Chapter 6

The teaching profession

> The underlying problem is that the social status of teaching has dropped dramatically. Every occupation that has been invented since 1970 is a graduate occupation and has gone into the occupational hierarchy above teaching. When I was a boy most accountants did not have degrees. Now the biggest faculty in every university is a commerce faculty, and they are all people who are expecting to earn more and have higher social status than teaching. The burgeoning of the university industry in Australia is actually about the creation of degreed occupations of a higher status than teaching.[1]

6.1 When this committee inquired into the status of the teaching profession in 1996-97, it observed that teaching was a highly complex and demanding activity, buffeted by shrinking budgets, alarmist media reports, unsupportive ministers, a crowded curriculum, and the disappearance of support services. It went on to describe how, despite what it saw as evidence of strong commitment and innovative teaching practices, there was a morale crisis related to the belief that the status of the profession was disturbingly low. Few teachers recommended that their brighter students enter teaching, and the academic entry level to university teacher training courses was notoriously low.[2]

6.2 What has changed over the past ten years? On the whole, not a great deal, except that the political and economic context has changed. The committee perceives that there is now an appreciation of the need for a more enlightened and collaborative approach to schools' policy. There is more funding available than 10 years ago. The debilitating years of bureaucratic restructuring and frustrating curriculum experiments are now a receding memory in most jurisdictions. Even perceptions of professional status are beginning to change, due in part to innovations like state teacher registration boards. But fundamental problems identified in the 1998 report remain, especially in regard to entry into the profession and teacher retention rates. This inquiry has uncovered concerns not directly referred to in the earlier report: the academic content of teaching degrees, particularly discipline-based knowledge; and the quality of teaching. The committee hopes that there may be more willingness in this first decade of the 21st century to take a more honest look at cherished mindsets and institutional deficiencies with a resolve to fix as much as we can.

6.3 In the meantime, across the country, a high proportion of teachers remain under considerable strain. This inquiry does not have as its central focus the pressures

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1 Professor Bill Louden, *Submission 73*, p. 4.

2 Senate EET References Committee, *A Class Act: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, March 1998, p. 1.

on teachers, but in noting evidence touching on teaching quality, and the demands of the curriculum, some consideration of issues affecting the profession can scarcely be avoided.

The school milieu

6.4 First, it is important to consider the task and operational field of the profession. One does not enter teaching without a sense of the importance of imparting knowledge or skills, or of bringing about some improvement or development in the minds and outlooks of students. As Dr Geoff Masters and his colleagues at the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) have reminded the committee, no concept is more central to the work of teachers than the concept of growth, and that teachers have a fundamental belief that all learners are capable of progressing beyond their current level of achievement.[3] As another ACER researcher told the committee in relation to why people enter the profession:

> The research shows that key drivers are the pleasure and stimulation that they get from working with children and colleagues and seeing kids develop and learn.[4]

6.5 That is what good teaching is about, but as the committee heard, teachers find many impediments laid in their path. They are confronted by resistance to learning. They are often confounded by students with such a lack of any sense of appropriate behaviour, social skills and worldly experience, across entire classes that it is hard for inexperienced teachers to establish a learning connection or point from which to progress. This is why teachers tend to gravitate to middle-class schools in middle-class suburbs.

6.6 The committee also believes that a proportion of teachers, who have spent 20 years or more in the classroom, are in danger of losing their drive and their enthusiasm in learning new skills and knowledge. This may partly arise from a lack of challenging professional development. It is not a phenomenon confined to teaching, but its effects have more consequences there than in most other jobs because of the need to be seen to perform. In combination with low morale, which also affects teachers' performance, this would account for what is probably an unacceptably high level of under-performance. The committee has no evidence on the incidence of this problem. It is an area of school and system administration which appears to be under-researched. The committee is not concerned here with demonstrably incapable performance, which is usually so obvious that it has to be 'managed'. It is concerned with lacklustre teaching which relies on habit, old method and old knowledge, and which can be safely ignored or tolerated by school management as well as by bored and underachieving students.

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3 Geoff Masters, Marion Meiers and Ken Rowe, *Assessment and Reporting of Learning Progress: The importance of monitoring growth*, ACER, April 2005, p. 1.

4 Dr Phillip McKenzie, Australian Council for Educational Research, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 41. Also, Mr Robert Aikenhead, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 67.

One correspondent to the Ramsey inquiry into teacher quality in New South Wales (see below) wrote:

> …a teacher might well get fired for predatory sexual behaviour with a young student, but others who mess up the lives and achievements prospects of their students through low professional competence remain entrenched in the system.[5]

6.7 Such teachers may be rehabilitated, but identification, diagnosis and treatment is a challenge which appears not to be a priority. This challenge may be taken up by the newly established teacher registration bodies, but the committee fears that employing authorities will have the capacity to frustrate quality teaching measures which are administratively inconvenient.

6.8 In his review of teacher education in New South Wales, Dr Gregor Ramsey described the incidence of stagnation in schools which occurred when teachers' long periods of 'professional passivity' weakened their morale and self-image. This culture rewarded patience, not learning, and was an anomaly in a society which normally rewards performance and creativity. Dr Ramsey also noted that there are degrees of proficiency amongst teachers, and until some standards have been agreed, and measures put in place to enforce them, the standing of teaching in the community will not improve.

6.9 Notwithstanding this teaching milieu, in schools geared toward student growth and achievement, it is easy to understand why Australian students do well in relation to the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) and Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS). In other schools, the reasons for a long tail of under achievement are also easy to identify. Education writer and former academic Alan Barcan has some depressing comments to make on a sub-culture of under-achievement:

> With values trending from stable and predictable to situational, it is no longer possible to assume that students will value qualities like application, ambition and achievement…The well-documented emergence amongst adolescents of a deep caution, even cynicism, about institutions, authority, government and education are, almost certainly, incrementally taking their toll on student performance. Though certainly not universal in their impacts, the valuing of work and the setting of personal goals is giving way to short-term self-focused living for many adolescents and, with it, the motivation for learning and the commitment to pursuing academic targets have both come under considerable pressure…The inability of many families to provide basic knowledge and values, the primitive culture of many peer groups, the deteriorating culture pervading the media, mean that

5 Gregor Ramsay, *Quality Matters: Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices*, DET, New South Wales, November 2002, p. 127.

> many students are no longer capable of absorbing even a simplified version of the traditional culture.[6]

6.10 In Chapter 1 the committee recognised the issue of inequity as one which dogged efforts to improve education standards across all schools. There is not much that schools can do to influence the lives of students away from school. It is the burden that students bring to school which so often disadvantages their performance. Education authorities and schools go to considerable lengths to perform an overall duty of care for students, but the committee believes that teachers are already up against the limits of their capacity to substitute for parents in areas of life skills, personal values, and behaviour. Some submissions were critical of the failure to understand what schools are confronted with today. As the Australian Education Union pointed out:

> The students who come to school today live in a very different world from that which adults inhabited when they were at school. Their experiences, their environment, their expectations and the expectations placed upon them have changed radically from the past. They are in many ways more sophisticated, but at the same time much of what happens in their lives outside school makes it that much more difficult for them to succeed.[7]

6.11 The committee did not receive explicit submissions on the learning culture of schools, but there was considerable weight put on the problems of inequity, and the failure of schools to deal with under-achieving students, especially those in the compulsory years of schooling who were marking time because, for one reason or another, they had reached the end of their growth in formal schooling. The implication for teachers is whether, if they were more skilled or experienced, and perhaps better resourced, they might have made a difference. The committee suggests that the experience of too much failure is a disillusioning experience for a high proportion of relatively inexperienced teachers, and this leads to high attrition rates.

Attraction and retention

6.12 Across the country the committee heard a common refrain of schools and systems needing more teachers and retaining them longer. Insufficient numbers are being attracted.[8] The effects of these shortages will become more serious problem for schools as the more senior and experienced teachers resign or retire. The shortage extends across the curriculum. While the shortage particularly affects rural, remote or 'difficult' schools, it is not confined to any one sector or state. There is a severe shortage of some specialist teachers, especially in mathematics and the sciences. As related earlier, the proportion of secondary school mathematics teachers with majors in mathematics in their degrees is declining steadily. Such is the shortage that teachers

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6 Alan Barcan, 'The disputed curriculum', *Quadrant*, June 2005, p. 45.

7 Australian Education Union, *Submission 14*, p. 24.

8 Mr Ian Ferguson, Queensland Secondary Principals' Association, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 5 June 2007, p. 32.

are often asked to teach subjects in which they have no expertise. The Independent Education Union of Australia described it as unacceptable that most teachers can report that during their career they have been required to teach some part of the curriculum for which they are not well-qualified, and then have to bear criticisms of the quality of their teaching.[9]

6.13 Teaching quality is compromised when a teacher does not have the knowledge or understanding of a particular subject. Some teachers may acquire it over time, usually through formal study, and, or intrinsic interest. This is unlikely to be commonplace. A teacher without the necessary literacies would not be able to teach the subject with confidence or accuracy. It is also possible that the subject is taught without depth, or alternately, greater emphasis is given to those parts of the curriculum in which the teacher does have expertise.[10] In relation to this, the committee notes evidence given to the House of Representatives committee looking at teacher education in 2005 by Dr Lawrence Ingvarson from ACER who said:

> The research indicates that you cannot use what are known to be effective teaching techniques unless you do understand the content deeply. If you do not understand, you are forced back on to the worst didactic textbook, going-by-the-rule book sort of teaching. A deep understanding frees you up to use good pedagogy, to discuss ideas, to relax, to open up the discussion, to throw away the textbook and to throw away the work sheets because you are interested, you understand the ideas and you know how to promote those ideas and that discussion.[11]

6.14 This is what the committee understands to be good teaching. It begins with enthusiasm for the imparting of knowledge and ideas, and drawing an equal measure of enthusiastic response from students. However, there might be some evidence of a lack of enthusiasm from the outset.

6.15 The committee heard that many new entrants into the profession see teaching as only a temporary job. It is a port of call on the way to what many hope will be a more desirable career destination. Young graduates, in particular those with strong academic degrees, find it hard to imagine spending thirty years in the classroom doing much the same thing as when they started. The committee believes that this will always be a characteristic of the teaching profession. Many enter the profession but only those with a strong sense of vocation stay on.

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9 Independent Education Union of Australia, *Submission 55*, p. 24.

10 Ms Louise Zarmati, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 17 May 2007, p. 69; Mrs Olwyn Gray, Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 62; Ms Joy Schultz, *Submission 59*, p. 3.

11 Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, Evidence to the H of R Committee on Education and Training, *H of R Committee Hansard*, 7 June 2005, p. 13.

6.16 But the committee also believes that much more should be done by schools and systems to reduce this waste of talent. There is an important role for principals in mentoring and encouraging obviously talented teachers. In theory, independent schools should have an advantage in keeping teachers on because long-term staffing policy is within their capacity to manage more effectively than in systemic schools. Granting more staffing autonomy to public schools is an important reform.

Quality of entrants to the profession

6.17 The committee was told that the problem of attraction and retention is in addition to the lower intellectual quality of people entering the teaching profession.

> In 1983, the average person entering teacher education was at the 74th percentile of the aptitude distribution...By 2003, the average percentile rank of those entering teacher education had fallen to 61. …Focusing on women (who make up about three-quarters of new teachers), the probability of a woman in the top 20 per cent of the academic aptitude distribution entering teaching approximately halved from 1983 to 2003. Meanwhile, the probability of a woman in the bottom 50 per cent...doubled.[12]

6.18 This information is consistent with evidence from Professor Bill Louden. He pointed to entry scores for trainee teachers and concluded that many got into university with very low TER scores. Universities admitting such students ran very large teacher training programs.

> When you start thinking of the size of these institutions and multiply that by the standard, who are the big providers and what are their standards like, you would have to say that there is a problem…People often talk about the problems in physics and mathematics and I do too, but underlying that the larger problem is that the genetic subsidy of women to teaching has been withdrawn. Women used to think they could not be lawyers. They are often not happy being lawyers either, but they used to think they could not be lawyers, that they could do nursing or teaching. The old bursary schemes that paid for working class people's higher education have been withdrawn, so there is no longer a kind of a working class intellectual subsidy into teaching. The women that teaching attracts are nothing like, on average, the same intellectual standard as those before.[13]

6.19 The percentile decline is not evident at every university and is undoubtedly due to some universities having lowered their Tertiary Entrance Ranking (TER) for education courses. Clearly, the universities have their reasons for making such adjustments. One such reason would be the issue of supply and demand. While universities continue to offer education courses, the demand for places within those courses has changed. There are now a huge range of options available to tertiary

12 Professor Igor Bray, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 2 July 2007, p. 22.

13 Professor Bill Louden, *Submission 73*, p. 4.

students, and those students with the highest TERs are not usually interested in a teaching career.[14]

6.20 The percentile decline does not take into consideration those students who enter university other than via the TER system, such as mature age students. Nor is it wise to suggest that the TER is the sole indicator of academic quality. The committee does, however, believe that there is a correlation between a teacher's academic achievement and that of his or her student. The apparent decline in the calibre of trainee teachers, as evidenced by the TER requirements, is therefore a matter of concern.[15]

Overcoming teacher shortages

6.21 The committee acknowledges that there will be no quick and easy answer to solving the current teacher shortages.[16] This section of the report considers aspects of teaching conditions which could be improved to make the profession more attractive. As a preliminary comment, however, the committee states its belief that regardless of what improvements to teaching conditions are made, it is unlikely that there will be significant increases in the number of high-achieving school leavers wanting to take up teaching. The attractions of other professions will always be more apparent than the vocational satisfaction that teaching offers more altruistic spirits. To compound this problem, there will be an increasing proportion of teachers who will see their teaching careers as relatively brief, a pathway to some other occupation. For at least two generations teaching has been a working class or rural springboard to better paid jobs. That pathway to social mobility is now obsolete because too many other occupations fit that purpose.

Teaching: a profession or not?

6.22 As noted at the head of this chapter, Professor Louden told the committee that the underlying problem is that the social status of teaching has dropped dramatically over the past 30 years, and that every occupation since invented is a graduate occupation which has gone into the occupational hierarchy above teaching. The result has been ambivalence over the professional status of teaching. That is, whether teaching is a profession or not.

6.23 The questioning of school performance, and the failure to attract people of the same calibre into teaching, has influenced current interest in teacher certification and

14 Mr Gary Barnes, Queensland Department of Education, Training and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 5 June 2007, p. 44; Professor Bill Louden, *Submission 73*, p. 4.

15 Professor Igor Bray, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 2 July 2007, p. 21.

16 Professor Igor Bray, *Submission 6*, p. 1; Mr Vincent Feeney, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 70; Dr Glenn Finger et al, *Submission 46*, p. 3; Independent Education Union of Australia, *Submission 55*, p. 22.

performance pay. The view is that teachers are responsible to an extent in organising the salvation of the profession, even though in the case of teacher registration agencies, state governments have led the way. The professional status of teachers is influenced to a large extent by the fact that they are all employees. They operate under the school and (for most of them) systemic authority. Their autonomy at the chalkface is regulated by a curriculum, a syllabus, and by whatever collegial or departmental agreements guide them in their teaching. A school is a social learning organisation in which teachers have a crucial role, and they also operate under a myriad of social and community constraints. They are public servants in the widest meaning of this term. They are professionals, in a more narrow sense however, in that they must be certified as being qualified, have special expertise, responsibilities and a duty of care, with duties extending beyond any formal hours of work, and an obligation for continuing self-education.

6.24 The issue of morale is crucial in teaching because job satisfaction depends almost entirely on the sense of fulfilling a vocation. It relies on seeing evidence of intellectual and character growth in one's students. The committee thinks it likely that most teachers give little thought as to whether they are regarded as professionals or not, when morale and job satisfaction levels are high. It is the stresses and strains on teachers, and criticisms of their efforts, that have concentrated minds on this matter. The Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia submitted that:

> If we want people to believe they are professionals, first of all we must tell them they are, we must treat them as if they are and we must provide them with conditions that enable them to be professional.[17]

6.25 But the committee believes that the professional status of teachers is much more complicated. A brief description of a profession is one which arises when any trade or occupation transforms itself through:

> The development of formal qualifications based upon education and examinations, the emergence of regulatory bodies with power to admit and discipline members, and some degree of monopoly rights.[18]

6.26 There are many important characteristics of a profession which are not present within the 'teaching profession', including, fundamentally, an autonomous and powerful regulatory or professional body whose function it is to define, promote, oversee, support, and regulate the affairs of its members. The committee notes that the teaching profession is seeking to acquire some characteristics of the more established professions, but the committee believes that, for reasons that go beyond the capacity

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17 Mr Vincent Feeney, Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools in Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 72. Also, Professor Alan Reid, Australian Curriculum Studies Association, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 July 2007, p. 13.

18 Alan Bullock & Stephen Trombley, *The New Fontana Dictionary of Modern Thought*, London, Harper-Collins, 1999, p. 689.

of any government or society to order, teaching will continue to be buffeted as much as any other occupation.

Teacher registration bodies

6.27 The committee believes that registration and accreditation bodies will have interesting challenges to face in their progress toward becoming the gate-keepers to the profession. This has the potential to bring them into conflict with employers. Currently, it appears that state registration bodies are more often creatures of education departments. The committee noted that one of the witnesses representing the Queensland College of Educators was concurrently an official of the education department in that state. On the face of it, this represents a conflict of interest.

6.28 Potentially, an independent college of educators could accredit teachers only in subjects which they are qualified to teach on the basis of their university qualifications or specialisations. This would be entirely consistent with the role of any other professional accrediting agency concerned with maintaining quality standards. However, it would be an attitude or action which school systems and employing authorities would strenuously resist because it would restrict the authority of a school or a principal to direct a teacher to take a particular class. It is commonplace for teachers to be directed to take classes in subjects for which they are not properly qualified, if only because of schools' legal duty of care. The committee is of the opinion that it is unlikely that state-based or national professional regulatory bodies for teaching could ever be relied on to back quality standards of professional teaching in the circumstance described above.

Remuneration

6.29 For many witnesses, the most essential element of professional treatment was that of remuneration. Professor Igor Bray argued that immediately increasing base pay would send a message to the community that teaching is valued. The Independent Education Union of Australia maintained that if the base pay is not right, then the profession does not have the standing and capacity to recruit.[19]

6.30 The fact that the base pay is not right was highlighted by many other witnesses. Professor Michael O'Neill from the University of Notre Dame provided an interesting comparison to the committee,

> We need to bring the three Rs back to teaching. But they are not the three Rs you would think I am talking about; they are 'remuneration, remuneration, remuneration'. We have a very sad tale to tell in Australia. It takes teachers in Western Australia nine years to hit a ceiling…First-year teachers [in the Republic of Ireland] start on a salary of $55,000, while most of our teachers start on $45,000. Over 25 years, [teachers in the

19 Professor Igor Bray, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 2 July 2007, p. 32; Mr Chris Watt, Independent Education Union of Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 26 June 2007, p. 14.

> Republic of Ireland] rise to a salary of $100,000. That gives them status and a position in society. But, first and foremost, it gives them something to hold onto; it retains them in the profession. They can see that their career is not finished after nine years…At my colleague's university, students enter with a TER that is equivalent to the TER for law students and medical students. They fight for places in education faculties.[20]

6.31 According to ACER:

> The typical salary scale for teachers in Australia does not place high value on evidence of teacher quality. Consequently, it is a weak instrument for improving student achievement. It does not provide incentives for professional development nor reward evidence of attaining high standards of performance. Thirteen of 30 OECD countries report that they adjust the base salary of teachers on the basis of outstanding performance in teaching, or successful completion of professional development activities...Australia is not one of them.
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> While progression to the top of the salary ladder is rapid in Australia – it takes only 9-10 years for most Australian teachers to reach the top of the scale compared with 24 years on average in OECD countries – there are no further career stages based on evidence of attaining higher levels of teaching standards. The implicit message in most Australian salary scales is that teachers are not expected to improve their performance after nine years.[21]

6.32 A table of current salaries adjacent shows the incremental stages for government schools across the country.

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20 Professor Michael O'Neill, University of Notre Dame Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 2 July 2007, pp 35-36.

21 Australian Council for Educational Research, *Submission 38*, p. 6. Also, Dr Glenn Finger et al, *Submission 46*, pp 4-5; Mr Marko Vojkovic, *Submission 2*, p. 1.

Current government school salaries in incremental stages, 2005 and 2006.

NORTHERN TERRITORY		VICTORIA			QUEENSLAND		SOUTH AUSTRALIA	
30/1/06			1/1/06	1/10/06	1/5/2006		From 1/4/06	
					4.0 per cent			
T1	37,652	Graduate Classroom Teacher			Band 1		Special Authority	
T2	41,647	G-1	**44,783**		1	39,943		40,173
T3	44,539	G-2	46,060		2	41,078		
T4	**47,656**	G-3	47,372		3	42,455	BAND 1 TEACHER	
T5	50,992	G-4	48,722		4	43,916	1	**46,077**
T6	54,561	Accomplished Classroom Teacher			Band 2		2	48,454
T7	58,382	A-1	51,539		1	45,145	3	50,831
T8	62,468	A-2	53,008		2	47,647	4	53,206
T9	**66,839**	A-3	54,519		3	50,141	5	55,587
		A-4	56,072		4	52,643	6	57,964
Teachers of Exemplary Practice (TEP)		A-5	57,671		5	55,153	7	60,340
		Expert Classroom Teacher			Band 3		8	**62,709**
Allowances:		E-1	59,458		1	57,243		
		E-2	61,302		2	59,345	AST 1/KEY TEACHER	
TEP 1 = 7.5 per cent of salary to max of 96 per cent of ET2		E-3	**63,202**	3/4/5YT max	3	61,432		65,477
		E-3a	64,531		4	63,645	AST 2	
TEP 2 = 12.5 per cent of salary to max of ET2		Leading Teacher			Senior Teacher (4 Year Trained)			68,542
		LT1-1	66,371			66,562		
TEP 3 = 20 per cent of salary to max of ET4		LT1-2	68,262					
		LT1-3	70,208					
		LT2-1	72,209					
		LT2-2	74,266					
		LT2-3	76,383					

TASMANIA		AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY			WESTERN AUSTRALIA		NEW SOUTH WALES	
From: 9/3/06		From: 1/7/05			From:	August 2006	From:	1/1/06
1	40,860	1.1	43,073	3YT min	Level 1			
2	42,144	1.2	**46,565**	4YT min	1	34,704	Step 1	36,936
3	43,431	1.3	48,894	5YT min	2	36,507	Step 2 (2YT)	40,259
4	**44,711**	1.4	51,222		3	38,614	Step 3 (3YT)	42,943
5	47,009	1.5	53,551		4	40,278	Step 4	45,167
6	49,431	1.6	56,460		5	**42,885**	Step 5 (4YT)	**47,621**
7	51,976	1.7	59,370		6	45,410	Step 6 (5YT)	50,072
8	54,658	1.8	62,282		7	49,546	Step 7	52,527
9	57,472	1.9	**66,353**	3/4/5YT max	8	54,479	Step 8	54,983
10	60,394				Level 2		Step 9	57,435
11	63,200	*Note: Expired Agreement (March 2006)*			1	56,573	Step 10	59,888
12	**65,389**				2	58,900	Step 11	62,341
					3	**62,863**	Step 12	64,798
					Senior Teacher 1	64,495	Step 13	**69,334**
					Senior Teacher 2	65,785		
					Level 3 Classroom Teacher	71,149		

Source: Lawrence Ingvarson, Elizabeth Kleinhenz, Jenny Wilkinson, *Research on Performance Pay for Teachers*, ACER, March 2007, p. 37.

6.33 The committee found general agreement between educators on how poorly teachers are paid. Their relatively low pay affects the quality of entrants to the profession, and this damages prospects for an improvement in education standards at all levels. There are flow-on effects to business profitability and efficiencies in public services. The committee is in favour of a significant across the board pay increase. This should be implemented regardless of whatever additional performance pay arrangement is finally determined.

6.34 The committee is aware, however, that this would be a bold step for governments to take. It would have the effect of elevating teachers' salaries well over the rate paid to, for instance, health care workers generally. While it would signal a long-term commitment to getting the basics of future national growth right, it would also arouse some antagonism from those who would see more benefit in alternative uses of the funding. While public schools teachers' salaries are the province of state and territory governments, the non-government school sector has traditionally been supported by the Commonwealth, and additional funding avenues for teachers in this sector would need to be explored.

6.35 Opponents of significantly higher pay would also argue—as would many educationists—that higher salaries may not have the desired affect of attracting a brighter cohort of trainees into the profession, because of the peculiar nature and challenges of the job, and the fact that it makes special vocational demands without the guarantee of corresponding vocational satisfaction.

6.36 The committee believes that there are strong grounds for increasing the base rate of pay for teachers across the current salary range. This should incorporate some new scale which would spread the increments over a longer span of a teacher's career. Arguably, the increments are now too closely grouped in the first eight or ten years of service.

Performance pay

6.37 The issue of teaching quality, which occupied up to half of the committee's time, quite naturally led to questions about performance pay. The issue has recently aroused public discussion. Some witnesses were less than enthusiastic with the idea of performance pay, as were submissions from teacher unions and other associations. The committee recognises that the failure to elicit informed comment was probably due to the fact that many educationists have not yet focussed on the issue. The committee notes the ACER claim that a lack of understanding about the complexity of developing valid and professionally credible methods for gathering data about teaching and assessing teacher performance is the reason why performance pay schemes have failed over the past 30 years.[22]

22 Australian Council for Educational Research, *Submission 38*, p. 6.

6.38 It is fair to report that performance pay is not opposed by many people on grounds of principle so much as on grounds of practicality. There is justifiable reservation about how a scheme could fairly reward those whose efforts and achievements are not easily measurable. This is particularly the case with teachers of students with disabilities and learning difficulties, and where teams of teachers contribute to quality learning outcome in ways which are difficult to disaggregate.

6.39 The purpose of performance pay is to encourage and reward excellence and effort, provide incentive, and improve the quality of student achievement overall. The committee recognises that there is a desire among all those associated with school education to revitalise the teaching profession, and this is the source of interest in performance pay. The committee is of the view that teachers' salaries ought to be increased across the board and has recommended that this be done. However, the view is also widespread, and shared by the committee, that teachers of outstanding merit should be rewarded with salary supplements, indicating to the community that the vocation of teaching is valued.

6.40 Although the Government has a stated policy in support of performance pay, it is at an early stage of development. This is evident from a reading of the ACER research paper published in March 2007 which indicates the scope of ideas for performance pay, and the need to engage in extensive investigation of models which would be most appropriate for schools.[23] In June 2007, the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Hon Julie Bishop MP announced a tender for an expert to develop models which could be tested. The committee anticipates that this will be a formidable task and makes the following references to important points arising from the ACER research paper.

6.41 Dr Ingvarson and his team noted that any valid and reliable scheme for assessing individual teacher performance requires multiple and independent sources of evidence, and independent assessment of that evidence. No single measure, such as exam results or a principal's assessment, would alone provide a reliable basis for making a decision about performance pay eligibility.

6.42 There are currently three approved schemes for performance pay operating in a number of states and territories, all of them having origins in the Advanced Skills Teacher concept. This has been promoted by unions since the early 1990s, but the concept is seen by disinterested observers to contain many flaws. These flaws are evident in the various performance pay schemes.

6.43 There are three categories of performance pay schemes. The first is a merit pay scheme, once used in many school districts in the United States. This scheme is not standards or criterion based; evidence in support of the award is often unreliable and of doubtful validity; and there is usually a fixed pool of funds. In the second

23 Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, Elizabeth Kleinhenz and Jenny Wilkinson, *Research on Performance Pay for Teachers,* ACER, March 2007.

category are knowledge and skills-based schemes. These are also common in the United States where bonuses are paid for the acquisition of post-graduate qualifications. This has the merit of valuing teacher growth and development, even though there is no evidence that having post-graduate qualifications improves classroom performance. Finally, there is the certification approach, which is an endorsement by a professional body that a member has attained a specified level of knowledge and skill. An application would be voluntary and made to one of the embryonic state certification agencies like the NSW Institute of Teachers.[24]

6.44 At this stage of the debate, such considerations were academic to most witnesses. The Australian Education Union told the committee:

> We support a process that recognises that a teacher has met professional standards that have been set and agreed by the profession and that are externally assessed…It is a method that does not produce any negative results within a school in terms of competition to the point of divisiveness or being seen as an arbitrary decision by a school principal or anyone else…Having said that, we are very concerned that the notion of performance pay—or additional bonus, if you like—would become a substitute for real increases across the board in teacher salaries.[25]

6.45 The committee would not want performance pay to be a substitute for real increases in salaries. The Australian Education Union's conditional support for performance pay drew attention to concerns which were foremost in the minds of other witnesses. Dr Glenn Finger and his associates from Griffith University highlighted issues of equity:

> The opportunities for and challenges of being an effective teacher are not uniformly distributed across schools and schooling situations. To discriminate against teachers [who] work in schools and communities that fail to afford support for their activities will only exacerbate the social divide within Australia, erode the commitment and enthusiasm of teachers working in challenging schooling situations and further demark many public schools.[26]

6.46 Contextual factors, the complex nature of teaching and learning, and the collaborative nature of people working together to produce learning outcomes were concerns also echoed in the remarks of the Queensland Secondary Principals' Association, which strongly opposed the entire concept of performance pay, especially one based on student results. While this is almost certainly a misconception, the committee noted that this is a common view:

> In terms of taking…students from where they were to where they were heading and achieving, the distance travelled was enormous but the results

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24 Ibid, pp 13-17.

25 Ms Pat Byrne, Australian Education Union, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 4.

26 Dr Glenn Finger et al, *Submission 46*, p. 5.

> were still poor. That to me is the basis of what is wrong with performance pay. If you look for a simple measure of student results, it just does not take into account context…The damage this would do to the totality, to the wholeness, of a teaching staff would be enormous. If of a staff of 65 you said, 'Those seven teachers are really doing well, by whatever measure,' then what does that do to the rest of the staff? The product—a student's success—this year is attributable to the teacher of the year before, the year before, the year before and the year before, not the person in front of the class now.[27]

6.47 Of more significance is the point that teachers will need to have confidence in the integrity of the system. Teachers are not to be compared with stockbrokers or FOREX dealers: they are team players. Stated below is one commonplace suspicion:

> I feel very uneasy about [performance pay] because I know how performance, whether it is in education or in industry at the other end of town, can be manipulated. You can cook the books and look as if you are an absolute whiz-bang when really there is no substance there. The other thing too …is that—and I saw this when they introduced performance pay [in Victoria]—other people ride on the backs of their colleagues.[28]

6.48 The committee considers that concerns raised about the effect of performance pay on secondary school departmental work teams, which operate on the basis of strong collegiality, are matters that need to be treated seriously. There is potential for individual performance pay to create considerable tension in school communities, and lead to a serious loss of trust and collegial spirit. This would damage rather than enhance teaching quality. The committee believes that work needs to be done to develop credible group performance bonus pay schemes which reward team effort and acknowledge *esprit de corps*. Nevertheless, the committee believes that the difficulties associated with introducing a performance based pay scheme can be overcome.

6.49 Another perspective on performance reward was raised in evidence from the Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia (AISWA). AISWA argued that quality teachers should be rewarded in a manner which re-invests in the individual teacher and the teaching profession, for example, professional development opportunities, teacher exchange and industry work experiences, or payment of Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) fees for higher qualifications.[29] Some of these schemes have been operating for many years, but should have been more extensively offered.

6.50 Dr Ingvarson and his team expressed the view that successful implementation of performance-based pay schemes for individual teachers is unlikely to become a

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27 Mr Ian Ferguson, *Committee Hansard*, Brisbane, 5 June 2007, p. 27.

28 Mrs Olwyn Gray, Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 25 June 2007, p. 67.

29 Mrs Valerie Gould, Association of Independent Schools of Western Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Perth, 2 July 2007, p. 8.

reality without the backing of a major research program to develop the capacity to measure teacher knowledge and skill. It is unlikely that teachers will become favourably disposed to such a scheme unless it involves them and their professional associations. This is already beginning. Several teacher professional associations, notably the National Council for the Teaching of Mathematics, have developed a set of teaching standards which might mark the way for future acceptance of performance-based pay schemes. The committee believes that the teaching profession will need to take this at its own pace. That way it has more chance of success in achieving the aim of revitalising the profession.

Conclusion

6.51 Excellence in teaching must be encouraged by all reasonable means. This is as important for the quality of education throughout Australia as it is for the vitality of the teaching profession. The inquiry has found that higher remuneration and some form of performance pay would be instrumental in enhancing the quantity and quality of the teaching profession.

Recommendation 7

That the Government takes steps to improve the remuneration of teachers so as to raise the professions entry standards and retention rates by providing incentives.