

25 May 2010

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Business
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Dear Ms Wall

Draft National Professional Standards for Teachers

Thank you for providing the opportunity to comment on the draft National Professional Standards for Teachers (Teacher Standards).

Previous research undertaken by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the Business Council of Australia (BCA) has identified the quality of teaching as the single most important influence on improving the learning of students. The BCA supports the development and implementation of teacher standards which aim to contribute to improving the quality of teaching within Australia's schools.

The comments provided in this submission are informed by the BCA's 2008 publication *Teaching Talent*, which incorporated the paper *Investing in Teacher Quality: Doing What Matters Most* by Stephen Dinham, Lawrence Ingvarson and Elizabeth Kleinhenz.

If the objective of making a contribution to improving the quality of teaching is to be achieved, the new teacher standards should be rigorous, and enable individual teachers to strive, innovate, and continue to develop and improve their teaching practice. We endorse the approach of developing a set of consistent national standards that clearly states the knowledge and skills expected of teachers at the four different levels, and which can be applied in all states and territories.

It is the view of the BCA that the future utilisation of the standards by the profession, including school leaders, must be a key consideration in the initial design, development and implementation of the standards. The new teacher standards should enable the following arrangements to be introduced.

An effective assessment process

First, the BCA supports the introduction of national arrangements for assessing individual teachers against the national teacher standards. This could include, for example, structured tasks that describe how teachers can provide valid evidence of their knowledge, understanding and practice in relation to the teacher standards.

Under arrangements for assessing individuals against the standards for highly accomplished and lead teachers, there should be adequate provision for the inclusion of evidence which shows how individual teachers have improved the learning outcomes of the students they have taught, taking into account the particular circumstances of the students and the school or schools concerned. While it is recognised that evidence in relation to improved learning outcomes is only one aspect of the assessment process, it should be an important of future assessment arrangements.

The development of the standards and the preparation of supporting materials should therefore be informed by how effective they would be as the basis for an independent assessment process to determine whether individual teachers are meeting rigorous and credible standards.

Certification arrangements

Second, the assessment arrangements should be supported by formal arrangements to certify that teachers have met credible and high standards through an independent assessment process.

The BCA's *Teaching Talent* publication stated that more attractive career structures for teachers can be achieved if the profession greatly improves its capacity to define, evaluate and certify high-quality teaching. If the development of standards is accompanied by a credible certification system, it is likely to be valued by employing authorities seeking to lift the quality of teaching in their schools.

Furthermore, systems used by employers to register beginning teachers and reward accomplished teachers will be more credible to teachers and other interested parties if they are based on certification by an independent and respected professional agency. A credible certification system can be expected to promote collaboration amongst teachers in relation to developing the knowledge, skills and effective practice expected of high performing teachers.

We envisage an approach whereby professional certification would be portable, across states, territories and school systems. In order to strengthen teaching as a profession, such a system should be profession-wide, not limited to public schools or particular jurisdictions, and not restricted to one particular employing authority.

Recognising and rewarding high performing teachers

Third, the BCA supports linking the certification of highly accomplished and lead teachers to increased remuneration.

We recognise that there is a distinction to be made between a profession-wide system for identifying teachers who can meet the standards at each level, and systems for rewarding teachers who demonstrate that they have met the standards for highly accomplished or lead professionals. The former should be the responsibility of an independent, national agency. Rewarding teachers will continue to be the responsibility of employing authorities. It is their prerogative to decide whether and how to recognise professional certification.

Within this framework, the BCA advocates the introduction of a new career structure for teachers on the development and implementation of the teacher standards. A

new career structure should involve a significant increase in salary recognising the higher performance reflected by certification as a highly accomplished or lead teacher.

Certification is an effective basis on which to link pay to performance for the teaching profession, as it is for other professions. More attractive career structures for teachers can be achieved if the profession greatly improves its capacity to define, evaluate and certify high-quality teaching.

In conclusion, the implementation of the National Partnership relating to the quality of teaching is a key element of the reforms required to lift school education outcomes.

The teaching profession is amongst Australia's most important when it comes to the contribution that its members make to the future economic and social well being of the nation.

Australia's school education system must promote the highest standard of teaching and create the best learning environment possible for all students. Every individual, no matter what their background, should have the opportunity to complete their schooling with the knowledge and skills that will give them the opportunity to choose a rewarding career and to fully participate in the life of their community.

We therefore require a school education system that attracts and retains highly capable teachers, and recognises and rewards high quality and effective teaching within the classroom.

The challenge is to develop a framework for quality education that is rigorous, which lays the basis for promoting excellence within the profession, and which is respected by teachers and the wider school system. An effective set of teacher standards, in conjunction with supporting reforms that include the development of arrangements for assessing teachers, a national certification process, and rewarding those teachers who demonstrate high levels of performance, can provide the foundation for sustained improvements in student learning outcomes.

If you have any questions about the previous work undertaken by the BCA, please contact Patrick Coleman, Director Policy, on 03 8664 2609.

Thank you again for the invitation to comment on the draft teacher standards. I look forward to continued progress with this important initiative.

Yours sincerely



Katie Lahey
Chief Executive