

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) appreciates the opportunity to put its views to the MCEETYA National Goals Taskforce on the draft consultation document “Australia’s Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century.”
- 1.2 The IEU is the federally registered organisation which represents the industrial and professional interests of teachers and school officers in all non government education institutions across Australia. This includes early childhood centres, schools and post secondary private training and ELICOS institutions. It has a current membership of approximately 45,000 members.
- 1.3 The non government education sector is a diverse one. There are approximately 2500 non government schools across the country attended by about one million students. The sector represents approximately 30% of the Australian education community. The diversity of the sector reflects the diversity of the Australian community and ranges across the breadth of educational, ethnic and religious philosophies. Nevertheless the non government sector sits within the broader Australian education community and its key stakeholders support a consistency of approach for the orderly development and implementation of public policy relevant to school education.

## 2. PRINCIPLES

- 2.1 For the purpose of this submission the IEU and its branches have undertaken a general critique of the current draft document consistent with the following principles which the union believes should underpin a national statement on the goals for Australian schooling.
  - (i) *All Australians share an equal entitlement to a high quality education which fosters personal development, a sense of self worth, a greater capacity to control one’s life and to meaningfully participate in the world of work.*
  - (ii) *Education is an investment in the nation’s future intellectual, social and economic wellbeing and as such should be funded at a level which addresses the increasing gap between resource levels and students’ educational needs.*
  - (iii) *In providing these resources the Australian community is entitled to an increased confidence in schools and the quality of service they deliver. In striving to meet reasonable community expectations regarding the provision of education, schools in their turn need a high degree of co-operation between schools, students, parents, employers and the community at large. The notion of partnership and the mutuality of role and responsibility are important principles.*
  - (iv) *To this end the Australian community must co-operatively strive to develop a schooling system that adequately meets the educational, economic, personal and social needs of society. This requires high level co-operation between the States and the Commonwealth and the other key stakeholders in the education*

*community in developing agreed goals and curriculum frameworks for Australian schools.*

- (v) *Schooling, however, is not an isolated process, but a part of the total national education effort. To this end, strong links must be developed between schools, TAFE and higher education institutions so as to develop an integrated education and training structure appropriate for Australia's economic and social circumstances and which can encourage a culture of life long learning.*
- (vi) *A national collaborative effort involving the States, Territories and the Commonwealth and other key stakeholders is required to strengthen Australia's schools. A national perspective on schooling is needed which nevertheless accommodates the diverse circumstances and needs of different parts of Australia. The quality of schooling is of major national consequence because high quality schooling will help the nation develop socially, culturally and economically.*
- (vii) *Fundamental to a strong and creative schooling system is the vitally important role of teaching and support staff. Schooling authorities should acknowledge, value and call upon teachers' professional judgement in the development and implementation of education policy.*

### **3. THE PREAMBLE**

- 3.1 Given that such a document is intended to represent the vision for what the Australian community should expect from its schooling system in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the IEU believes the preamble should be a visionary, philosophical and ethical statement about the role and purpose of schooling for the child community and the nation.
- 3.2 There should be a contextual statement in the preamble, not just in terms of the unique Australian schooling context and experience but one which also gives a sense of the history of the document. This is a reflective as well as a futures orientated process, which builds on and strengthens the 1988 "*Common and Agreed National Goals for Schooling in Australia*" statement, but which should also include a statement about the nature of society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 3.3 The preamble should be an ethical statement about the rights of the nation's people, particularly its children, to a high quality, equitable and well resourced education system which values and encourages the love of learning throughout life and which defines education in the broadest sense. It should emphasise the importance of a collaborative and partnership approach to achieving such an outcome.
- 3.4 Paragraph 1 is a poor starting point for such an important statement about the nation's vision for schooling. There are many who would contest the assumptions in the statement "successful nations will be those which accept the opportunities that globalisation presents to schooling".
- 3.5 The preamble should make clear the purpose of the document and its intended audience – education systems, schools, parents, students, community.

- 3.6 The preamble should include a strong statement about the fundamentally important role of the teaching profession to an agreed statement of goals for schooling.

#### **4. THE STUDENT GOALS**

- 4.1 The language should be modified to reflect the educative process as a developmental one – the prescriptive tone implied in the word “should” needs amendment.
- 4.2 The statement should indicate that a student needs the skills and capacities to be prepared for a range of contexts throughout their life – as a responsible citizen within the community; as a family member; as a participant in both the paid and unpaid workforce, often engaged in ongoing education and training etc.
- 4.3 There should be an acknowledgment that schooling is a social and interactive experience as well as an intellectual and skill based one.
- 4.4 The IEU acknowledges and supports the statements in paragraph 2.3 of the “Student Goals” as set out in the draft document regarding the importance given to ethical and values issues in education.

#### **5. THE CURRICULUM GOALS**

- 5.1 As in 4.1 above, the goals should be expressed in terms of teaching and learning being reflective and developmental processes.
- 5.2 The importance of a rich and diverse curriculum to accommodate the diverse needs of individual students should be emphasised, as well as the notion that different students will perform across the range of student achievement levels.
- 5.3 The statement needs to include reference to the post compulsory years of schooling, consistent with the important principle of learning throughout life.
- 5.4 The IEU believes that the goal regarding encouragement “to be enterprising” should be balanced with statements related to concepts of community, interaction and collectivism.

#### **6. THE SOCIAL JUSTICE GOALS**

- 6.1 The IEU believes that this section requires strengthening in terms of statements regarding access, participation and equity.
- 6.2 The social justice goals need to be linked to the curriculum goals – to ensure that schooling is equitable and socially just, it is important that the curriculum values, affirms and is inclusive of gender, culture, race and the social aspects of our community.
- 6.3 A statement of goals on social justice needs to address the importance of the physical and emotional health of young people and the requirement that schools are safe, supportive learning environments.

- 6.4 A socially just society is one which has a strong sense of community, of mutual rights, obligations and responsibilities and which sees it as important to emphasise these values as a member of the world community. Issues of peace, justice, religious and racial harmony and acceptance, respect for the environment and its fragility etc. should be part of this statement on social justice goals.

## **7. THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY AND ENVIRONMENT**

- 7.1 The issues raised under this section of the document have been incorporated into the goals statements set out above.

### **TARGETS**

With regard to the inclusion of targets in a national statement on the goals of schooling, the IEU believes that the current draft document is too unclear in terms of definitional issues, the use and purpose of such targets, and how such targets would be measured.

The IEU has indicated its strong reservations in previous submissions about the increasing emphasis on a testing agenda at both the State, Territory and Commonwealth level.

The union would not support the inclusion of targets, if in the implementation strategy for such targets, the sense of vision, breadth of purpose and the holistic nature of the goals statement were subverted.

### **CONCLUSION**

The IEU supports the collaborative work being undertaken by MCEETYA on a review of the 1989 *Common and Agreed Goals for Schooling in Australia*, and believes that it is important that such a statement is forward thinking and captures the essence of what the nation's schooling system should offer to its people. The IEU strongly supports a statement which is visionary and which embodies the aspirations of our education community and society.