not provide scope for an examination of the causes of shortages in the supply of fully qualified teacher professionals. There has been an inquiry into teacher education every year for the past 25 years at state and federal levels. Many of these inquiries have commented on the key issues of remuneration and the attractiveness of teaching as a career. New accountability requirements being imposed by governments on schools as a condition of funding, such as an ever-increasing number of standardised literacy and numeracy tests, and frequent changes to student data and reporting requirements, are adding to an already full workload. Teachers resigning in the first five years of their teaching career often give unnecessary workload unrelated to their core role as a prime reason.

The AEU estimates, based on the demographics of the profession and the rates of departure, that between 30,000 and 40,000 qualified entrant teachers will be required over the next five years to maintain current staffing. Shortages of teaching staff in some subject areas and in some regions are already evident. Yet the shortfall of university places continues to be a critical issue. University Admission Centre figures extrapolated nationally show that there could be a shortfall of 46% in first preference places Australia-wide this year.

These issues are just as important as any of those covered by the Terms of Reference, yet they are not issues on which views are being sought.

The Terms of Reference appear to have been constructed with the view in mind that a front-end teacher education program consisting of a collection of technical skills can equip a graduate with all of the requirements that it takes to operate successfully in any situation as a teacher.

The AEU would suggest that these views, if held, need substantial reconsideration.

Point 1

Teaching is highly contextualised work, and while a university teacher education program can, if given enough substance, assist new teachers to adapt quickly, it can never answer all of the questions that will arise in the working lives of any teacher. Successful teaching is about thinking, about problem-solving, and about adaptation, as well as skills and knowledge, and universities must build their practical work around analytical and reflective habits of mind.

Previous Inquiries

Dr Stephen Dinham, has written [Campus Review, 2.3.05, p 9]

Recently Dr Brendan Nelson announced an inquiry into teacher training. There was a previous national review of teaching and teacher education in 2002-3. I was a part of that Committee of inquiry and its recommendations are yet to be implemented.

This latest inquiry means we have had one inquiry per year on average into teacher education at state and federal levels over the past 25 years. Each inquiry inevitably reaches much the same set of conclusions.

Point 2

It would be a valuable service for the education community as a whole if the Committee looked carefully at these previous efforts, if only to extract common themes and identify where particular recommendations have been accepted and implemented, and why other recommendations have been ignored.

Despite this, and remembering that we have come through a longish period of consistent systemic tinkering and very substantial policy offerings, we have seen real progress and improvement. This has taken place across the board, including teacher education, and we are confident that this generation of new teachers is not only ethically and mentally as strong as any previous generation, but the academic preparation for teaching is better for most of them than was available to any of their forebears.

Terms of Reference

- 1. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting students for teacher training.***

Teacher education courses attract very large populations of students. Teacher education students, like students in other faculties, are self-selected. That is, they apply for a place, and are given one according to the ranking in whatever school final examination is in place in their particular state or territory.

To be a successful teacher we can assume that four requirements are needed:

- a) disposition (a willingness or desire to teach, for whatever reason);
- b) temperament (the personal characteristics that would support survival in a world of children, and which could gain sustenance and reward from such an environment);
- c) knowledge (those things that have to be known, either at a content level or at the level of professional knowledge, to enable one to successfully teach); and
- d) skills (the active physical and mental practice of teaching).

Clearly the first is demonstrated by an application to pursue a teacher education course, and the third and fourth a consequence of successfully completing that course and periods of classroom practice, both in the practicum and in the early years of full-time or casual teaching.

This leaves the question of temperament.

The Committee will probably be invited to consider claims about the predictive value of psychological testing. There are two difficulties here. The first is that the precise psychological capacities required for a teaching career are not fully understood. Secondly, it is possible that 'temperament' is not simply a 'chemical inheritance', and perhaps can be changed and/or modified over time through exposure to knowledge, guidance and experience.

Point 3

The AEU is opposed to a general selection test for teacher applicants that eliminates applicants on a broad spectrum of capacities which are supposedly fully formed at the age of eighteen or nineteen. It would be unfair and lose potentially good teachers.

There are however increasing numbers of applicants who are not coming directly from school and who have had a range of experiences and employments for whom an interview would be a useful way of presenting their case for inclusion. For these applicants an interview may enable them to present information not otherwise available.

For Indigenous applicants for whom school education may have involved a history of poor or inadequate provision or for whom current accreditation systems have proven educationally hostile, an interview is commonly used to add to other academic information to determine suitability.

Where applicants direct from school are involved, an interview may add to the tertiary entrance score as useful additional information which an applicant could provide, particularly if the interviewing panel includes practitioners or those close to current classroom requirements.

The question of the university's role in ensuring that clearly unsuitable students do not proceed to course completion is a significant consideration and requires some attention from the Committee.

In this context, the statement of the Minister on 11 April 2005, about the 'capability score' will simply add confusion to student lives, and is a classic example of poor policy chasing poor policy, or 'hard cases making bad law'. The universities have been pressed into compromise solutions because of funding policies, and now a resolution has been proposed that simply makes things worse. The pursuit of a 'capability score' for entrants seeking places in teacher education, and probably other faculties as well, will apply quite undue pressures upon students as well as schools and school systems, on grounds which have no research basis whatever.

2. Examine the extent to which teacher training courses can attract high quality students, including students from diverse backgrounds and experiences.

The ebb and flow of students into teacher education courses is a matter of considerable speculation but little light. In the 1980s there was a fair degree of media interest in the supposed flooding into teaching of students with 'low' scores in their school finals. Closer inspection indicated that much of this speculation was unfounded, but it seems to have survived in the political mind at least.

This public debate drifted away during the 1990s, partly because the media lost interest in it, and partly because there was a clear demonstration that a large number of students with very good results had chosen to go into teacher education courses.

The waters were muddied somewhat by an increasing number of adult entrants with university degrees whose school exam scores were irrelevant, increased numbers of adult entrants entering university for the first time, and large numbers of full fee-paying students from overseas. They were muddied even further by the application of statistically derived scores which show, in one form or another and in some states, a ranking of students on number that often seemed to display a competence that simply was not there.

Point 4

While the pressure is on Universities is to fill all allocated places in a faculty it is possible that some of those students selected late in the process will not be of high standard academically. This is superficially a matter of concern, but we have little information about the fate of students so identified.

There has been recent publicity about the nature of the academic 'carve-up' of places (The Australian, 6 April 2005), and the Committee should consider the implications of any proposed changes on teacher education faculties. This will also involve some consideration of the demographics of Australian schools and teacher demand in the future.

It may be that school results of teacher education entrants may differ across different campuses. Whether this makes any difference to the quality of emerging teachers is also a matter not pursued as yet.

What has been pursued, at least in one university [reported in The Australian, 6 April, 2005 research by Ian Dobson, Monash] is the fate of students from various sources after the first year of university, with the 'best and brightest' school leavers being

replaced with those who were the 'third best and brightest'. It should put aside the innate silliness of the whole idea of 'best and brightest'; it is a demonstration that educational measurement often has much more power as a picture of performance at a particular moment than it has as a predictive mechanism.

Point 5

The Committee might consider a matter that has never been demonstrated one way or the other, and that is whether high end-of-school results are a good indicator to either becoming a good teacher, or of lasting in the teaching profession.

Such a lot of talk about the so-called 'best and brightest' is carried on in the media that there is an assumption being put into the public arena that unless a student was right up with the 'best' of the final school exam results then they are somehow not fit to enter a teacher education program. This assumption is quite erroneous.

Indeed, the AEU would suggest that the disposition, or the temperament, or the general suitability, of people wishing to teach is in general no less than for those who fight their way into law or medicine or veterinary science.

Dobson also supports the notion of weightings for particular people who have not achieved strongly in final year examinations, but whose representation in the teaching service is very important. Universities have had programs of this kind for many years, so we suppose that the terms of reference really refer to the outcomes of those programs. For instance, what has happened to the considerable numbers of teachers of Aboriginal background, many of whom were given preference for university places. Where are they now, and have they lasted in teaching? We think that this will be difficult to ascertain unless the Committee redefines the term of reference in a much more precise way.

3. *Examine attrition rates from teaching courses and reasons for that attrition.*

There are many reasons why a student might abandon a university course, including personal, economic or family pressures. These reasons are to be regretted. If, however, the student departure is due to the student finding the course and the coursework too hard, or self-doubts arise about his or her temperament or disposition, or if there is a perceived insoluble failure at practicum, then the student is better off out of teaching.

In general, Teacher Education Faculties do not have any higher rate of attrition than other faculties and share with them the situation that attrition is most likely to occur in the first year of university.

Point 6

The Committee should clearly find out what it can about this matter, but it should also look more closely at the attrition rates in the first few years of teaching [DEST, An Ethic of Care, October 2002, and Ewing, Smith 'Retaining Quality beginning teachers in the profession' in English Teaching: Practice and Critique, May 2003].

If there is a problem, it is here. There have been plenty of recommendations about this area, but not much action.

What we don't know is who the departing teachers are. Why are they leaving? Will they be teaching elsewhere? Do they depart for other teaching jobs, or to travel, or to live with a partner? Do they generally come from difficult schools? Have they been overwhelmed by teaching, or do they think that it is just not worth the effort, or is there some other reason? None of this is known, and until it is we cannot make accurate assessment about the successes or failures of any part of the teaching or pre-teaching experience.

Point 7

Until we know this we cannot say with certainty what role the pre-service education of any teacher has had on a decision to become part of an internationally worrying statistic.

An interesting note on this issues has just been released by the Australian College of Educators in a paper by Professor Don Anderson called "The Profession of Teaching, The Report of a Longitudinal Study 1967-2004." He is looking back on a group who were first surveyed in the mid-1960s. They were also Dip Ed students, thus belonging to a group whose consecutive teaching diploma was not seen as being of a high standard. Yet 'almost 60% of our respondents thought that their initial training was a good preparation for teaching careers'. (p.19)

Yet in the very next paragraph, on p.20, Anderson can report that:

Despite this level of overall satisfaction with initial training, there is a strong current of criticism running through the surveys, starting with the early years of practice. In particular a majority believed that there should have been more practical knowledge and more experience in classrooms. This view, sustained throughout their careers, is expressed at every survey opportunity, and is largely independent of the particular university.

These findings must be viewed against and earlier statement in the report:

The socialisation of teachers followed a somewhat different course to the others. Whereas the initial idealism of engineers, lawyers and medicos was replaced over the years of training by a more realistic and profession-centred stance, the teachers' idealism remained. It was only after some time in schools that they began adopting attitudes and strategies for coping in the classroom that were necessarily at variance with beliefs held when they were students.

In other words, the professional socialisation of students came later. It also must be remembered that Anderson's survey is of people who entered teaching many years ago. Today's policy-makers have made many efforts in recent years (from the early 1990s) to help the socialisation process, the most significant of which is the internship. As the internship is the last major pre-service work that is undertaken, perhaps this is the area that needs some major research attention.

Point 8

Engineering, medicine and law all have case work as a major component of their studies. Case work is also becoming a feature of teacher education programs, with encouraging results. Those matters that require the modification of idealistic positions can be readily dealt with in case-based

studies, although in many ways the adjustment of ideal to reality can often become an adjustment of best practice to local practice that may have its own flaws and problems.

Sometimes those who claim to live in 'real worlds' actually live in constructed worlds which to many of their inhabitants don't seem very real at all.

Point 9

The Committee should understand that some universities appear to have run down their teacher education programs, largely due to university management demands.

The Committee should look carefully at the requirements for teacher education programs in the tertiary institutions, look at time on task (or the expectations about attendance at lectures and seminars), the availability of practicum time, methods of supervision of students undertaking their practicum, the assignment expectations, and so on.

For whatever reasons, some universities seem to be short-changing their teacher education students, and it is almost certainly a matter of the attitude of the administration.

The Australian Council of Deans of Education have claimed that Teacher Education is seen as a "cash cow" by many universities and is often seen as an easy way to shift student load to ensure universities achieve their student quota targets.

Point 10

Further, the Committee might investigate the reasons why administrations in some universities, which after all are teaching institutions, appear to have some disregard for Education Faculties, which are there to promote, support and develop the art and craft of teaching.

4. Examine and assess the criteria for selecting and rewarding education faculty members.

The AEU will leave this question to be considered in the submission of the National Tertiary Education Union.

5. Examine the educational philosophy underpinning the teacher training courses (including the teaching methods used, course structure and materials, and methods for assessment and evaluation) and assess the extent to which it is informed by research.

The Australian Education Union believes that a teacher education course that relies solely on content and methodology is an inadequate preparation for teaching in a modern society.

A teacher Education program needs at least three fundamental strands to be of any value.

- a) a philosophy/history strand to teach that education is not just driven by practice, but by ideas, and that a history of education and education policy is also a history of ideas

- b) a sociological strand to teach that the provision and the content of education is also socially constructed, and is concerned not only with those belief systems which bind us, such as a belief in democracy and the rule of law, but also that divide us, such as knowledge about disadvantage, disability, and socially-constructed difference.
- c) A teaching practice strand, which involves study of curriculum, of different methodologies surrounding teaching (including new technologies of teaching); and which also involves a consistent contact with schools through school visits and the practicum.

Because of the nature of teaching it would clearly be impossible to provide a precise course to fit all the circumstances in which a teacher might find him or herself. Teacher education offers a general set of understandings which have to be applied across very diverse sets of circumstances. Of course, some specialist provisions are possible (TESL, Special Education, and other areas which constitute special compulsory studies) but in the course of a degree they constitute elements of a wide program, rather than specialised studies of a particular program.

The outcomes of these courses, and the expectations that employers place on them, are documented and readily available as specified competencies and understandings that registration authorities require from those to whom they are about to grant registration.

Point 11

It is the expectation in all of these statements (which exist in one form or another right across the country) that deeper levels of competence will be acquired over time, and that initial registration granted on graduation is provisional only, and further registration is dependent upon a successful period of teaching.

Mandatory Indigenous Studies

While the AEU's advocacy of three fundamental strands in teacher education programs above is inevitably general and provides scope for both flexibility and specialisation, we believe that Indigenous studies should be mandatory.

As educators we have a responsibility for the development of the cultural and citizenship knowledge and values on which our society is founded. The lacunae in Australia's national identity and culture and the living injustice towards Indigenous people are in part due to the unresolved effects of European invasion and dispossession. School education can assist in overcoming these deficiencies.

Indigenous histories and cultures prior to invasion, teaching/learning practices and the needs of Indigenous students, including languages and ESL practices should be part of mandatory requirements. A 1999 survey of teachers on the National Priority Areas determined by the MCEETYA National Goals of Schooling observed in relation to Improving Indigenous Outcomes,

“Fourteen percent (13.7%) of respondents, the lowest response for any single priority, indicated that they had undertaken training in these aspects of this priority area.” (Australian College of Education (2001) *Teachers in Australian*

Other Federal Government Reports, including the flagship report on Indigenous Strategic Results Projects (SRPs) *What Works” Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students* (McRae, et al. 2000) have all concluded that effective teaching practice is essential to improve educational outcomes for Indigenous students.

Despite these reports, and AEU submissions to previous Teacher Education Reviews, the Deans of Education have reported to the AEU that the that contest within university faculties for funding has meant that Indigenous studies has been even further marginalised than it was five years ago.

Point 12

The failure to provide Indigenous Studies as part of teacher education courses is a particular indictment on the Federal Department of Education and its respective Ministers who have publicly championed their support for improved outcomes for Indigenous students when the link between teacher education and outcomes has been established by Departmental research.

Philosophical underpinnings

The notion of education for the creation of virtuous and able citizens goes back as far as Plato, but its modern interpretation arises from the political theories that emerged in the 18th and 19th centuries around ‘democratic’ revolutions and nationalistic political movements. The growth of the notions of democratic participation, the rights and responsibilities of citizens, patterns of suffrage as they moved towards universality, and the twentieth century expansion of the idea of human rights (with all the subsets belong to gender, childhood, ethnic and racial origins and disability) all lead towards education not only as a key function of a working democracy, but an expanding key function.

Statements about these functions are endlessly repeated but they have similar characteristics in modern democracies.

- a) they are secular, in that they do not promote any particular set of religious or denominational beliefs
- b) they are based on the belief that the state has supremacy. Even in interpretations of state powers which promote the parent as having the major role in choosing educational provision, the state retains the view that the parental choice of no education is not an option. This means that the state has a reciprocal responsibility to provide an education service that is available for all its citizens.
- c) in more recent times the fundamental definitions have expanded to take on the view that the promotion of democratic citizenship for all citizens intrinsically involves the pursuit of equity.

The most prominent and influential educational philosopher of the twentieth century was probably John Dewey, and there are plenty of short works that cover his contribution (W.F. Connell’s ‘A History of Education in the Twentieth Century World’,

published by the Curriculum Development Centre in 1980 remains a useful Australian introduction).

Point 13

The work of philosophers and educational theorists does not remain the province of schools or Universities. It seeps into the public domain through Acts of Parliament and the rule of law.

Principles enunciated by Dewey, and developed by endless teachers and philosophers, underpin every piece of education legislation in Australia. However, they are not unchallenged, and we know from twentieth century history where the greatest threats arise. They arise from:

- a) 'Fundamentalism', whether political or religious, and as expressed in single party states, dictatorships or theocracies,
- b) An excessive attachment to 'instrumentalism', where the child or student no longer becomes the centre of the process, but where the state becomes more and more obsessed with prescriptive and mandated texts, syllabuses and methodologies.
- c) a failure to adequately resource the systems that are constructed to serve the educational needs of the democracy itself.

Point 14

University education faculties draw most of their basic work from legislation, syllabus documents, theories of education, notions of equity and child-centredness, and research into effectiveness and good practice. Preparation for entering schooling as a teacher is a preparation to enter an area that is endlessly contestable, and the preparation should familiarise participants not only with the solid foundations of education systems in our democracy, but the endless contestability of implementation within those understood frameworks.

6. *Examine the interaction and relationships between teacher training courses and other university faculty disciplines.*

The AEU understands that the relationships are patchy, but that good relationships add definite value to the teacher education programs. There may be some evidence to suggest that where university faculties have been looking to improve their own teaching practices they become more interested in the work of the Education Faculty, where it exists. We are reluctant to enter this area, because it is easy to make generalisations which only apply to a couple of situations, or that arise on some campuses.

There is some literature about specific subject areas in schools and the difficulties that some teachers have in adjusting their professional training to meet school demands.

7. Examine the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to:

i) teach literacy and numeracy

The Inquiry needs to be cognisant of the fact that the vast majority of Australian students are well served in the acquisition of literacy skills, as borne out by the recent results of studies such as the OECD's Programme of International Achievement 2003 (PISA). While not arguing that improvements cannot be made, this clearly indicates that there is not a crisis in the preparation of primary and secondary teaching graduates to teach literacy.

However, teachers at all levels, including the upper primary and secondary years, often express the need to be provided with greater knowledge and skill development in literacy teaching, both pre-service and in-service.

This is a particular issue in secondary education areas, where teacher education students may see themselves as specialists in content areas, and be of the view that literacy is for primary schools only. This view is not held by any serious education authority in Australia, possibly in the world, and it is essential that all secondary teachers understand that as they move into the technical and specialised language of their field they are engaged in the teaching of literacy.

Literacy is more than decoding. Much of the impetus behind current moves towards deep learning activities for children is driven by concepts that emerge from studies of perception and meaning. Understanding multi-literacy is a key concept in quality teaching movements around the country, and it is important in all teaching situations.

Point 15

The single greatest difficulty in recent years in considering the education of teachers about literacy is the public profile of advocates of single-method approaches to literacy. This method might be a phonics method, a 'whole language' method, a guided reading program method based on graded exercises, or something else. These advocates are all from the 'magic bullet' school of teaching, and fail to recognise the complex nature of the real teaching of literacy in classrooms.

There is no 'best' or 'only' way to teach literacy. Successful teachers make use of a range of bodies of knowledge, from which they select what is relevant to their classroom situations. In a powerful learning environment, a number of variables combine and interact. Teachers need to be familiar with a range of teaching strategies, such as "whole language", phonetic, functional (genre based) and critical approaches to reading. It is impossible to say that one approach or another is more or less suitable for a particular child in a particular environment at a particular time. Aspects of all must be understood and applied as appropriate.

It follows from this that the AEU supports teacher education which provides teachers with the knowledge and skills necessary to enable them to make informed judgements as to the most appropriate teaching strategy for a particular student or group of students.

Such provision must be made at both pre-service and in-service levels, as it is unrealistic to assume that all the necessary skills can be provided during the formal teacher education phase of a prospective teacher's education. It is, however, important that this provision is both well resourced and well directed.

It is critical that any professional learning programs are actually effective, are 'best practice' in their own right, and that they are available not only to primary school teachers, but to secondary school teachers as well. Some students will need ongoing individual support throughout their schooling.

The most recent curriculum documents recognise the complex nature of the teaching of literacy, and provide support for different approaches. Often, however, the assumption of steady and definable progress is over-stated and over-prescribed in curriculum documents, and create stress for teachers dealing with problem children. Teacher Education programs which provide support for the curriculum documents must be seen as providing an appropriate introduction to literacy teaching, and new assessment technologies must be seen as providing more consistent information for the school to deal with than older methods.

If secondary teacher education students are missing out on this information then they will not be equipped to adequately approach literacy problems in their classrooms.

ii) teach vocational education courses

Some universities teach students to teach vocational education courses in the school setting. These teachers must also meet two specific requirements:

- a) they must demonstrate the competencies that are required to become a teacher of VET. Those competencies may be gained through industry experience, or through a TAFE course.
- b) They must have a Certificate IV in Workplace Learning and Assessment from a TAFE College.

The university does co-ordinate and record the evidence that the relevant competencies have been achieved, and can also arrange for TAFE placement for the Certificate IV. This information is recorded on student transcript.

There are examples of university courses that provide a range of pathways, including advanced standing through RPL (recognition of prior learning), and TAFE certificates, into teacher education courses for VET subjects in high schools.

This is a very complex (and perhaps complicated) area. If the Universities are not able to do more in this area it is perhaps a consequence of the rules and the complexities, and not necessarily a consequence of university inactivity.

iii) effectively manage classrooms

Classroom management consistently emerges as the most difficult problem confronting new teachers, just as in certain circumstances it can be the most difficult problem confronting experienced teachers. Classroom management always has been, and obviously still is, connected to the view that the child has to conform to adult modes of behaviour, and always show diligence, respect of whatever knowledge is placed in front of him or her, and perform complex tasks quietly, while seated.

In no other circumstance in any kind of environment are people expected to show as much self-control as students in classrooms. And of course there are, and always have been, lots of occasions when they don't. Until relatively recently dissidents were

quietened by assault, but more civilised times have eradicated this practice. So the teacher has to exercise control by force of personality, or by the exercise of some magical bag of tricks that someone has perfected somewhere. Sometimes these things work. Some people can control unbelievably difficult classes by force of personality or by the expert use of tricks. But for the ex-student, short on practice, the dissonance that is set up in many classrooms is unexpected, even shocking, and the time it takes to adjust may go well beyond the patience that the new teacher has with the task itself.

Point 16

The situation where able and committed students are crucified in their early years of teaching because of difficult schools and students, poor school leadership, and a culture of 'well I had to do it, why can't she/he?' is no longer as common as it was. However, the figures, even on the small samples in both the DEST paper and the Ewing/Smith paper, indicate that it is still too common. Even more common is the systemic view that 'it's their own fault', or 'they should have learned how to manage this at university.'

What answer is there to the problem of placing a person in a situation where the circumstances act totally against the object of the exercise? In other words, while ever schooling is conducted with a brutal disregard for the way many children actually learn then new teacher are going to need a lot of support if they are to avoid suffering.

If the new teacher is not supported, then he or she can often be powerless in this circumstance, and university pre-service cannot help much except provide some paste-over answers to impossible situations. After a while many 'successful' teachers learn to disregard the improbability of learning taking place, and proceed by pretending that the situation is normal, and being unrealistically thankful for the students who do succeed. This is not the outcome that new teachers expect.

It must be understood that we are talking here about the most difficult children in the most difficult schools. These are generally children who either come from under-resourced families into under-resourced schools, or children with serious behaviour problems. It must also be understood that many new teachers find themselves in circumstances where they are encouraged and supported, and where student behaviour is not a major problem.

The area is discussed further in point v) below

Systemic pressure on new teachers

Point 17

The problems for many new teachers are compounded by the apparent impossibility of schools and systems separating the notions of 'mentoring' and 'supervision'.

Even in the generally valuable 'An Ethic of Care' the problem of a 'supervisor' being responsible for guiding new teachers into the day-to-day intricacies of their craft is unaddressed, or briefly addressed and dismissed. The whole concept of 'supervisor' is one of judgement, not guidance. It reeks of the assembly-line and old-fashioned methods of 'quality control'. It is Old System. Every 'visit' that is made by a

'supervisor', every conversation, every piece of advice, is linked to an assessment which at the end of the year does or does not provide a 'licence' to teach.

The tables in both 'An Ethic of Care' [table 16] and the Ewing/Smith paper are also instructive. The gap between the perceptions of what has been offered (by 'supervisors') and what has been received (by new teachers) is often very large, sometimes to the point of being disturbing. The services offered to new teachers must be focussed on support, information and assistance. They must be formative in intent. Providing a new teacher with a 'supervisor' gives all the wrong signals.

Even worse, there is evidence in both papers of significant differences of opinion between new teachers and 'supervisors' about the quality of their teacher education experiences, with new teachers being quite supportive of their teacher education in general, and 'supervisors' being quite critical. It is hard to escape the conclusion that in some schools new teachers are being advised, even taught, to have little regard for their pre-service education. This, of course, is professional socialisation, and it is a regrettable part of a 'coping' strategy, as Anderson points out.

New teachers tend to be critical of their education in quite specific areas, such as classroom management, IT usage, and assessment based on criterion-referencing. [see Anderson, p.5] However, there is also evidence [Ken Eltis, 1995 and 2003, reports to the NSW Minister for Education and Training – these are both public documents] that many experienced teachers also struggle with these matters.

Point 18

New teachers under pressure to accept and defend current school norms in their first year of employment (for many teachers the early year or years of employment will be as casual teachers) will find it find it easier to blame their increasingly distant university education for the difficulties they currently face if that is the message that they get from the staffroom. This is not a sound basis for criticism of the teacher education programs themselves.

There must be an increasing systemic demand for 'mentoring' programs for new teachers. There must also be an increasing systemic response to the resource requirements, particularly the requirement of time, to ensure that those programs are effective. Systems can change teachers' beliefs over time, and can ensure that sound personnel practices are encouraged at school level. The old attitudes must change, and while they should never lose their critical edge, teachers at school level must know more about what is possible and not possible in pre-service professional education.

iv) successfully use information technology

Information technology is a key area in all teacher education courses. One of the common assumptions that older generations make about younger generations is that they are supremely knowledgeable about all technological matters, and that basic computer skills are almost inbuilt into young people. While this is partly true it must be remembered that using IT in teaching may require skills that don't apply to using a chat room or, for entrants who come from other corporate worlds, the kinds of technology that they have been familiar with in their previous work situation.

Teacher Education courses must ensure that appropriate basic understandings and skills are in place. Of course, it must also be remembered that new teachers are often entering schools where the general understanding of IT is quite low, and they

may be expected to provide support to other more experienced teachers. It is certain that some of the school expectations of student knowledge of IT are unrealistic, just as it is certain that this is an area that can be substantially addressed during teacher education.

v) deal with bullying and disruptive students and dysfunctional families

Individuals who are classified as 'disruptive students,' 'bullies' or as coming from 'dysfunctional families', in terms of teachers' work, are three discrete areas.

'Dealing with disruptive students' comes under the general terms of 'classroom management' and 'student welfare'. These used to be lumped together as 'discipline', but the influence of child protection policies around the country have led to distinctions being more carefully enunciated. Certain fundamental rules when dealing with disruptive students can be, and are, introduced in Teacher Education courses. Certain practical advice can be, and is, given during various practicum experiences. The case-based approach being adopted in many Teacher Education courses is, we believe, of great value.

Point 19

However, it is impossible to create a course which deals with the full range of possibilities of student behaviour.

Rather, students should be provided with a basic range of practical and pro-active strategies. In practice, some people are naturally more able to deal with disruptive students than others, for reasons that have to do with inbuilt characteristics and capacities rather than any acquired knowledge. Students on practicum are watched closely for difficulties, to the point where some may be advised to discontinue with teaching.

Student behaviour in schools is very much seen as a whole school matter. While teachers are expected to be able to deal with random errant behaviour, persistent problems must be dealt with at a school level, and most schools have devised systems for dealing with these problems. Where the problems with individual students are chronic, then systemic assistance outside the school can be sought. This is particularly so for behaviourally disturbed children who are increasingly being 'integrated' in classrooms, often with minimal support, and who provide massive problems for the teachers concerned. Teacher education students are taught that they must not allow persistently poor classroom behaviour to continually disturb them without their seeking assistance. They are also taught that every effort must be made by the individual teacher to ensure that their classroom practice is not contributing to the problem.

Point 20

'Bullying' is a child protection matter and teachers are advised to deal with incidents that come to their attention by reporting immediately to the Principal of the school.

Under no circumstances should teachers believe that they have the training or the skills to deal with 'dysfunctional families'.

It would be unwise for a Teacher Education program to advise students otherwise. While it may be necessary for a teacher to have dealings with an individual member

of such a family (which would be managed no differently from dealings with a member of any other family), any requirement for the school to have direct dealings with a 'dysfunctional family' is the province of the principal of the school.

Students are also warned against hasty classification of individuals, families or, for that matter, communities.

iii) deal with children with special needs and/or disabilities

In this context we understand the term 'disabilities' to refer to diagnosed specific physiological impairment, whether it be physical or intellectual, and the term 'special needs' to encompass such students but also more broadly refer to children who come to school from environments which have individual or collective social disadvantage that adversely affects their learning.

The issue of disability is a difficult area for Teacher Education, as it is substantially reliant on medical research that regularly increases its classifications and specialised understandings of disability. There are generalised courses made available which deal with sensitivity, parental expectations and fears, and understanding of some of the problems that disabled children face in their daily lives, as well as some specialised options, but no generalised course can deal with the vast range of specific knowledge that is required for dealing not only with each particular disability, but also with levels within each particular disability. Disability education is very specialised.

Within this context, a distinction need to be made between teacher training and professional development designed to develop understanding of the education of children with disabilities and inclusive practices in general, and the need to ensure an adequate supply of teachers with relevant and up-to-date disability specific training. Therefore in addition to the inclusion of generic courses on disabilities, Departments must ensure that there is financial support for the training of disability specific teachers, and provide for their ongoing professional development and networking.

The extent to which pre-service teacher education courses include elements dealing specifically with students with disabilities is extremely variable, but generally not very significant. Similarly, there is no systematic process to ensure that as many student teachers as practicable include experience with students with disabilities in their school experience placements.

Realistically, the degree to which student teachers can gain knowledge and experience in relation to specified disabilities is problematic – there are a wide variety and many pressures on the available time. However, the AEU would support discussions with teacher education personnel and relevant disabilities experts to develop generic courses which may include some elements of a specific nature. The important aspect is to give teaches in training some introduction to the teaching of students with disabilities and some understanding of approaches which they can then later build on in response to particular situations.

Point 21

The most useful function that universities can fulfil in teaching students to deal with disability is to encourage students to use their investigative skills in acquiring information about the disability that they have to deal with, as they are dealing with it.

There is specialist expertise in systems and in the community, and there is also the Internet, to assist them in this task. However, expecting a newly-graduated teacher to deal successfully with disabled children 'mainstreamed' into classrooms is a bit much.

iv) achieve accreditation

It is the AEU understanding that the term 'accreditation' is most likely to be used as a part of process of determining whether a teacher has acquired the enunciated proficiencies that a registration agency may require, or whether the teacher has the requirements necessary for promotion or special placement,

Clearly there are contacts between teacher education and registration and employment bodies. The degree of contact varies from state to state. There was a time when Departments of Education owned teacher education and one would expect that the overview process today would not be as substantial as it was then.

There is some information from the Ramsey Review in New South Wales that even where an overview is maintained it is not seen as a major priority and is generally a paper-driven event. Further slippage could easily occur between what is presented on paper and what actually occurs in the lecture and seminar rooms. It would also be obvious that there would be a difference in priorities between the universities and the employing and registration bodies.

This is worth some closer investigation on a national level but it is no easy task. Teacher education institutions have a requirement to teach areas which Departments of Education generally avoid (such as the philosophy and history of education), and which are crucial to the development in the student of a sense of belonging to a thinking and reflective profession which is ideas-driven and historically developmental. Also, intensive overviews of university practice could not be seen as professionally encouraging, or even practical.

The Australian Education Union believes that formal arrangements between employers of teachers, registers of teachers, and the education of teachers are very important. These arrangements should ensure regular assessments of the content of pre-service courses (which include university involvement in employer-developed teacher development programs).

Point 22

The point we are making here is that the sharp cut-off points between pre-service, probation and continuing education should be softened, and that all points in the teacher development process should become an interest shared by all three levels of teacher education; teacher educators, registration bodies and employers.

The Committee should investigate ways and means of developing and/or improving these arrangements.

v) deal with senior staff, fellow teachers, school boards, education authorities, parents, community groups and other related government departments.

This is an extraordinary request. How does anybody learn to deal with senior staff, fellow workers etc? We, as adults who work and live in communities, learn by

experience, by accepting advice, by always trying to know as much you can about whom you are dealing with, by watching other people in action, by understanding conventions and rules, and by making mistakes.

Trying to construct a course to answer questions such as this for teachers would be as difficult as providing an equivalent course to cover the range of personalities and problems brought to a Member of Parliament by their constituents and their professional colleagues.

University courses will provide students with opportunities to learn about their rights and responsibilities, often by inviting representatives from teacher unions to address students. They will also invite representatives of employers of teachers and other agencies to inform students about their work, the ways in which they deal with teachers, and the services they provide.

Point 23

Induction courses for new teachers – offered by teacher unions or by systems – provide a very useful point of contact with these issues. Even for experienced and professionally mature teachers, these areas can be a quagmire of problems. Expecting a pre-service course to provide all the answers for the multiplicity of human behaviours that a new teacher will meet is simply not possible.

Perhaps some broad guidelines about personal response can be offered, as can exercises involving role play and sessions with experienced older teachers, but most matters of this kind have to be dealt with *in situ*. Again, strong Principal advice, and competent mentoring, can help a lot. The teacher unions also provide an immense professional backup for teachers of all ages who run into problems with systems and other individuals.

8. Examine the role and input of schools and their staff to the preparation of trainee teachers.

We assume that the term of reference is talking about school and practising teacher input into teacher education programs. If so, then opportunities to do so are limited at present, and such opportunities may be very useful for all. (Some further points about this are made Point 10.)

Point 24

The most substantial point of contact between schools and universities is the practicum, and this is a tremendous opportunity for feedback to the university. However, time is a problem. Until the crisis in the employment and payment aspects of the supervising teacher's role is sorted out, the practicum cannot be as significant as it should in the teacher's preparation.

Teachers write reports on students and could include advice and questions for the university but it really takes personal contact to tease out the issues. The time and the opportunities for this kind of contact have to be squeezed out of existing spaces that are already full.

Still, we are confronting a situation where authorities will be demanding new more precise measures of student competencies during practicum. There has to be a common understanding between student, colleague teacher, practicum supervisor,

and the university faculty, as to what these requirements represent, and how they are to be assessed.

The industrial arrangements involving the universities and the unions are in crisis due to an unresolved determination of the employment relationship. This has meant that the payment of supervising teachers is now unrealistically inadequate, such that the status of the role has been undermined.

Point 25

The solution to the practicum requires leadership and should be based on best practice. This will require more contact between the parties; the Committee might seek to find whether there is a developing practice which can provide a base, and some guidance, for the profession as a whole.

9. Investigate the appropriateness of the current split between primary and secondary education training.

Traditionally primary teachers have had their teacher education programs delivered as a 'concurrent' model, where the teaching of the information required for the practice of teaching is taught at the same time as the academic and content side of the requirements. Secondary teachers, with some exceptions, have generally had the methodology added as a post-graduate study after graduation in the degree of their choice, a 'consecutive' model.

The history of this is fairly transparent, and it has to do with perceptions that a teacher of Physics or History needs to know a good deal more about the content of that subject than a primary teacher needs to know. However, the more common practice now is to integrate elements of the Teacher Education program into the Secondary program and at some stage seek to introduce some practicum experience.

In the past there was a degree of professional disdain about the quality of the old 'Dip. Eds', which were rarely seen by the older breed of teachers to be an adequate preparation for teaching [see Anderson, p.5]. Unfortunately, and illogically, this led to the breeding of a culture of 'sink or swim' rather than a culture of strong support in the early years, and this in the past was accompanied by the sheer difficulty of teaching very large classes, and in the distant past the practice of distributing 'extras' for absent teachers on a daily basis.

For many entrants to teaching, but particularly adult entrants (usually those who have completed a degree, or some professional or trade training outside a teacher education program) a 'consecutive' course in teacher education is the only option available. With the end of large-scale scholarship programs, students who enter teaching as graduates are often converts to the idea, they are often much older than teacher education students were in the past, and they often have families. Also, many of them are full fee-paying students from overseas.

Point 26

It is important that consecutive teacher education programs continue to improve their status, and are retained as high level postgraduate studies sufficient enough, and of a high enough quality to ensure a high level of recognition not only by their employers, but by their owners as well.

The older programs were one-year programs, and it is important to note that many consecutive programs are now two years in duration. Considering the kind of salary loss that this entails, and the added burden of HECS payments, and the uncertainty of employment upon graduation, this is often a considerable sacrifice.

There are some 'middle school' Teacher Education courses now being offered that try to bring what has seen to be separate courses of study into one, by providing an expanded 'primary' part of the course at the cost of a reduced 'secondary specialist' part of the course.

There are some interesting consequences of such courses. The arrival of adolescence does not always correspond to arrival in secondary school, and there is considerable debate as to whether these children are ready for the sudden differences and challenges that secondary schools provide. While most teachers would see the need for the very sharp cut-off between primary and secondary education to be somewhat amended, there are differences of opinion as to how this might be addressed.

The move to 'middle school' specialisation would be worth looking at. There are certainly significant advocates of separated education provision for children in the early years of adolescence, and there has been a considerable literature built up on the topic by Commonwealth agencies. The attitude of the teaching service to the subject would, we suspect, be divided.

10. Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.

The AEU would prefer to break this section into various parts. Further, it is a vast area, and we have confined this initial response mainly to teachers in their early years.

University to School

Point 27

There is so much comment about how 'the universities should get into schools more' that it has almost become de rigueur in any discourse about teacher education. However, there is rarely any careful consideration just what this 'getting into' will entail in terms of the staff resources needed to do it, the selection of schools (recognising that the university staff to school ratio is quite small), and the overall objective of the exercise.

If the comment is to be made it will need to be attended by some comment as to who is to benefit, and what this benefit might look like. For instance, universities in their daily work generally come from a wider perspective than the average school has time for. Material that arrives in schools from employers often comes as advice and programs, and often misses out on the broader sociological and theoretical issues that originally motivated the programs. Universities are generally very good at explaining these matters.

The notion that someone from outside the school can offer valuable help in generating ideas at school level has a history that goes back to the foundation of public school systems. However, inspectors disappeared many years ago and their professional replacement, consultants, are very much thinner on the ground that they were in the 1970s and 1980s. A good deal of the work that consultants do also

relates to the promotion of Government programs and initiatives rather than to considerations of school and teaching improvement.

So we are in something of a bind. It is probable that university Education Faculties have a lot to offer schools, but the notion that University staffs can directly service lots of schools is likely to be wishful thinking.

Point 28

The Committee must examine the impact that staff cuts, climbing student ratios, and the increase in marking and advisory time have made on the capacity of teacher education faculties to expand the working day into schools. And it also must consider whether even in the best of times and resources a mass university impact on schools is feasible.

School to University

Conversely, schools deal with the daily effort of teaching, and may be able to continually remind universities to keep up with the new issues that are erupting in schools on a daily basis.

If we are considering large-scale contact with universities it is a much more realistic proposition that universities be able to devote a part of their program to practising teachers. There have been many programs of this kind over the years and they have generally been well received. They too are costly. Release time for teachers is expensive, and programs offered outside school time will be affected by the gradual expansion of time on task that teachers themselves have to face.

The Committee should search for successful programs from the past, and consider what is needed to develop and extend them. It will also need to consider the ways in which effective university programs can reach teachers in schools which are out of range of easy university access.

Rural and Remote Schools

A 2004 study of Australian research on the staffing of rural and remote schools [Philip Roberts: 2004] noted:

There are significant gaps in the research, and in existing government reports, that need to be addressed. There was a considerably amount of literature available on pre-service teacher training, beginning teacher issues and strategies, mentoring, and the access to education (curriculum) in rural areas. However, most of this is general and does not contain a construction about how to specifically address these issues in rural and remote areas. There were not a lot of references available on staffing issues, ways to attract and retain teachers, or effective rural pedagogy. A number of reports on rural education were primarily concerned with student access to the curriculum. Most of these reports, including those of the HREOC and Vinson Inquiries, contained a few pages stating that attracting and retaining teachers was an area of concern. While these reports often suggested some possible remedies they were invariably brief and not linked to any reasoned argument or evidence. This absence appears problematic, as none of the issue raised in any of the reports can be overcome without the provision of appropriate, good quality and stable staffing of rural and remote schools.

Roberts has identified an issue that is not mentioned in the terms of reference, but which is a very complex one for systems. The problem of staffing rural areas is associated with teacher education in that students who have no personal history of contact with rural Australia should be given opportunity to at least touch on such an experience during practicum. Some regional universities do have to deal with practicum placement in distant communities, and do it very well. But it is not an inclusive experience available to all students, largely because of cost (both to the university and to the student) and administrative difficulties.

Point 29

An understanding of the growing diversity of city and rural experience is one that needs attention, and the Committee would do well to take advice from rural universities and those city-based universities with rural practicum policies, on how this matter could be encouraged and extended.

All that having been said, it is important to note that the vast bulk of teacher development programs come from systems – particularly Departments of Education and Boards of Study. Increasingly this advice is in kit form and is driven by new demands being continually thrust upon schools by Government legislation. While this information, which generally includes requirements for action at school level, is generally well-intended and socially useful, it has the potential to drive out more deliberative and participative forms of professional development which are actually devoted to the work of teaching.

Point 30

Overall, this submission strongly supports the view put forward in recent Commonwealth Government reports such as Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future – Advancing Innovation, Science, Technology and Mathematics [chaired by Professor Kwong Lee Dow, 2003] and An Ethic of Care [DEST 2002], that teacher education be framed as a continuum, covering all phases of a teaching career.

Probation and the Early Years of Teaching

There has long been a professional policy adopted by Departments of Education which presumed that a teacher's learning was linked to a continuum of professional experience. In the days of two-year courses in Teachers Colleges, employment was linked to a three-year 'probation' where the graduate teacher was supposed to be assisted by experienced teachers. This, in theory, provided a five-year apprenticeship before the 'licence to practice' (usually some form of Teachers Certificate issued by the employer) was obtained.

The reality was quite different. In almost all situations the new teacher had to hit the ground running, often with very large classes, or perhaps in a one-teacher school, with largely symbolic 'supervision', and had to perform at a significant level of expertise from Day One. Schools kept this 'sink or swim' culture alive for many years, and it is only starting to change now, although there are many teachers who have been employed in 2005 who are working in this environment.

There was no developmental program. It was student one minute, teacher the next.

As the periods of pre-employment training became longer the probationary periods became shorter. As four-year teacher education programs became the norm the

probationary period has been reduced to one year (which was the norm for four-year 'trained' secondary teachers).

This probationary period should be seen as an intensive internship, with all the support that an internship should attract. All systems have sought to develop programs of this kind in recent years, but they are highly dependent upon leadership at the school level. Indeed, effective mentoring programs in schools are a significant indicator of effective school leadership, and possibly even of effective schools.

School systems have also begun to follow-up ex-students in their employ, an area that has previously been left to the Universities to consider. Certainly the results of this work, and work like it, will be of immense value to the Committee. Principals themselves are also involved. There is a vast research base becoming available in these follow-up activities. Obviously the only way to gather quick information is by survey – which might get a 40% to 50% return – an outcome which to some extent already skews the results and this has been used by universities for some years. However, it is another information base altogether when a whole cohort is followed up and quite complex and much richer information is obtained.

This practice, more developed in some states than in others, is difficult to pursue, but certainly provides high-level personnel information which is obtainable in no other way. It also has immense value for the individual concerned, especially those who may already in their first year feel quite isolated.

We believe that any investigation will put paid to the notion that Principals out there generally believe that new graduates are not up to scratch, and it should signal a warning note to all of us who might encourage ourselves to make untrue generalisations about the younger generation of teachers.

If such a follow-up is to become a regular part of the first-year experience of new teachers (and we are aware that some programs have been in place for some years) it is here that strong links between systems and Universities could become valuable. Principals, teachers and school staffs in general have little idea about what is provided in Teacher Education courses, largely because they have little occasion to find out. Universities and schools with new teachers could have links through which information about courses could be made available, so that some kind of continuity may be generated between the theoretical and the applied. This is one kind of contact that may be possible through new information and communication technologies. It is also possible that for some schools such contact is already available, but too little information has escaped into the education environment for anyone to have noticed.

Whatever the actual Australia-wide situation, the AEU is confident that for teachers in their early years of full-time teaching, school-based support is better than no school-based support, and whatever the Committee can endorse or recommend to ensure that old 'sink or swim' cultures can be eliminated would be greatly appreciated.

Point 31

The Committee would do well to consult the DEST report 'An Ethic of Care' [2002] which examines issues surrounding effective programs for beginning teachers. It is a useful document, and contains reference to a number of follow-up studies both in Australia and overseas.

We would assume that successful mentoring programs for beginning teachers might help to create programs for the assistance of all teachers in the school when problems arise. This is a feature of the term 'collegiality' where, when a teacher runs into problems, assistance is apportioned rather than blame.

11. Examine the adequacy of the funding of teacher training courses by university administrations.

The President of the Australian Council of Deans of Education, is quoted in Campus Review of the 2.3.05 (p.3) in the following paragraphs:

[Professor Lovat] said that the inquiry might turn out to be worthwhile. But only if it was an opportunity "to identify a decade and a half of underfunding that took no account of a national award that has made practicum such a costly exercise." ...

He hoped that the inquiry might also reveal that the average Education Faculty provided huge cross-subsidisation for high-cost faculties such as medicine, engineering and science "and so is part of what keeps the modern research university functioning.

Point 32

These are serious statements, and must be investigated.

However, there is another area which is related to funding but which is running up against other problems, and that is what is called 'practicum' in this submission, and probably more properly should be called 'professional experience'. This is canvassed further on in this submission.

Some Overarching Comments

Teachers and 'Change'

There is absolutely no value in exhorting teachers to embrace 'change' as some kind of metaphysical event. 'Change' is useful only when concretely applied to specific situations. It should also be remembered that over the last twenty years, 'change' in the educational world has become inextricably linked with attempts to unfavourably restructure employment conditions.

All school systems are awash with school and teacher level innovations. Most of them are valuable in their own way and in their own situation, but they are generally heavily reliant on individuals, and are generally unnoticed, unreported, and under-evaluated.

Point 33

The most significant systemic changes do not come about because of individual action. Observation of the teaching profession does not demonstrate the axiom that 'a single spark can light a prairie fire'.

The most significant changes are those that are

- a) ***Systemic***
- b) ***Robustly supported with good implementation processes***

- c) **Well-resourced**
- d) **Directly appealing to teachers**
- e) **A combination of a theoretical rationale + useful classroom procedures + effective outcomes**

Some further considerations

For a number of years in the 1990s the NSW Government (under both Coalition and ALP Governments) sponsored a standing Committee called the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Teacher Education and Quality Teaching. This body was responsible for a number of very good documents which would be of great value to the Committee if available.

In 1999, in a paper called "Identifying the Challenges: Initial and Continuing Teacher Education for the 21st Century", it produced a number of recommendations for the Government which included a series of synopsis statements that covered the major issues to be addressed. They called for funding to

- a) enable agreed outcomes of teacher education programs to be met in accordance with the requirements of registering bodies;
- b) enable teacher education faculties to respond effectively to the increasing intensification of teachers' work arising from increasing changes in technology, employment, society and in people's lives generally;
- c) maintain existing levels of support for initial teacher education to ensure no further increases occur in teacher/student load or reductions in contact hours;
- d) support the delivery of the practicum and other field experiences in schools so that practicum is effective in the development of teachers;
- e) recognise the contribution of post-graduate study to the lifelong development of teachers individually, as well as its contribution to supporting systemic priorities and change strategies; and
- f) enable and support educational research to sustain and enhance the range of systemic, school, teacher, teacher education and student needs.

Point 34

The AEU believes that this series of descriptions could provide a useful tool for the Committee as a set of reference points.

Registration Authorities

The Australian Education Union has argued for a National Teacher registration system since the early 1990s and its state affiliates have supported the establishment of State Teacher Registration bodies. Registration is of course intimately reliant on accreditation, and strong and effective relationships with teacher education institutions are the key to strong accreditation processes.

The Australian Education Union would be surprised if the answer was in the negative, and we would expect that the issue of teacher registration will attract serious consideration in the Committee's report.

While the matter of a national registration authority did not have a strong start in the early 1990s, particularly as a voluntary organisation, the AEU strongly supports the work done in creating and strengthening teacher registration bodies in the states. Although it is early days for most of them, we would expect the Committee to seek considerable contact with those agencies, and determine how co-operative effort could lead to a de facto national system without detracting from the very good work that is being done by state bodies.

Internships and the Practicum (Professional Experience)

Internships are lengthy school experiences (usually about ten weeks) that are a requirement in the latter part of the fourth year of a Teacher Education program. They require the student to attend school for the full period of the internship, to teach unassisted (they are specially accredited to take sole control of classes) from time to time, and to take on full staff duties.

The internship programs arrived on the scene in the early 1990s, and their success propelled teacher education in Australia into world best practice. However, they are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain, along with the practicum, and the Committee must satisfy itself that it has a full grasp of the reasons for this.

The future of all school-based professional experience programs is a matter of concern for teacher educators. Places for students on practicum are becoming increasingly difficult to get right across the country. Teachers are becoming more reluctant to take student teachers into their classrooms, and the problem falls most heavily on places for the most inexperienced, those in their early years of teacher education. University Education Faculties are also worried that quality places have also become more difficult to find.

Point 35

It would be easy to suggest that the reason is money, but we would suggest that the root of this problem lies in the continual intensification of teachers' work, and much of this problem lies at the feet of policy-makers from all areas. Many teachers feel that they are just too busy to take students on, and that student teachers interrupt the flow of the work that they have to get through in a year. In such an environment, the constant pressure for the payment of teachers to be ended is simply an invitation to drop out.

Also in this environment the recommendation from the Victorian Parliament 'Inquiry into the Suitability of Pre-Service Teacher training Courses', that Teacher Education students have access to many more practicum days than are currently possible, will be totally unrealistic on placement grounds alone. There needs to be some major effort here, or the felt need of teacher education students for significant practicum experience will be unable to be fulfilled.

Teacher education courses, which are now either four or five years right across the country, cannot be elongated any further. The answer to further satisfying the education needs of teachers lies in the school environment. The intensification of the work of schools and teachers means that time is being squeezed. Simplistic answers are no longer viable, and it is going to take the combined efforts of all the players, working collaboratively, and including the teacher unions, to provide the services that will be needed.

Conclusion

Teacher Education courses are aimed at providing a professional base for those who are to enter the profession of teaching. Faculties of Teacher Education across Australia are struggling against peculiar funding arrangements, lack of forward planning and continuity, a growing disconnection with schools that has nothing to do with their own efforts, and against a profession that is being swallowed by a multiplicity of policies.

In this context Faculties are trying to maintain quality programs that involve both theoretical and practical bases of teaching. Both are essential, and notions that would see a reductionist approach to teacher education are short-changing the profession as a whole, and its status in the community, which despite all the public noise and bombast remains high.

Point 36

'Reform' approaches to teacher education that appear to be generated by something said at a cocktail party or a barbecue cannot be allowed to creep into reports about work that is as complex and as challenging as teaching. Teachers have had enough of 'wouldn't it be a good idea if..' approaches to their work. They are tired of the 'notional', and the trivial and the ephemeral, and of endless reports that go nowhere.

New teachers have a number of sources of information and support to assist them in their early years. Their reliance on their university education does not seem to accompany them too far into their teaching years, as their daily lives are rapidly subsumed by systemic and school matters. Yet the university years give them attitudes, capacities, and understandings that form the very basis of their work, and when teachers turn their backs on this they do so at the risk of losing the idealism and sense of service that brought them into teaching in the first place.

Systemic and school problems cannot be fixed by universities. The Committee has to base its work on a clear understanding of what happens in schools as well as universities. The research work that is needed to explain the complex inter-relationships of the component parts of a teaching life is simply not there.

The Victorian Report

There are reports on teacher education being prepared in other parts of Australia. The Victorian Report is timely, considering the timing of the Commonwealth Parliament Report into the same issue. By the time its Report is ready it will also have access to the NSW Report on the same topic. It is also possible that the MCEETYA Report on the mapping of 100 teacher education courses in 40 institutions will also either be completed or be able to provide useful information to the Committee. All of this is of value.

The AEU would wish to make some comments about the Victorian Report.

1. It is a useful document in its identification of structural changes that could, in time, be adopted to address matters raised in our submission. It is clear that the workload in the 34 recommendations referring directly to the Victorian Institute of Teachers is such that the Institute is envisaged as having

considerable resources at its disposal to cover the documentation that the Universities are asked to provide, and conduct the research that is advised.

2. There is an inordinate amount of paper-driven activity proposed in the recommendations.
3. There is something of a failure to recognise that much of the collaborative business going on will need time, staff, and money. Consultation between agencies is difficult, and the more that is imposed the more difficult it becomes. It is also slow. It does not seem to be recognised that the major instigator and operator of the mechanisms will be the Department.
4. Its fundamental approach to complaints about teacher education is that, "Far too often, school principals and experienced teachers, employing authorities, parent representatives and new teachers, and even some school Principals, reported that new teachers were not *teacher ready*". This underpins the comment in the report that new teachers are more likely than not to be unready for teaching.
5. While the matter of 'teacher readiness' is addressed, the matter of the reasons for the scope of expectations of new teachers is not. It is acknowledged in the report that teachers work is more complex, but it is readily accepted that more recent teacher education programs should be as effective as they were 'in the past'. Is it possible that some of those who complained about 'teacher readiness' came from schools where inductive and mentoring processes were lacking?
6. There is no discussion about just what is 'theoretical' and what is 'practical'. The Committee should think about this carefully, because there seems to be a general view that there is a neat divide in universities between the two, and that 'theoretical' is the dominant. But what is regarded as 'practical'?
7. Is a seminar on reading methods 'theoretical'? or 'practical'? Is a lecture that covers an area of 'disadvantaged', all the time referring back to situations and practices in good schools, a 'theoretical' or a 'practical' experience? Or does it skip between the two, one minute theoretical and another minute practical? Or in fact is it possible that all teaching, regardless of what it is about, that does not involve an observable activity (ruling out mental activity) is actually theoretical.
8. This is not meant to be a few idle observations. The use of the terms in all reports is delivered as if they were referring to absolutes that are consistent across all sectors of the education systems. In fact, they are not, and unless the Committee peels back the layers of meaning to get some true reference points, then it will not be able to reach useful conclusions. The MCEETYA mapping exercise should bring some light into this matter.
9. What did the school that reported 'unready' new teachers do with them? How many of the new teachers were dismissed during, or on the completion of their first year? How many were signed off as competent? Was there any improvement during the year? Could any Principal report how long it took his or her new teacher/staff member to become proficient, and what was done to bring this about?

10. The Committee has raised valuable issues about 'alternative' forms of teacher education provision, although we would suggest that the combination of need to work, family duties and travelling time will make any program awkward for many students. The Committee should look closely at this area, but not be too carried away by English or United States models, which have been attracted to some extremely 'Mickey Mouse' models over the years. The Victorian claim about having observed 'world best practice' (in Australian terms that almost always means 'observed somewhere else') should be noted with caution.
11. The exhortatory nature of the finale is standard (indeed we have allowed ourselves a similar luxury in this submission) but it covers up some problems.
 - a) New teachers will need to be adept at new things, but the dissatisfaction with pre-service education from Principals et al is not about new things, but about old things. The public debate about teaching is not about new things, but about perceived failings in old things. The growth of private schools is not based on a public perception of new attributes, but of old attributes.
 - b) The Committee notes 'exemplary work' done by 'a number of pre-service education courses'. What number? A few, some, most, all? What did the exemplary work entail?
 - c) The Committee also notes that despite many reports 'tangible reforms have been slow'. Did the tangible reforms reported in point b) come from the reports, or from the universities' own identification of needs? This is an important question, unanswered. The Committee failed to note that the context of the tangible reforms is reduced budgets and staffing, greater pressure and more substantial demands from the surrounding universe.

The Victorian report raises three issues of great significance for the future of teacher education.

- a) The structure and nature of new courses needed for clients from new sources. The Committee should have a good look at what has been done already, and the problems facing of unfunded 'career change' students.
- b) The need for greater links between the sectors.
- c) The possibility of placement of parts of teacher education in schools. There is some of this happening already and it should be looked at. However, it should also be noted that the schools most likely to benefit (unless funds can be made available) belong to the cashed-up private sector, and the large proportion of students, those in public schools, could miss out.