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Teachers Touch Tomorrow

The National Professional Standards for Teachers website: www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au was launched by the Chair of the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), Mr Anthony Mackay, at the third National AITSL Stakeholder Forum.

The Forum, Teachers Touch Tomorrow, was held in Melbourne on 12 May drawing over a hundred representatives from key government, non-government and independent schools and education systems, professional education associations, teacher unions and other education peak bodies from across Australia.

The new website, developed by AITSL, is an interactive resource for schools and teachers which will support the implementation of the Standards for Teachers. A demonstration of the website also foreshadowed further work in the development of exemplars, elaborations and evidence guides to support teachers in their understanding and use of the Standards.

> *"We need to take the cling wrap off (the Standards) and get them working in classrooms."*
>
> Allan Blagaich, Acting CEO, Curriculum Council of Western Australia

The Standards which were endorsed by the Ministerial Council for Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs (MCEECDYA) in February were a highlight of the Forum. The CEO of AITSL, Ms Margery Evans, noted their significance, saying "For the first time in Australia we have an agreed set of Standards for Teachers but", she said, "they will not be worth anything unless teachers engage with them in their schools".

Ms Evans also outlined AITSL's progress on its work plan so far, reiterating the importance the organisation places on working with the education community through its active engagement with stakeholders across the range of its activities; through working parties, expert steering and implementation groups as well as through stakeholder consultations and surveys.

She also outlined major pieces of work ahead for the Institute - starting with supporting schools and teachers to implement the Teacher Standards - and moving to work on the accreditation of initial teacher education programs, achieving national consistency in teacher registration as well as continued consultation and finalisation of the Principal Standard.

AITSL was also very pleased to announce the release of its first App for ipads and iphones. The App, which lays out the exposure draft of the National Professional Standard for Principals is available free worldwide from the Apple itunes store.

Addressing the Forum via a recorded video message the Hon Peter Garrett, AM, Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth flagged the important work ahead for AITSL in 2011. Minister Garrett concluded by noting that the impact that teachers have on young people is second only to that of their families stating that "together we can strongly influence future directions in quality education for all and show without doubt that teachers do touch tomorrow."

Professor Geoff Masters, CEO of the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), provided a keynote address on the importance of clarifying and promoting teaching practices that demonstrably support improved learning.

Stressing the importance of giving teachers good information so that they know how to go about improving teaching practice, Professor Masters defined 'good information' as being 'specific' descriptions or guides to practice that also acknowledge context. "It cannot be a choose your own adventure", he said.

Concluding a very successful day Mr Mackay noted the next National Stakeholder Forum will be held in November this year.

Copies of the presentations made at the Forum can be found on the AITSL website at: www.aitsl.edu.au. The National Professional Standards for Teachers website can be found at: www.teacherstandards.aitsl.edu.au The AITSL App can be found at the Apple itunes store.

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