

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) appreciates the opportunity to put its views to the MCEETYA National Teacher Recruitment Project.
- 1.2 There now exists substantial consensus across the nation amongst all the major stakeholders in the education industry that there is a crisis of confidence within the teaching profession.
- 1.3 In 1996, the Senate Inquiry into the Status of Teachers received submissions from key stakeholders which painted a picture of an education community struggling to sustain high quality teaching and learning outcomes in the face of rapid and substantial structural change and reform. The outcomes of that Senate inquiry are documented in “A Class Act” which made recommendations to the Federal Minister in the current government. To date, none of those recommendations have been implemented.
- 1.4 The Ministerial Council on Education Employment Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) has now established a Taskforce to examine issues of national teacher supply and demand particularly in relation to recruitment of high quality personnel into the teaching profession.
- 1.5 The IEU strongly believes that the issues of teacher recruitment and retention are directly connected with a number of others, including but not limited to, the status of the profession; the speed and process of policy change and implementation; the loss of resources to education; the salary and conditions paid to teachers and issues related to the need for professional standards. In developing a comprehensive strategy to properly manage national teacher supply and demand and teacher recruitment and retention, policy makers must address the overall contextual picture. Reasons for the current malaise within the profession, and community perceptions that it is a profession and career with little going for it, are complex and require scrutiny by the Taskforce.

## **2. THE ROLE OF THE UNION**

- 2.1 The IEU is the federally registered organisation which represents the industrial and professional interests of teachers and school support staff in all non-government education institutions across Australia. It has a current membership of approximately 44,000 members.
- 2.2 The union has a known and understood mandate under its Constitution to advance and defend the industrial and professional rights and interests of teachers and support staff in the non-government sector. The IEU Constitution specifically provides that the union should encourage and initiate policies that contribute towards the improvement of the status, training and qualifications of all members of the union.
- 2.3 IEU members strongly support the union’s taking a leadership role in education policy debate and development, recognising the strength, independence, commitment and resources that the union brings with its advocacy.

### **3. SUPPLY AND DEMAND**

- 3.1 The issue of supply and demand of the teaching profession is a critical one. There is an increasing consensus that there will be a shortage of teachers around the turn of the century
- 3.2 Factors which will contribute to the expected shortage include higher retirement rates of teachers as the teaching population ages, increased demand for replacement teachers, and changes in student enrolment numbers. The key issue that the IEU urges the MCEETYA National Teacher Recruitment Strategy Taskforce to consider is the development of long term strategies that address the issues of supply and shortage without reducing the quality of educational outcomes for students.
- 3.3 Strategies that the IEU endorses include:
- (a) Financial commitment to improve salaries and conditions
  - (b) Increasing support for teachers (especially beginning teachers in difficult schools) and other mechanisms to improve teachers' effectiveness and professional satisfaction
  - (c) Enhancing the status of teaching in the wider community, and the morale of teachers, through public and practical support for teachers and their work
  - (d) Recruitment campaigns for initial teacher education programs and for teaching itself
- 3.4 A trigger response to expected shortages, or for that matter, supply would be damaging to the profession. The IEU would view with strong criticism any short-term responses that had as an effect a reduction in the quality of Australian schooling. These could include the imposition of increases in general teaching workloads, reducing curriculum choice in areas that require specialist staff, and the employment of unqualified teachers.

### **4. THE CURRENT CONTEXT - A PROFESSION IN CRISIS**

- 4.1 Over the past 8-10 years, successive Commonwealth Governments have initiated research projects and sought advice through key advisory and policy bodies such as the Schools Council (prior to March 1996) and MCEETYA on ways to strengthen the quality of Australia's schools through micro economic reform strategies. In doing so, Ministers have articulated the issues of teacher quality and the status of the profession as being of the highest priority.
- 4.2 The union has welcomed policy initiatives intended to recognise, advocate and further strengthen the critically important contribution which the teaching profession makes to the nation. Despite this, there continues to be a marked decline in the morale and status of the teaching profession.
- 4.3 The reasons for this are complex, but the union believes that at the core of the profession's malaise and loss of heart, the following issues are relevant:
- (i) the ambivalence on the part of policy makers and school authorities in acknowledging and supporting the hallmark of the teaching profession which is teacher professional judgement. Teachers perceive their role and

their efforts are no longer valued or respected by the community. Their professional judgements are often ignored, their input not valued at policy levels and they continue to work in the context of relative isolation. This is particularly evident in a number of key areas such as curriculum design, assessment and reporting of student achievement. Around the country, state and territory curriculum and assessment bodies are restricting the participation of teachers, and there is a growing emphasis on the use of standardised, pen and paper style national or state testing of students, quite unrelated to teachers' professional judgement, and often contrary to the wisdom of their experience

- (ii) The subjection of schooling by policy makers and commentators to the ideology and rhetoric of the market place and economic rationalism. It is rhetoric which emphasises an individualistic, competitive and user-pays model, from which as well as winners, there must be losers. This jars with the collaborative and co-operative approach which most teachers believe underpins quality teaching and learning and their deep commitment to the education and welfare of every student, and that all students should be winners from their experience of school. It is not that teachers aren't familiar with and successfully working within policy regimes of reform and restructuring in education. Teachers value support, order and flexibility in school organisation and many want to be included in organisational decisions.
- (iii) Derisory and contradictory statements by government members, policy makers and media commentators which are generally gratuitous and based on a poor understanding of the complex work of teaching.
- (iv) Most systems and schools have implemented policies which have resulted in a greater focusing on the planning, delivery and monitoring of individualised, student-centred approaches in an attempt to better meet the great diversity of student need . Alongside the move to more individualised programming has grown the need for more collaborative, team-based teacher work structures. These approaches, while supported by teachers as highly desirable, are however, less and less supported by systemic resourcing, and are difficult to sustain in traditional school timetabling and staffing structures.
- (v) In addition to changes in pedagogical approaches, the changes in the structure of families, the cultural plurality of school populations, youth unemployment and the diversification of the labour market and the increasing retention rates in schools have meant that greater responsibility for much of the socialisation and general care of students has fallen onto schools and, in particular, teachers . Most schools have developed programs concerned with the "whole student" and are becoming increasingly aware of the need to develop extensive, albeit unresourced, interagency and broad community links. Much of the work and input is unpaid in the sense that teachers take on roles that are beyond their teaching duties, and which are often emotionally stressful.

As a consequence of these increased expectations, there has been a significant increase in both the general workload and level of stress experienced by teachers. The effect of this on teachers' morale is

exacerbated by their perception that they have received insufficient support from the community and government and its agencies in this area.

- (vi) Education is an enterprise on a massive scale, the largest industry in Australia in terms of both budget and workforce. It involves a very large number of key stakeholders, ranges across the public and private sectors, and involves policy making at both the federal and state government levels. Implementing school based reform across Australia's 10,000 schools and engaging its 300,000 teachers and support staff in such an endeavour is a very complex and difficult task.
- (vii) There can be little doubt that new technologies are profoundly affecting educational practice at all levels. Technology has the potential to reorganise curriculum knowledge requirements and the resources that teachers use to prepare and deliver their programs. Its use requires not only new teacher skills, but a reconceptualisation of what it means to teach. Teachers require an in-depth knowledge about the organisation of knowledge itself in order to use the new technologies. A new pedagogy is required which is dependent on the appropriate and systematic integration of information technologies and school practices.
- (viii) Changes to industrial conditions and work practices including the introduction of performance appraisal and the development of teaching competency frameworks.

4.4 The education profession needs to be able to attract the best teachers and retain the best. The teaching profession could be described currently as at a peak in terms of experience, skill and age. As this cohort retires, there will be a commensurate loss of skills and expertise within the profession. As schools move into the next century, the demands on the profession will continue to increase. Much of the literature on future models of schooling (Lepani et al) emphasises the connections that schools need to strengthen with the local community, so that the barriers between home and school become "borderless". Other bodies of literature emphasise the technological revolution that will enable educators to be conduits to a boundless amount of information, and will transform vertical models of curriculum delivery. What is clear however is that teachers will still be working with students and will have to bring critical professional judgement to bear upon the choice of teaching and learning strategies to suit those students' educational needs.

## 5. UNDERSTANDING THE NATURE OF TEACHERS' WORK

5.1 In a research paper entitled "How To Improve the Quality of Teaching in Tomorrow's Schools ; The Contribution Of Research", prepared in 1996 by the NSW Teacher Education Council, a number of prominent teacher educators have remarked that

*"... Helping students to live and work in this changing world places increased demands on the skill, dedication, imagination and professionalism of teachers, who must increasingly contextualise their teaching in relation to the needs of individual pupils, employers and society, particularly as mediated by government policy, parents and community leaders."*

- 5.2 The increased demands made upon teachers must be seen in the current context where the education systems of all Australian States and Territories have undergone dramatic restructuring, along with changes in curriculum and assessment.
- 5.3 The developments are shaped by two major interconnecting trends:
- increasing complexity:
    - teachers are being asked to undertake a wider variety of tasks, sometimes fitting together and sometimes not
    - they must respond to diversifying student populations with greater personal, cultural and social needs than before
    - teachers must respond to the requirement that more and more issues be covered in the curriculum as well as to changes in education policy which require new work to be done in curriculum, planning assessment, and school management; and
  - increasing intensity:
    - a product of the amount of work that must be done
    - the accumulation of demands and deadlines, and
    - the increasing scrutiny through the media and quality assurance reviews.

As a result of these trends, teachers are less able than ever to adopt a narrow view of their tasks as simply the transmission of pre-set curriculum. Their teaching skills and strategies must be sophisticated and flexible, providing them with sound professional judgements in specific situations, with specific classes and individual students.

- 5.4 Research shows that stress has eventuated as a result of the ever increasing complexity and intensity of teachers' work. Issues of particular concern are communication, style, and the leadership approach of the school management; increasing hours of work; the lack of time for collegial work to implement reforms; ambiguities deriving from inadequate role descriptions; lack of consultation with and input from teachers regarding role; demands upon personal and private obligations; relationships with students and parents and career prospects.
- 5.5 What policy makers must be concerned about are the detrimental effects such high levels of stress are having on quality teaching and learning and the functioning and organisation of schools. Many teachers are fatigued and have lost heart, many withdraw from their colleagues, take leave or leave the profession. Research reflects an evident loss of personal self esteem and pride in the value of their work and their profession. At the present time, Australia's teaching profession is at its peak in terms of skill, expertise and experience while at the same time struggling with a jaded view of their own worth and sense of alienation.

## **6. QUALITY TEACHING – WHAT IS IT, WHAT ARE THE BARRIERS**

- 6.1 Stakeholders from across the education industry recognise issues related to the status and morale of the profession as fundamental to the national interest and to the development of sound public policy development on education.

- 6.2 In December 1990, the Schools Council published its seminal report “Australia’s teachers: An Agenda for the Next Decade” which set out a long term agenda for action, based on ideas about how effective teaching can be recognised, supported and rewarded through developing more varied and defined career paths that combine incentives and opportunities for improving teachers’ classroom performance. The report was based on an analysis of teachers’ work and developed a Charter for Teaching which included the dimensions of ethics, professional work and continuous professional development. In essence, the Charter endorsed the development of standards ie. what teachers should know and be able to do.
- 6.3 This research, together with other reports and projects undertaken and published since then, provide direction and advice for the way forward to addressing the problems of the profession’s status and morale and the consequent problems of poor levels of recruitment and retention. The IEU believes that it is not a lack of research, knowledge, understanding, or general acknowledgment which is the impediment to improving the status of the profession but a lack of will on the part of government (both federal and state) and system and school authorities to give reality to their rhetoric.
- 6.4 Excellent practice in teaching and learning does exist in Australian schools and is envied and studied by policy makers and practitioners from other countries. The IEU believes that not enough effort is given by policy makers and schooling authorities need to develop strategies which sustain and generalise into Australian schools the recommendations from research, the best practice and genuine reform put in place by teachers and to communicating these outcomes in a positive way to the community.
- 6.5 The IEU believes that precious public funds and education resources are at best poorly focussed and at worst wasted on ill-defined restructuring, or short term reforms which are not explained well or make little sense to the profession and which confuse the community, and on inappropriate policy shifts. This has left the profession fatigued and frustrated, the general community confused and parents anxious about their children’s education. It has certainly contributed to the current malaise of the profession.

## **7. RESTORATION AND IMPROVEMENT OF SALARY AND CONDITIONS**

- 7.1 In 1996, the Director of the Sydney Catholic Education Office, Brother Kelvin Canavan called for a long term strategy to raise the status of the profession and noted the following:

*“The message is clear. It is in the interest of the nation to have a strong and competent teaching profession in Catholic, state and independent schools. Salary levels are an important factor in attracting and retaining teachers of high quality. And, unless teachers are well paid, the expectations of many parents will not be met.” (5/8/96)*

- 7.2 The IEU strongly advocates an improvement in the salary and conditions of teachers. Whilst this would certainly make teaching a more attractive profession, the central argument is about the value of the work undertaken by teachers in schools. Despite some lingering perceptions in the community of teachers’ lives as short breaks of minding children interspersed with long holidays, the reality is

a highly demanding and stressful profession. It is a profession that requires four (and increasingly, five) years of professional training and academic study and continuous learning throughout a career, yet its career opportunities in respect to promotion and financial reward are minimal.

- 7.3 There are significant differences between pay and classification structures for teachers when compared to other four year trained professions. In teaching, specialisation is intrinsic to the profession, and there is little provision for the recognition of cross-disciplinary excellence or responsibility. Career structures could best be described as “flat” and significant curriculum and supervisory responsibilities are rewarded largely through the payment of small allowances.
- 7.4 The status of teaching can only be improved by a commitment to establishing a better career structure for classroom teachers. Currently, leadership roles in schools are more heavily focussed on administrative and school leadership. Positions of responsibility, which would involve co-ordination of a particular year level or subject attract only a small allowance or combination of time and payment. Good classroom teachers want to stay in the classroom but the financial and social rewards are lacking. Generally, after 10 years of full-time teaching, most teachers will have accessed the highest incremental level of salary, and then there are no increases for the rest of their career if they choose to stay in the profession that they trained for and have gained experience in – the education of students.
- 7.5 The IEU views with concern evidence of increasing casualisation in employment contracts in the non-government sector, particularly for young teachers. Whilst this trend is reflected in other occupations, the IEU believes that the costs it may save in terms of the denial of accrued benefits to employees, are outweighed by the lack of stability that the profession should engender in both students and teachers. Any employee in a school should be viewed as valuable enough to warrant a secure tenure of employment, and short-term or relieving employees are severely disadvantaged in terms of their capacity to access the same conditions and entitlements as permanent employees.
- 7.6 Similarly, part-time employment in the non-government sector does not often offer the same protections and entitlements as those afforded to full-time staff. As many employees are women, and many need a career that can offer them both full-time and part-time work, depending on lifestyle and family commitments, it is imperative that part-time employees are afforded more equitable conditions in terms of spread of timetabled hours, opportunities to return to full-time tenure as a matter of choice, and more flexible working conditions in respect to combining the demands of career, family responsibilities and life choices.
- 7.7 These rights should be available to all employees. Currently, many other industries are becoming more ‘sensitive’ to the family and life needs of employees. The non-government education sector is slow to move from expressions of goodwill to actual implementation of work practices that would accommodate these needs. The after hours commitments of many teachers employed in the non-government sector include planning meetings, sport, weekend commitments to coaching and/or attendance at religious events, reporting evenings with parents, camps, information evenings, and a host of other activities with students in specialist areas such as outdoor education, music, and drama. Historically, these extra commitments have been unpaid, and regarded as part of the ‘labour of love’ involved in teaching.

- 7.8 The IEU urges that the MCEETYA Taskforce develop a strategy which provides for the restoration of proper salary relativities for the teaching profession as part of the problems of recruitment and retention of high quality personnel into the teaching profession.
- 7.9 Like the rest of the Australian workforce the teaching profession has become increasingly mobile over the past ten years. Such mobility is not just across states and territories but between government and non-government and between Catholic and independent sectors. The teaching profession is a national (and international) profession not one limited by parochial State/Territory and sector loyalties. As part of its strategy to address teacher recruitment, the IEU urges the MCEETYA Taskforce to consider issues of teacher mobility.
- 7.10 The interrelationship of issues such as national standards and guidelines for initial teacher education, national competency standards for the profession, the portability of service and entitlements and the planning and administrative requirements related to teacher supply and shortage are evident. There is little sense or justice for a teacher who has taught for 9 years in NSW losing recognition of such service for long service leave purposes if he/she moves to Victoria for reasons such as family transfer or lifestyle reasons.
- 7.11 It should be noted that in 1992, the Council of Australian Governments determined:

*“The Council agreed that there are benefits in public servants being able to transfer employment between the various State/Territory and Commonwealth governments. Each jurisdiction would benefit from the experiences of its counterparts and for public sector employees this would widen career opportunities”.* (7 Dec 1992)

This is relevant for education staff in both government and non government education systems.

## **8. PROFESSIONAL STANDARDS – THE TRAINING OF THE PROFESSION**

- 8.1 A very substantial body of research already exists around the issues of initial teacher education and pre service, professional development, and competencies and standards for the teaching profession. The IEU strongly supports the development of nationally consistent standards for the teaching profession and the incorporation of these into a comprehensive system of national registration for the profession. It is recognised within the community that this is the mark of a profession and would give a lift to those within the profession. The IEU urges the Taskforce to see the development of such standards as an important element in a strategy to redress failing recruitment and retention policies currently in place.
- 8.2 The IEU has strongly supported a national scheme of teacher registration, covering all teachers in government and non-government schools. Such a scheme provides the opportunity to address a broad framework of issues such as professionally established entry standards, questions of professional ethics, requirements for teacher training courses, ongoing professional development and the capacity for deregistration. Such a nationally consistent set of standards and system of registration arrangements would enhance the standing of the profession

and clearly serves the public interest. The IEU points to models of excellent practice in place, in particular the Board of Teacher Registration in Queensland.

- 8.3 In the past, the union has expressed its concern about the decline in the standards of academic excellence of students entering pre service training courses. It is unsatisfactory that students of higher academic achievement continually opt away from teaching as a career and the union believes that there is a need to develop a set of industrial and professional conditions which are likely to attract to teaching in appropriate numbers, students with high academic ability and appropriate personal and potential professional expertise. The need for appropriate levels of remuneration and conditions and the development of career structures for the profession are referred to above.

As well, the IEU is committed to the support of beginning teachers in schools, through both the regulation of industrial conditions and the establishment of induction programs. However, the general experience of a beginning teacher is one of being “thrown in” to the life of a school, with a swim or sink philosophy. These early years for a new teacher can be exceptionally difficult, and professional survival is often based on inner resources rather than systemic, supportive structures.

- 8.4 The union believes that the induction of new teachers should be recognised as a major responsibility of schools and employing authorities. Attracting good teachers to the profession remains a strong concern, but retaining them and ensuring that their skills continue to develop and are recognised is an equally paramount issue. The first step of this process lies in the induction of a beginning teacher. Those teachers that are part of this process, through mentoring and the provision of professional support, should also have their input and skills developed and formally recognised within the profession, rather than the current reliance on the goodwill and voluntary labour of others.
- 8.5 Current research indicates that while pre-service teacher education programs have been both adequate and innovative, induction programs for beginning teachers are not widely available, and where they are available, they are rated as only moderately helpful or not helpful. The union believes that induction is more than the provision of information to a new employee about their organisation. It includes the process whereby new staff develop knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to carry out roles effectively.
- 8.6 The IEU strongly advocates a more structured approach to a first year teacher’s experience, which can be achieved by a better combination of time release and effective mentoring. In “best practice” models, induction roles and responsibilities are clearly outlined and formally linked to professional development and collaborative skill review. For example, in Catholic schools in Victoria, the union and employer association worked together to develop guidelines for school development planning in the areas of induction, skill review, and professional development.
- 8.7 The regulation of industrial conditions for new employees is represented in some states and territories by beginning teachers being given a workload of face to face teaching hours that is slightly less than their colleagues. Whilst this may partially reduce the stresses associated with one’s first professional year, it does not necessarily address all the issues that face a new teacher – difficult classes, assessment and reporting, curriculum frameworks, meetings, communication

with parents and colleagues, documentation requirements, and the day to day administrative and professional demands of teaching.

- 8.8 The gap between policy and practice in the area of induction remains a wide one. The effective induction of a beginning teacher can only be achieved when other colleagues have the time to properly support and advise a new employee. The reality of teachers' day to day lives is that not enough time exists for their own professional development, let alone being able to properly support the needs of a new colleague.
- 8.9 The union is opposed to any form of probationary employment for beginning teachers, and any induction process that is linked to punitive or formal due process. Beginning teachers need to experience a supportive work environment without feeling vulnerable about employment security.
- 8.10 In consultations that the union has undertaken with beginning teachers, the major issues that have emerged are:
- The overwhelming gap between theory and practice
  - Class sizes and spread of classes
  - Lack of release time for induction
  - Lack of opportunity to discuss professional concerns on a "one to one" basis
  - Excessive paperwork
  - Lack of structure or format of induction program
  - Legal liability concerns – lack of information at the school level
- 8.11 The IEU urges the consideration of the following in regard to the induction process:
- The entitlement of a new teacher to a lighter workload to ensure appropriate time for consultation and advice
  - Access to adequate counselling services without any reference to professional competence at this entry level point of career
  - Provision of adequate release time for both the inductee and any colleague involved in the induction process
  - Clear understandings of the professional status and rights of the inductee, and all other parties involved in the induction process
- 8.12 The IEU supports clear guidelines and processes established at the system and school level for inductees. These should include:
- General principles concerning the responsibilities of the inductee and support teacher or mentor
  - Access for the inductee and mentor to appropriate professional development activities
  - Organisational information such as school policy, expectations, and responsibilities made explicit
  - Guidance and advice on useful professional development such as teacher unionism, professional associations, in-servicing etc
  - Regular review of the effectiveness of the induction program
- 8.13 The IEU believes that these entitlements would need to be covered in an industrial agreement, so that appropriate monitoring, accountability, and

implementation can be ensured. The IEU believes that many teachers display desirable attributes at the beginning of their classroom teaching career, but are excluded from effective involvement in further systematic, professional development.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

The great majority of Australia's teachers are committed to their students and struggle hard amid rapidly changing demands to update their knowledge and skills and to deliver what is asked of them by schooling authorities. They would welcome and are entitled to more evident support for their standing in the community from school authorities and government. It is the view of the IEU that in addressing issues related to the morale and status of the teaching profession, the MCEETYA Taskforce would also be tackling problems related to the recruitment and retention of high quality people into the teaching profession. If teacher supply and demand issues are disconnected from this overall context then the resultant strategy will be conceptually short sighted and narrow.