



Australian Education Union

Submission to the

National Professional Standards for Teachers

Consultation

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The Australian Education Union represents both the professional and industrial interests of over 180,000 teachers and other education workers throughout Australia in the primary, secondary, TAFE and early childhood public education sectors. As such it is uniquely placed to participate in all stages of the development processes of national professional standards for teachers.

1. Introduction

The AEU supports the concept of professional standards for teachers and school leaders. AEU support for such standards, however, has always been contingent upon them being developed by the profession for the profession, that their purpose be transparent and appropriate, and that they do not undermine or attempt to replace existing industrial agreements. The AEU *Quality Teaching in Schools Policy* states:

Teaching standards appropriate to various career stages can form a useful basis for the development of quality teaching provided they:

- Are developed by the teaching profession;
- Reflect the complex work that professionals undertake in educational settings;
- Are embedded in industrial or formal agreements between employers and teacher unions;
- Are used to guide professional learning and are not used punitively for performance management;
- Are used voluntarily at the advanced level.¹

The introduction to the 12 February draft states that the Standards “provide a basis for planning professional learning that will increase teachers capacity over time,” and, “They enable teachers to...determine career pathways”.

These observations stand in contrast to the Deputy Prime Minister’s statement at the National Press Club on February 24, 2010 that, “These Standards will inform the way teachers are hired, developed and promoted”.²

¹ Australian Education Union, (2007) *Quality Teaching in Schools Policy*. Clause 2.1.7.

<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Policy/QualTeach2007.pdf>

² Gillard, J. *Delivering the Education Revolution*. Address to the National Press Club, 24 February 2010.

http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_100224_143429.aspx.

There are implications in this statement for existing industrial agreements between the state and territory branches and associated bodies of the AEU and their respective governments, and for various award provisions.

“Teacher quality” and teacher professionalism

We note the first sentence in the introduction to the draft document:

The most important school-based factor in improving outcomes for students is the quality of their teachers.

Whilst it is certainly true that the quality of teaching is a very important element in student achievement it cannot be judged in isolation. Other key elements and factors in the provision of a quality education to students cannot be ignored. Furthermore importance of “teacher quality” in providing a quality education must be put into a collegial context.

Teaching is a challenging, dynamic, collegial profession which requires regular, high quality professional development, mentoring and support. National standards underpinned by collaborative and professional structures, respectful of teacher professionalism can support growth in teacher professional capabilities. The AEU has stated previously in its paper *Low Teacher Trust – Let’s Not Go There* (2007):

The quality of teaching is undoubtedly extremely important, and this is borne out in the research. However, the implications from this take two very different paths depending whether this leads to greater or lesser trust. The high trust path puts an emphasis on measures which enhance judgment, respect expertise, encourage collegiality, ensure participation in decision making, offer system support and are tied to high status and rewards for all. It acknowledges that teaching and learning is problematic and that there is a need to search for answers on these problems. The route to higher quality is seen to be through research, professional learning, dialogue and learning from each other.

It is essential that respect for teacher professionalism is evident in the national Standards.

National standards and the socio-economic context

We are particularly concerned that the importance of “teacher quality” is being misinterpreted to suggest that teachers and schools are singularly responsible for any under achievement by students.

The Deputy Prime Minister and others have cited the research of Professor John Hattie in support of the claim that the “quality of teachers” is the most important school-based factor in improving outcomes for students. However, Professor Hattie attaches the important caveat that there may be out-of-school influences more important than teacher quality, but which he chose not to look at in his study. He himself has stated that his book is not about, “what cannot be influenced in schools - thus critical discussions about class, poverty, resources in families, health in families, and nutrition are not included - this is NOT because they are unimportant, indeed they may be more important than many of the issues discussed in this book. It is just that I have not included these topics in my orbit”.³

Teachers in the public education system are committed to achieving the highest outcomes for all students they teach, regardless of their backgrounds. The educational well being of our students is our greatest concern. Supporting teachers in this fundamental professional and ethical responsibility should be the role of national standards. Indeed, overcoming social and educational disadvantage must be one of the key goals of teaching. Teachers must be supported in this very important responsibility with system support and appropriate resources and shown the necessary respect and trust to most effectively meet the needs of their students.

Quality teaching and teacher professional judgement

The development of professional teaching standards must be built on an acknowledgement of the overall high standards of Australian teaching. Australian teachers have a very high standard of teacher professionalism, as demonstrated by the achievement of Australian students in international measures. As such the Standards should seek to harness and build on this high level of teacher professionalism. This must be based on an understanding of the complex role of teaching and learning in modern Australian society and the importance of equipping students with the knowledge and skills required to be successful in the 21st Century.

It is essential that teaching standards aim to support an education for all regardless of background which provides excellence in learning outcomes and the creative and critical thinking skills needed to achieve successful careers and lives in a changing society. A quality

³ Misa, T. *League tables are and unhelpful sideshow*. New Zealand Herald 6 July 2009. http://www.nzherald.co.nz/maori/news/article.cfm?c_id=252&objectid=10582708. Viewed 20 April 2010.

education for all is also a powerful tool in achieving goals of equity and social justice. Achieving these objectives requires high quality teaching based upon multiple objectives and a high level of teacher professionalism. To accomplish this schools and teachers must be given trust and support to innovate and tailor teaching to individual learning needs.

It is vital that teacher professionalism and professional judgement be supported, not only by standards but by resourced system support.

Pathways to teacher and school leader capacity building

The AEU supports collegial pathways to improvement that encourage teachers to support each other and work together to improve their professional capabilities. This must include properly resourced programs to develop teacher capacity. One of the key purposes of standards is to determine areas of individual need in respect to teacher capacity building to support teachers in this regard. Such professional development should be collaborative in nature and draw on the professional expertise of teachers rather than impose template “standards” that have been determined elsewhere.

The importance of ongoing capacity building is supported by a range of academic evidence. Andreas Schleicher of the Directorate of Education at the OECD, for example, notes that the best performing countries in PISA “build their success on combining clear and ambitious standards for educational performance with access to best practice and professional development and support for schools.”⁴

In this regard it is pleasing to note that the COAG *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* contains as a key outcome, “developing teachers and school leaders to enhance their skills and knowledge throughout their careers”.⁵ Its reward reforms for its indicative achievements include improved induction programs for new and beginning teachers and principals, continual improvement programs and professional development for teachers supported by resources and materials that are shared nationally.⁶ The National

⁴ Schleicher, A (2008) Seeing School Systems Through the Prism of PISA. Commissioned paper in Appendix A, Luke, et al, Op Cit. p.75

⁵ COAG, (2009). *National Partnership on Improving Teacher Quality*. Clause 24.d.
http://www.coag.gov.au/intergov_agreements/federal_financial_relations/docs/national_partnership/national_partnership_on_improving_teacher_quality.pdf

⁶ Ibid, Schedule B, Table B1.

Partnership’s reward reforms also include, “Improved in-school support for teachers and leaders, particularly in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools”.⁷

Considerably increasing the resources allocated to quality professional development and collegial mechanisms of support is the pathway most likely to support teachers in their capacity building and provision of quality education to their students. This is particularly so for teachers working with disadvantaged students, Indigenous students/communities and students with special needs.

Professional teaching standards should be supported by:

- High teacher trust and respect and an acknowledgement of the importance of professional teacher judgement
- An understanding of the collaborative nature of teaching
- Investments in teacher professional learning which enhance professional capacity and judgement and assist in the sharing of professional knowledge and achievement
- Investment in resources, particularly directed at schools with concentrations of those students finding it hardest to achieve
- Objective and pertinent research which resonates with teachers and helps them to overcome the problems they identify as limiting student achievement
- Acknowledgement of the professional expertise of teachers and the importance of allowing due weight to their views.

2. The preamble

It is vital that the intent, purpose and use of the Standards be made clear. It is also important that provision is made to guard against their inappropriate use.

An understanding of the appropriate application of the Standards and the support mechanisms that should accompany them would be facilitated by reference to the following matters in the preamble:

⁷ Ibid.

- An acknowledgement of the high quality of Australian teaching
- An acknowledgement that teacher professionalism must be supported by adequate system support to meet the needs of all students
- A reference to the collaborative nature of teaching
- A recognition that evaluation of teaching practice against the Standards must take a holistic approach based on collegial mechanisms of peer appraisal rather than imposed compliance measures
- An acknowledgement that evaluation of teaching practice based on the Standards must be supported by pathways to improvement, including investment in teacher professional learning which assists in sharing professional knowledge and achievement
- A recognition that use of the Standards for evaluation of teaching practice should not in any way replace the legitimate role of unions in negotiating conditions of employment, registration, promotion and career paths
- A recognition of the vital role of education as a vehicle for social equity and fairness, and of the importance for it to be properly resourced
- An acknowledgement of the important role of Early Childhood Education teachers. ECE teachers have a role in the Australian education system as important as other teachers. This needs to be explicitly recognised, and it should be made clear that the Standards apply to them as much as to other teaching professionals.

As will be discussed, supporting materials should also be developed that accompany the Standards and make clear their role in matters of professional development and capacity building.

The importance of building collegial teacher and school leader capacity and supporting teacher professionalism must be emphasised.

3. Timeframe, nature and scope of the consultation process

No reform can succeed without the cooperation and active participation of teachers. The AEU strongly disagrees with the statement in the introduction to the draft Standards which states that they were produced after “extensive consultation with the profession”. On the contrary,

the AEU does not believe that adequate consultation has taken place. The present timeframe is insufficient for effective consultation and the achievement of the necessary meaningful and deep engagement of the teaching profession.

Since the 1990s several attempts to produce national standards for teachers have been unsuccessful as they have not provided sufficiently for meaningful consultation. There are no players more central to the formulation, development and implementation of national teaching standards than teachers themselves. Teachers must have ownership of national teaching standards if they are to be meaningful and effective, and if they are to do so teachers themselves and their key professional organisations must be central to the negotiation of such standards.

The present consultation process asks participants to fine-tune the already developed draft Standards. This severely limits the nature and scope of teacher participation. The AEU believes that a participatory process must be much broader than this. It should include sufficient scope to address issues that they see as relevant rather than simply fine-tune the present draft. Teachers should be afforded the opportunity to raise issues in a broader context.

Specifically targeted resources should be provided to allow teachers to participate during school time.

Such processes will clearly require considerably more time than that which is presently allocated for the consultation process. It is unclear why this process should be rushed, and the AEU feels it is far more important that quality standards be produced that are owned by teachers and formulated with their participation than it is to keep to the present timetable.

The present consultation process is also problematic in that it is being undertaken at the same time as the consultation involving the finalisation of four major learning areas of the National Curriculum, considerably reducing teachers' opportunities to actively and realistically take part in both. AITSL should increase the timeframe for consultation and work with state and territory departments and with teacher professional bodies to facilitate teacher and school leader engagement.

4. The use of the Standards and teacher assessment

Use of the standards must be negotiated between the employer and the relevant union and embedded in relevant industrial agreements.

The Graduate set of standards relate to what should be expected of a graduate upon completing her/his educational qualifications. This set is particularly relevant to the accreditation of teacher education courses. The accreditation of education institutions would require the institutions to demonstrate that their courses graduate students who meet these standards.

The AEU supports a national system for the accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses. This is in accordance with the AEU's support for a nationally consistent approach to initial teacher registration based on a minimum four year degree, and soundly based criteria for content, course structure and consultative mechanisms. A nationally consistent approach will facilitate a better understanding of the respective systems in each jurisdiction, ease mobility to other states/territories and over time strengthen the professional base of a high quality, more nationally consistent and coherent schooling system.

The Proficient set of standards relate to determining whether a new teacher has reached the requirements for full registration after their period of probation.

The AEU supports a system for the accreditation of teachers based on national standards. AEU policy also states:

There should be a process of provisional registration leading to full registration of teachers at the end of a period of induction.⁸

The aim during a provisional registration period should be to support teachers in the early years. AEU policy states:

Completion of initial teacher education must be followed by a period of timely, accessible and effective induction in which the beginning teacher has the opportunity to integrate theory and practice. Provision for induction should include:

⁸ Australian Education Union, (2007) *Quality Teaching in Schools Policy*. Clause 4.2.
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Policy/QualTeach2007.pdf>

- reduced teaching load;
- time for new educators to prepare and to reflect on their practice;
- mentoring from designated teachers in the school who have received training in mentoring and are allocated time to carry it out;
- ongoing support from their university education faculty.

This will assist in developing the conditions through which new educators will develop the practice of action research, apply research to practice, and take part in professional dialogue about practice.⁹

The wider reform program

The AEU's support for the Highly Accomplished and Lead Teacher voluntary national teaching standards is contingent upon their appropriate use. The AEU notes the statement on page one of the *Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers – Consultation* that the Standards will be used for “initial teacher registration, and performance appraisal and professional accreditation of teachers at higher levels of professional expertise”.

While the present consultation asks for views on proposals for teaching standards, the AEU strongly asserts that to do so without reference to the wider research on teacher career reform would not only be to ignore the origins of the present consultation, but runs the risk of ignoring the findings of Federal Government research on the set of issues which are involved in successful reform.

We emphasise that the present consultation is a product of a wider reform agenda; in fact the origins of the present consultation lie in the COAG National Partnership Agreement which provides a broader context. The consultation occurs in a conceptual and historical context in Australia and internationally about the reform of teachers' careers, quality teaching and the recognition and reward which should accompany those changes. Unless the introduction of standards is conducted in the context of other changes which should accompany them, the reform project will be seriously compromised based on the recent research. Unless employing authorities and the Commonwealth recognise that voluntary agreement to the standards and recognition and reward is offered for attaining them, then it will be difficult if not impossible to win support from the wider teaching profession.

⁹ Ibid. Clause 4.1.

The AEU and its associated unions represent a high proportion of public sector teachers' industrial and professional interests. To achieve reform it is essential to win union commitment to standards and the recognition and reward of quality teaching. This is inextricably linked to the comprehensive industrial instruments which exist and have been bargained by the AEU and its associated bodies in every state and territory of Australia. The industrial rights of the unions in the respective industrial jurisdictions and requirements for democratic ballots to be held to approve industrial agreements must be taken into account. They mean that unions and their members must approve agreements which make changes to career paths. The AEU supports the introduction of standards-linked career reform but only on the basis that it is properly negotiated. The policies adopted by the AEU and research it has conducted support this approach as will be explained below.

Federal Government Research Links Teaching Standards to Recognition and Rewards

The current and previous federal governments commissioned detailed and expert international and domestic research about the set of issues which are involved in the achievement of effective quality teaching reform. This work was undertaken by researchers commissioned by the Federal Government and drew on interviews with stakeholders, the wider business community and the experience of educational authorities in Australia and internationally.

Minister Bishop commissioned research in 2006 on the reform of teachers' careers to introduce performance standards linked to remuneration. This work was completed in 2009 and published by the Ministerial Council under the title "Rewarding Quality Teaching."¹⁰ The research listed the range of issues which COAG included in the National Partnership Agreements in November 2008 which form the context for the present consultation:

COAG specifically agreed that the National Partnership will bring about change where it leads to:

- New professional standards;
- Recognition and reward for quality teaching;
- A framework to guide professional learning;
- National accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses;
- National consistency in teacher registration;

¹⁰ MCEEYA (March 2009). *Rewarding Quality Teaching*.

- National consistency in accreditation/ certification of Accomplished and Leading Teachers;
- Improved mobility of the Australian teaching workforce;
- Joint engagement with higher education related to pre-teacher education; alternate pathways to teaching; and workforce planning; and
- Improved performance management in schools.¹¹

The research went on to refer to the policy of the AEU:

Significantly, the 2007 Annual Federal Conference of the Australian Education Union adopted its ‘Quality Teaching in Schools’ policy, including its support for:

- Teaching standards appropriate to various career stages that are embedded in industrial or formal agreements (2.1.7);
- The interconnectedness of quality teaching and quality career paths, which encompass salary arrangements (2.10);
- Proper system wide processes that ensure the distribution of teachers throughout schools (2.11);
- A considerable regime of ongoing professional learning that focuses on teaching effectiveness (Part 5); and
- Management and staff development in schools should focus on teacher effectiveness (5.10).¹²

“Rewarding Quality Teaching” also cited the views of the Business Council of Australia which has paid considerable attention to the issue of quality teaching in joint research conducted with the ACER.

The Business Council of Australia position on teacher pay

Building on its 2007 policy the BCA issued a substantive report ‘Teaching Talent -: the Best Teachers For Australia’s Classrooms’ developed with the ACER (May 2008) that provided a five point plan which included a new remuneration structure for excellent teachers. In 2007 the BCA proposed awarding the top teachers (who met specific performance criteria) double the average teaching salary, estimated at \$130,000. In the 2008 proposal the BCA proposed a

¹¹ Ibid, p. 1. http://www.mceecdya.edu.au/verve/resources/Rewarding_Teacher_Quality-Final_Report_-_GDA_2009.pdf

¹² Ibid. p.2.

four point teacher remuneration scale and estimated the distribution of teachers across the scale after a ten year period of implementation of:

- Graduate (provisionally registered teacher) base salary (10% teachers);
- Registered teacher (no more than three years experience as provisionally registered teacher) – 1.25 times base salary (40% of teachers);
- Accomplished teacher (usually available at ten years experience, achieved by most teachers) – 2 times base salary (30% of teachers); and
- Leading teacher (track record of leading and managing colleagues to improve student learning and welfare) – 2.5 times base salary (20% teachers). (BCA2008: 34, 35.)

The BCA also estimated that the cost of teacher remuneration would slowly rise to a level that is about \$4billion higher than current annual levels which is a rise of 20% to 25% of current costs (BCA 2008: 36). A predicted shift to a younger teacher profile might moderate the cost (BCA 2008: 36). The remuneration structure would rely upon a system of teacher accreditation to identify shifts in performance.

However the BCA argues that professional certification should be separate from industrial arrangements and employer based performance management systems. A national independent agency (jointly formed by governments around Australia) should decide professional certification for accomplished and lead teachers that is voluntary and portable - analogous to other professional qualifications, like chartered engineer or certified practising accountant (BCA 2008: 37,38). The BCA estimates that an integrated national system would take ten years and \$50million to establish; and that the cost for each candidate assessment would be \$2,000, to be met by employers and government. It estimates that 10,000 teachers will make application each year for professional certification.¹³

The AEU notes that the BCA argues that “professional certification should be separate from industrial arrangements and employer based performance management systems” in favour of an “independent agency”. However, the BCA does not argue that industrial arrangements should not recognise the certification process which would be essential for a successful scheme to operate.

¹³ Ibid, pp.15-16

An earlier research report Commissioned by Minister Nelson from the Australian Council for Educational Research, “Research on Performance Pay for Teachers” was published in March 2007 and considered the international and Australian experiences and concluded:

In summary, many pay for performance schemes have been tried over at least 150 years, and most have failed because they have not gained the support of the stakeholders who are most closely involved in the processes, most notably teachers and school administrators. The legacy of these failed attempts lingers in school cultures where teacher scepticism is deeply entrenched.

This review indicates, however, that it is now possible to establish performance pay schemes that overcome many of the deficiencies of previous merit-pay schemes. These standards-based schemes need to be distinguished from “performance management” schemes, which are the right and proper responsibility of school managers. The focus of the latter is on whether teachers are fulfilling their contractual duties. The focus of the former is on providing incentives and recognition to teachers to move to high standards of professional performance that improve student outcomes.¹⁴

Further, ACER summarised the circumstances under which such reforms were likely to be successful:

Under what circumstances do performance-based pay systems gain professional commitment and improve student learning outcomes?

This review indicates that performance-based pay systems are more likely to have a positive impact when their development and operation is seen as a mutual responsibility between employing authorities and professional associations. There are complementary roles to be played here in the development of standards, assessments, professional development, certification and employer recognition. In other words, performance-based pay schemes for teachers are more likely to be successful when:

- a) their guiding purpose is to give substantial and valued recognition to teachers who provide evidence of professional development to high teaching standards;
- b) valid (research-based) standards have been developed by expert teachers in their specialist field of teaching to provide long-term goals for professional development;

¹⁴ ACER (2007). Performance Pay for Teachers. pp. 107.

http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/research_on_performance_pay_for_teachers.htm

- c) appropriate research has been completed to develop reliable and valid procedures for gathering evidence to indicate whether teachers have met those standards;
- d) the assessment of performance procedures are conducted by an agency external to the school to ensure reliability, comparability and fairness;
- e) teachers have adequate opportunities to learn the knowledge and skills required to put the standards into practice;
- f) a teacher's ability to demonstrate that they have met the relevant standards leads to valued professional recognition, enhanced career opportunities and significant salary increases;
- g) teachers who reach high standards of performance gain access to interesting, challenging and well-supported positions in schools where they can make provide leadership to improve teaching and learning; and
- h) Governments and other employing authorities become convinced that the assessment system is valid and reliable and make long-term commitments to support the system.¹⁵

The AEU's view of the need for the reform of teachers' careers to improve quality teaching linked to transparent and fair standards of teaching has been clearly stated for some years. In a policy document in 2007 the AEU argued for professional standards and improved recognition and rewards.

The AEU Proposal for Professional Pay Validated by UNSW Research

The Australian Education Union has proposed a Professional Pay scheme to further reward experienced teachers through recognition of their teaching knowledge and practice. Such reform would recognise and encourage professional excellence and help to attract and retain the best teachers in our classrooms.

The scheme would establish a set of professional standards for teaching beyond current processes. Teachers would be assessed by an independent and fair process and rewarded through salary increases, not one-off cash bonuses. Teachers would be required to demonstrate how their teaching experience and professional development is contributing to the improvement of educational outcomes for students.

The scheme would be funded by additional recurrent funding for public schools from both the federal and state/territory governments. In support of this proposal, in 2008 the AEU

¹⁵ Ibid, p.

commissioned research by Educational Assessment Australia at the University of NSW to test the validity of a set of standards derived from those being proposed by the Teacher Registration Institutes in most states. (University of NSW, Educational Assessment Australia, Technical Report, National Survey of Professional Accomplishment of Government School Teachers, AEU July 2008).

The findings of the study were:

1. The findings of this analysis suggest other opportunities for further investigation. For example, it would provide useful information if SES data were available to analyse results based on the socio-economic education contexts of teachers' schools.
2. This analysis clearly indicates that the current range of evidence and criteria developed in the states and territories provides a valid foundation for a national model for recognition of 'teacher accomplishment'.
3. This survey would form a valid basis for the development of a national assessment instrument to assist states and territories to plan for valid and consistent measures for recognising 'accomplishment' in teacher standards and performance. (p 13)

In a report on the study the AEU said:

Assessing experience and excellence in the classroom

Towards this end, the AEU commissioned the University of NSW's research organisation, Educational Assessment Australia (EAA), to undertake a survey of Australian government school teachers to investigate a set of national professional standards.

The study investigated standards and criteria already established in the states and territories and the validity of applying them nationally for the purpose of assessing the level of achievement required for an 'accomplished teacher'.

The survey covered areas outlined below:

1. Current position and employment status (e.g. permanent full-time; part-time; temporary; casual)
2. Tertiary qualifications

3. Memberships
4. Role(s) at school
5. Knowledge of teaching area(s)
 - a. Curriculum and programming
 - b. Lesson planning and content
 - c. Assessment and reporting
6. Implementation of teaching practice
7. Maintenance of professional development
8. Participation in the school community

The survey also collected additional information such as the size and demographics of the schools at which the teachers have taught. EAA analysis clearly indicates that the current range of evidence and criteria developed by state and territory governments provide a valid foundation for a national model for recognition of ‘teacher accomplishment’.

EAA suggest the survey used for this study would form a valid basis for the development of a national assessment instrument to assist states and territories to plan for valid and consistent measures for recognising ‘accomplishment’ in teacher standards and performance.

The research undertaken and policies adopted by the AEU as outlined above are brought to the attention of AITSL in this consultation to illustrate the AEU’s support for the introduction of teaching standards on a sound basis of consultation and negotiation in the realities of the employment context.

The problems of teacher career paths in Australia have much in common with those in a number of other countries and there is a history of experiences of successful and failed reforms, which ACER and Gerard Daniels reported in their research for the Federal Ministers outlined above. The AEU has also maintained an independent role in monitoring reforms particularly in the US and UK.

5. Early Childhood Education

Any national professional standards for teachers must encompass Early Childhood Education (ECE) as much as for other years of schooling. Furthermore, this must be made explicit in the Standards.

With the rollout of Federal Government supported universal access to a preschool education delivered by four year degree qualified early childhood teachers, the role of such teaching will become more important in the Australian education system. ECE teachers have equivalent pre-service education to teachers of other years and play an equally important role in the education of children. It is vital that they be included in national teaching standards. The fundamental standards and issues relating to all teachers also relate to teachers of ECE. The language of the Standards should be broad enough to be applicable to all teachers and should be inclusive of ECE pedagogy. The importance of ECE teachers should be acknowledged in the preamble and elsewhere.

Similarly it is also important to consider early childhood teachers in the same context as school teachers if the Standards are to be utilised for the purposes of accreditation of pre-service teacher education courses and initial teacher registration.

6. The Charter for the Australian Teaching Profession (Appendix One)

The AEU notes that the introduction to the present draft Standards refers to the *Charter for the Australian Teaching Profession* produced by Teaching Australia. The charter is also attached as Appendix One.

The AEU would stress that despite the use of the first person “we” in the document purporting to be the voice of Australian teachers, this document was not developed by teachers or any organisation representing them. This so-called charter can in no way claim to represent the voice of Australian teachers.

The AEU also has serious concerns about the document itself. There is no mention of equity, fairness or social justice. There is no mention of the ethical responsibility of schools and teachers to support all students regardless of their socio-economic background or other circumstances.

For these reasons the AEU strongly believes that this supposed charter should not be attached to any national standards or referred to in any other way. The sentence referring to the charter in the introduction should be removed, as should all other references to it. If a real charter for the Australian teaching profession is to be produced it should be done with the active

participation of teachers, both individually and through their professional bodies in a manner similar to that described above for the development of the national Standards.

7. Support materials

Supporting documents should be developed to accompany the Standards and make clear their role in matters of professional development and capacity building. These should include the following:

- **Accreditation of teacher pre-service courses.** A document outlining the application of the Standards to pre-service courses and the requirements for registration of such courses.
- **The appropriate use of the Standards.** A document making explicit the appropriate use of the Standards. The AEU believes such use should be as indicators to assist teachers in their professional growth and not as compliance measures which teachers will be required to meet on an individual basis.
- **Early career teachers.** A document on the appropriate practices that should accompany the early years of teaching. This should include an outline of the responsibility of schools and systems to support new teachers so that the use of the Standards for these early years can be understood in its correct context. It should be stressed that this implies a very high degree of system support and mentoring. The importance of permanence being the normal mode of employment at the end of the induction period should also be stressed.
- **Teacher professional development and building teacher capacity.** A document that examines the importance of investment in high quality teacher professional learning which enhances professional capacity and judgement and assists in sharing professional knowledge and achievement. This should include opportunities for collaborative interactions and sharing of knowledge in school time amongst teachers in ways that do not distract from their other responsibilities. Such professional development must be properly resourced.

- **Teacher professionalism and judgement.** A paper examining the appropriate role of professional teacher judgement in addressing the requirements of students and communities.
- **Early childhood educators.** A paper which examines the application of the Standards to early childhood educators.

8. Levels of professional capability

The distinctions between the four levels are not made sufficiently clear and more detail is needed as to what is expected at each level. This should relate to specifics concerning the capabilities and aptitudes teachers should have at each level and how they could be supported to achieve them. As it is, the rationale behind the use of some of the language at different levels is unclear. It is unclear, for example, why “proficient” teachers are described as meeting the “fundamental” standards of the profession. It would appear logical that meeting the fundamental standards would be a requirement of all teachers, including new graduates. It is also unclear why the word “highly” is added to that of “accomplished” at the third level.

9. The Domains, standards and descriptors

The AEU believes the three domains of the current draft Standards, professional knowledge, professional practice and professional engagement, are essentially the correct ones. Many of the important elements of the role of a teacher and the work they are engaged in would be more accurately reflected if the following areas received an appropriate emphasis in the standards:

- Behaviour management. The ability to effectively manage a range of behaviours and situations that can occur in a classroom in order to maximise learning outcomes for all students
- The ability to effectively communicate with students, parents and colleagues
- The ability to establish a rapport with students and facilitate student engagement

- Subject to appropriate support structures, the ability to incorporate the needs of students with special needs, including students with a disability and those with mental/emotional/behavioural issues
- Subject to appropriate support structures, an ability to support the needs of students from non-English speaking backgrounds
- An understanding of the needs, cultural backgrounds and requirements of Indigenous students and an ability to address these
- An ability to understand the needs of and teach to the requirements of students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Multicultural perspectives and the ability to teach to the needs of students and communities from diverse backgrounds

The difference between descriptors at different levels is sometimes slight, and their application to actual teaching practice unclear. Descriptors 1.3, 1.5, 2.4, 2.5 and 2.6, for example, are very similar at the graduate and proficient levels. Whilst the two levels sit alongside each other and could be expected to have a certain amount in common, the different stages should reflect an appropriate development of professional practice. Graduate teachers in their early years of teaching should not be expected to have the same capabilities as other teachers, and this should be reflected in the standards. On the other hand, descriptor 5.2 shows a staged development of professional practice as the four levels progress.

Descriptors should aim to provide a clear continuum of development between the four levels that includes an indication as to how the differences will be reflected in actual classroom practice. These should include issues of behaviour management, student engagement and effective pedagogy.

Standard 1 should contain a greater emphasis on communication capabilities. This standard should also include a greater emphasis on teachers possessing an understanding of the backgrounds of different students and the impacts these factors have on student learning. There needs to be more attention given to understanding and the cultural, religious and language backgrounds of students and using this knowledge in teaching practice. A greater emphasis, explicitly stated, should also be given to the importance of understanding the impact of socio-economic background and the profound effect this has on learning, as well as to strategies to engage students from lower socio-economic backgrounds. There also needs to

be greater references to addressing the needs of Indigenous students and students from non English speaking backgrounds. These elements should also be included in pre-service teacher courses, and should be present in some form in all four professional levels.

Standard 3 should contain a greater emphasis on facilitating student engagement. The ability to work collegially in planning and implementing effective teaching should be included in all four levels, not only in the two highest levels as it is in the present draft. There also needs to be a greater emphasis on an ability to build and maintain effective relationships with students, parents and colleagues in this standard.

Standard 4 should contain a greater emphasis on the ability to effectively manage a range of behaviours and situations that can occur in a classroom in order to maximise learning outcomes. It is pleasing that Standard 4.3 states that lead teachers should have the capability to guide colleagues to create supportive environments for their students. This should be complimented by a capability / willingness for graduate teachers to seek guidance from mentors or supervisors, as this is an important capability that leads to improved practice at that level.

10. Conclusion

The AEU supports the concept of national standards for teachers and school leaders. Support for such standards, however, has always been contingent on them being developed by the profession itself, that they reflect the complex work that professionals undertake in educational settings and that their use be transparent and appropriate.

The present consultation process should be extended to allow teachers and their professional bodies to take part and resources provided to facilitate teacher participation. The relationship between the Standards and industrial agreements negotiated between unions and employers should also be clarified in the preamble.