

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

May 31, 2005

Dear Committee Secretary,

I am a Melbourne-born Australian citizen residing in London with my British husband. I am a trained journalist and graduate from RMIT University and I recently qualified to teach as a Secondary School English teacher in England via the **Graduate Teacher Program (GTP)**.

I am currently working as an English teacher and assistant head of year eight in the London Borough of Harrow.

To my dismay, I have discovered that the **Victorian Institute of Teaching** does not, at present, recognise the GTP and therefore, I will not be able to register to teach in any government school (or private school for that matter) in the state. I have been advised that the VIT will only recognise the Post Graduate Certificate of Education (PGCE), which is similar to a Diploma of Education. Considering the continued press about the teacher shortage in Australia (Victoria in particular), the failure to recognise GTP-trained teachers is a serious oversight. **I believe that all the other states and territories in Australia take a similar view of the GTP.**

As the House of Representatives inquiry will include an examination of **how teaching can become a more appealing career option and how the needs of mature-age entrants to the profession can better be met,** I believe it would be in your interests to look more closely at the GTP and recognising teacher qualified via this route.

The UK Government piloted the GTP in 1997 as a way of attracting mature entrants into teaching. In 1997 there were 89 places available on the programme, administered by Designated Recommending Bodies (Universities and Local Education Authorities) around the country. In 2002/2003 there were 3200 places. It is, in short, an extremely popular route into teaching and attracts career changers who are serious about becoming teachers.

At 27, I was one of the youngest in a group of 50 trainees who did the GTP through Brunel University. Many people wanting to move into teaching are unable to because of financial and family commitments and the GTP offers a more substantial salary than the bursary currently offered by the government (£6000 to do a PGCE). For instance, a teacher doing the GTP at an Inner-London school currently earns £17529 for the year; teachers in all areas of England excluding London earn £14853. People

who undertake the GTP are generally dynamic, intelligent individuals who want a career change and have given much thought to entering the teaching profession.

The GTP allows students to train at schools (both government maintained and private), in conjunction with universities and approved further education colleges for one year (or more, if necessary) to achieve Qualified Teacher Status (QTS), which is the mandatory requirement to teach in England.

Trainees on the GTP are required to fulfil exactly the same standards (as outlined by the Teacher Training Agency and the General Teaching Council of England) that PGCE students have to. In fact, in terms of practical teaching experience, trainee teachers on the GTP have far more than on the PGCE, which is a factor in the popularity of this route into the profession.

I completed my GTP via Brunel University in London and was employed at a boys' technology college in North West London. As a trainee on this programme, I had a school-based mentor and a tutor from Brunel University who met with my school mentor and me each term and formally observed my teaching. The university tutor made herself available at all times and my school mentor also formally observed me fortnightly. Another requirement of the training programme was to attend lectures at the university throughout the year.

Rather than produce academic essays, GTP trainees are required to gather evidence from their teaching practice and training to fulfil all the teaching standards. The award of Qualified Teacher Status is measured against these standards. (**I understand that more classroom practice for teacher trainees will feature in this inquiry.**) I also passed three skills tests in ICT, literacy and numeracy, which are mandatory for ANY teacher in England and Wales to undertake and pass in order to be awarded Qualified Teacher Status.

The only difference between the PGCE and GTP is that a university award is given at the end of the PGCE. I have personally worked with newly qualified teachers with a PGCE qualification who cannot withstand the rigours and demands of teaching. GTP trainees are, in a sense, thrust into the 'sharp end' of teaching and are far better equipped to teach. I have also worked with numerous young Australians who have graduated from teacher training and come straight to the UK to teach; many of them struggle greatly due to their lack of classroom experience.

There is a common opinion that if you can teach in and survive in an inner London school – you can teach anywhere. Personally, on-the-job training and support was far more beneficial for me than university lectures on, for instance, the different theories of education; university contact time on the GTP is far more practical and is used as a platform for sharing experiences and challenges. The slogan of athletic brand Nike comes to mind when I think of my teacher training experience: *'Just Do It.'*

I also read with interest the recent article in *The Age* newspaper "New teachers not coping with class (May 29, 2005), which reported:

***"More than 85 per cent of novice teachers feel that university degrees leave them unprepared for the classroom, and many are forced to teach subjects in which they have no expertise..."***

*...Less than 15 per cent felt that their training helped them cope with issues such as bullying, disruptive students or problem parents...*

*...The teachers expressed their concerns in a survey conducted by the Australian Secondary Principals' Association...*

*...He (Ted Brierly, President of Australian Secondary Teachers' Association) said on-the-job training proved much more effective than university training alone. Prospective teachers would gain valuable, real-world experience if an internship system were developed, he said..."*

I want to work in the state-school system when I return home to Victoria (or possibly another state) and it is devastating to me that I may not be able to continue my career as a teacher. I could not afford – both financially and personally – to go back to university and do a Dip Ed and why should I? If I'm good enough to have gained a place on the highly-competitive GTP, work in one of the toughest schools in London and am deemed competent enough to be a member of the General Teaching Council of England, why am I not good enough to teach in Australia?

I hope that you may investigate the validity and success of the Graduate Teacher Program and, at the very least, consider allowing teachers' who have trained via this route to teach in Australia. **In New Zealand, UK teachers who have trained via the GTP are now assessed on a case-by-case basis for registration to teach in that country.**

Yours truly,

**EMILY WEBB**

#### **Index of documents relating to the Graduate Teacher Programme**

- 1) Qualified Teacher Status certificate (QTS).
- 2) Letter from Brunel University re. Award of QTS.
- 3) Letter from General Teaching Council (England) re. QTS.
- 4) Letter from Brunel University re. course sessions and reading list.
- 5) GTP acceptance letter from Brunel University
- 6) Facsimile from Brunel University course tutor
- 7) Newly Qualified Teacher induction programme letter from Harrow Council (a London borough.)

- 8) Emails from GTP-trained teachers who have been/will be prevented from teaching in Australia. (Senders' have given permission for these to be used.)
- 9) Certificate from a teacher development course attended to illustrate the continued professional development that I have undertaken.
- 10) Teacher Training Agency skills test certificates. (Passing these tests is compulsory to gain QTS.)

In 2004, over 3,000 trainees will progress to QTS through the programme - amounting to over 10 per cent of the newly qualified teacher (NQT) output in England. This represents a doubling in the numbers involved in GTP over two years.