

IEU(SA) Branch response to National Review of Teacher Registration 23 April 2018

The South Australian branch of the Independent Education Union of Australia represents teaching (and non-teaching) staff in SA's non-government education sector including Early Learning Centres, Schools, Vocational training, ELICOS and other pre-tertiary providers.

IEU(SA) has a long and successful partnership with the Teachers Registration Board of SA and under its Act provides 2 board members (and 2 proxies).

As much as representatives of IEU(SA) participated in the consultation meeting of 4 April 2018, it is appropriate that I record some core issues as seen by the IEU(SA).

The need for teacher registration

- The need to regulate the fitness and propriety of the teaching workforce is self-evident
- The public rightfully demands assurance of the quality and safety of the education system
- The IEU(SA)'s strong view is that the profession should regulate the profession
- Teachers, as appointed by their unions, should be the majority of registration boards

The need for the involvement of the profession to regulate the profession

- Teachers can be trusted to manage their own profession.
- They have integrity and high standards when it comes to valuing and promoting the profession
- Union appointed members of the SA TRB provide high quality input into board deliberations (including disciplinary matters)

The need for transportability and consistency

- Mutual recognition between states is important for people who migrate between states (and especially those who live near state borders)
- SA is about to introduce a Working With Children Check system with conditions similar to the other states
- Education ministers have signed off on the eight elements of teacher registration so there should be little difficulty in states recognising teachers registered in another state even if only for the remaining period of registration
- As currently practiced, mutual recognition is more in name than reality

Registration as a state or federal issue

- As the federal government is not a supplier of education and runs no schools, it should not be involved in the regulation of education, including the registration of practitioners
- Each state now has a system of teacher registration with requirements and standards converging.
- It makes no sense to roll all systems into one national registration bureaucracy
- Each state has the scale to be efficient and serve its local community

The need for comparable standards between areas of teaching (eg VET and Early Learning)

- The IEU does not support systems of fast tracking of those with other degrees, trades or professions without an equivalence of pedagogy and subject expertise
- For example if people with trades wished to become teachers, then the registration pathway would need to be as rigorous as for traditional entry modes
- Early Childhood teachers are required to be registered in SA and the IEU would support that being adopted Australia wide
- There may be an argument for states to adopt a system of specialty registrations eg Early Learning registration, VET registration but always of the same levels of rigour

The need for support for initial teacher education students and early career teachers

- Initial standards for entry to courses need to be realistic, but also achievable over the length of the ITE course
- Pre-registration for ITE students is not necessary as all that is required is a Working With Children Check to undertake school placements
- Ensuring proficiency and “job readiness” is a resource intensive process. Universities and schools need to provide the hands-on practicum experience to

give ITE students a realistic view of their new careers with a chance of being able to survive long term with further mentoring

- As much as it is unfair to let someone start a course they cannot graduate from, it is also immoral to not have time and resources set aside for structured mentoring in the first (perhaps) 5 years or until proficiency is gained.

Usefulness of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers

- The usefulness of the APST for gaining proficiency is limited in some situations
- If early career teachers are only able to gain replacement or short term contracts, they will not be able to demonstrate achievement of standards over a period of time
- There are resourcing implications to utilise them fully and properly
- APST have also on occasions been misused in disciplinary cases as the basis for allegations rather than as developmental tools

Structured pathways for leadership positions

- Whilst there is some intellectual appeal in having potential school leaders work their way through a series of standards in readiness for “promotion”, the practicalities would probably weigh against any high levels of uptake or success.
- There may be some scope for leadership programs in systems of schools, but many non-government schools operate on a stand-alone basis and would have difficulty resourcing the time or cost of developing leaders at the local level
- In any event, current leaders would need the confidence that the aspiring leaders would not displace them prematurely

Conclusion

- The Education Ministers are converging their approaches to Teacher Registration issues.
- There is no utility in forcing a greater degree of convergence through the heavy hand of Canberra
- Each state system has the scale to be effective and has arisen out of, and in service of its local situation
- Harmonisation of standards and the transportability of registration is a worthwhile objective with some areas of further work (eg VET and early childhood registration, mentoring)
- To propose a one size fits all is unrealistic as there would be no agreement on what an “ideal” system would be

- IEU(SA) would not mind if the rest of the country picked up the SA system, because we are comfortable with the structures and approaches taken, but it is unlikely that this would be universally acceptable
- IEU(SA) has great confidence in the functioning of the SA TRB and sees no particular need for any radical overhaul on a national or state basis

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