



Established in 1902

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Submission by the National Council of Women of Victoria

on the Discussion Paper launched by Minister Hall and Minister Dixon called:

New Directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession.

The following are some comments we, The National Council of Women of Victoria, would like to make concerning this paper.

In the Ministers message, page 3, Ministers Hall & Dixon state *"In our decentralised system where principals have a high degree of autonomy it is they who have the power to improve the quality of teaching."* What checks and balances and support are there being offered for Principals in this very challenging role. Also how effective are these checks and balances? In an article on the front page of The Age, Mon July 9, 2012 the headline reads "Schools hit by principal shortage" and cites the reason being long hours and low pay.

Page 4

Dot point 2 states *"students do not perform as well at secondary level as they do in primary school"* This could well be a reflection of the fact that they do not have the level of support they need. In a primary School setting there is much more support and services available to needy students to help them succeed, but these services are scarce in secondary schools.

Dot point 4 *"The gap between our highest and lowest performing schools is growing"*. If this includes the top private schools this is not surprising. Also when comparing the selective Government entry schools with those in the lowest socio-economic areas there is also going to be disparity.

Page 5.

The statement *"that much of the expenditure in the last 20 to 30 years has gone into the effort to reduce class sizes despite evidence that this does not have a significant impact on improving student outcomes."* This is a very sweeping statement which does not look into other factors. This corresponds to the ceasing of "streaming for ability" so if teachers are teaching students across a wide range of ability classes need to

be smaller. Also student integration has also led to a greater range of ability in classes. There is also the fact that all students are continuing to stay longer at school and these weaker students need more support.

Once students had to pass the Intermediate Exam to proceed on at school but now all students are encouraged to complete Year 12.

Page 6 *“improving the quality of teaching will require strong action”*

This then states that “improving the quality of teaching is a complex task; it is a profession that requires both technical and emotional intelligence the ability to be flexible etc”

It then states three actions necessary to achieve this. It then describes the ideals under each of these actions. The question is how are these actions going to be supported and implemented?

Action 2 states *“Create a high performance profession:”* What exactly does this mean? Are they to be actors!!

Page 7.

Q.1. *What is missing?*

There is no discussion at all in this paper about resources. The paper discusses how we need great teachers about which no one would argue but there is no mention of the resources needed to achieve this. It is noted that these are only discussed later in the paper when entry into the top tier is mentioned.

Page 9

Part 2. *“Attract great people into teaching: Attract stronger candidates and improve their preparation”.*

Who are GREAT PEOPLE!!!.. Refer to Conclusion for our comments on this.

At the end it states *“England reversed years of teaching shortage through a strong recruitment campaign that promoted the profession as a career of choice and by improving salaries and working conditions.”* No mention at all in this paper is made about improving, or even addressing either of these matters.

In the last paragraph it states *“East Asian jurisdictions and the ability to share practice and research with others to drive improvement”* The government is aiming to bring in a bonus system for the best performing teachers which will not encourage teachers to share any new innovative ideas with their colleagues.

Page 10 *Assessment of Victoria.*

This discusses that the admission requirements to enter teaching are declining whilst admission to other courses is becoming more competitive. It also discusses that whilst the starting salary is quite high the top of the earnings scale is comparatively low. **There are no suggestions given on how to remedy this.**

It then goes on to discuss that there is no way to better compensate good teachers working in high need areas, such as low socio-economic communities and rural and regional schools which typically offer more challenging working environments, living conditions or both. There needs to be discussion about compensation to attract high achieving teachers to these areas.

Page 11.

2nd paragraph “around 15 to 20 percent of graduates are not employed as teachers following graduation” This is about salary and conditions.

3rd paragraph comments on the need to provide practicum placements for pre-service teachers in all Victorian schools. For this to take place the schools need to be suitably remunerated for the time and effort involved in helping and advising these students.

4th paragraph comments “Pathways into the profession need to be more flexible to open up a teaching career to qualified professions.” This is very important as the movement of teachers from other professions introduces new ideas BUT they must have teaching qualifications.

Page 12 Teach for Australia.

This may be an excellent programme that was set up in 2008 but it is not really going to have a great impact. So far 120 Associates have graduated but only 75% of them are still in teaching (Teach for Australia website). This is despite the careful selection programme and the extensive support they receive.

Page 17

Paragraph 1. This talks about most teachers progressing to the next pay scale each year despite stated policy that such progression is not automatic. May not this be a reflection that the weaker teachers are weeded out at the contract stage? With an oversupply of teachers in some subject areas only the best will continue to be employed.

Page 18 Potential Actions.

This paragraph states “*The organisation of teaching must prioritise teamwork and support, especially for teachers in their early years of teaching.*” In teaching, team work is very important and we feel that performance based pay will not encourage this, as teachers will want to be credited for any innovations and not share them. New teachers in our schools should be supported by an induction policy.

Point 4 talks about “*establish exchanges and secondments for teachers to work in other schools*” This is an excellent idea as teachers teaching in one school for a number of years need to see and experience what is happening in other schools, and also interstate and overseas. However there is no suggestion how this could be implemented in Victoria where the schools operate in a decentralised system.

Page 19.

1st dot point. This talks about the 11 weeks of non-attendance time of teachers at their school. Whilst this is nominally true most professional teachers will spend some of that time either undertaking professional learning or class room planning and preparation. The 11 weeks does include public holidays such as Christmas, Easter and Australia Day.

Also no mention is made of the amount of afterhours work and weekend work that needs to be done by teachers. Especially when teaching the senior classes in secondary schools there is a lot of preparation and marking e.g. School-assessed coursework (which is part of students final Year 12 mark), exam marking, assignment marking. Then there are the regular changes to the curriculum which means that new subject matter needs to be researched. Each year most teachers’ allotments change so that they are teaching different year levels and different subjects. This means they have to keep up with all areas, across all grades, in their subject area.

Meetings: co-ordination, planning, strategic, departmental, faculty. There are often several a week, before or after school and ALWAYS outside the nominated work hours.

Report writing – student reports were once ONE paragraph per teacher, on a double page student report. Now it's ONE PAGE per teacher, per subject per student. These are written outside work hours.

As PROFESSIONALS teachers expect to not have set working hours, but if diaries were kept of hours worked, the holiday time would not seem excessive!

Page 21

4th paragraph *“At present selection panels for principals must include both teachers and parents.”* We feel it is extremely important to have both a parent and a teacher representative on the selection panel, along with the principal's peers and other leaders. Both the staff and parents need to feel they have some ownership of the outcome, and they are the ones that know the local conditions. Surely if a teacher is capable of teaching they are capable of having input into selecting a principal.

Page 23.

Point 2. Teachers also should be provided with much stronger development. If it will benefit principals, it will also benefit teachers.

Point 3. *“Review the composition of selection panels. As part of this remove teachers from selection panels.”* This suggestion to remove teachers from selection panels reflects the low esteem in which the teaching profession is held by the Government. They are considered not capable of being involved in selecting the best applicant for the job.

We would like to return to Page 7 and the question WHAT IS MISSING.

1. How to raise the general esteem in which the Teaching Profession is held. This we feel is very important to attract high performing graduates.
2. Adequate salary that encourages high performing teachers to stay within the profession and regard teaching as a career.
3. Adequate support services and working conditions for teachers. Most staff rooms are very crowded with little preparation space.
4. The very high number of contract teachers in Victoria.

“About 8000 teachers in Victorian Government schools-or 18% of the total number-are on fixed term contracts. The figure is much higher for beginning teachers, with 47% on fixed term contracts.” (The Age: Teachers seeing no future in state system: May 30 2012)

We feel the above four issues need to be addressed before the top graduates/strong candidates of Victoria Schools will be attracted to teaching as a career choice.

Conclusion.

Recruiting “the brightest” students to train as teachers is not always the best concept. The brightest students often do not have either the understanding OR empathy for students who struggle with subject areas which “the brightest” had no trouble with, and often excelled in.

Productivity –We are not producing sausages or laptops. Quality inputs, quality production, efficiencies, quality control, quality outputs. These are industrial and commercial concepts **utterly unsuited** to education.

Teaching is a profession not a business, nor a production line.

Representatives of our organisation would be willing to participate in further discussion on this paper.

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