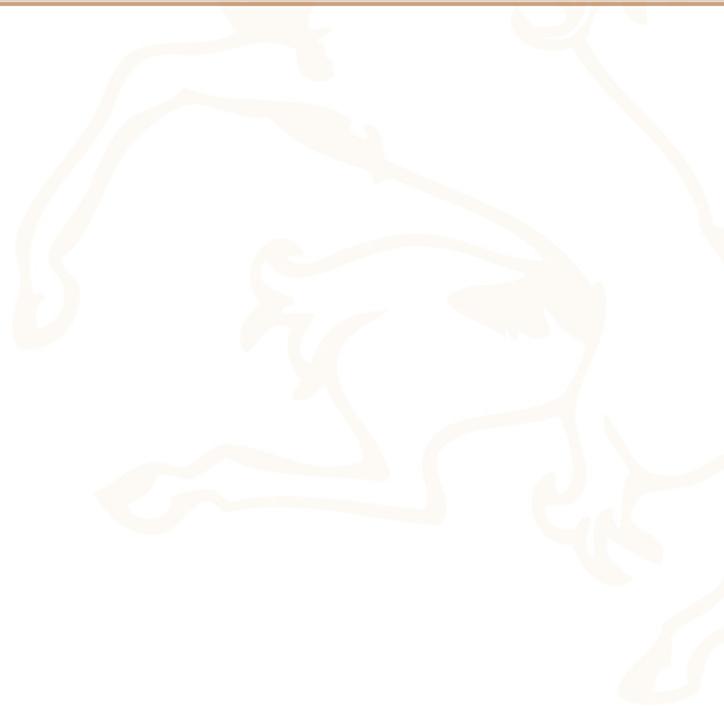




# **Response to ‘New directions for school leadership and the teaching profession’**



Victorian Branch,  
Australian College of  
Educators  
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## Introduction

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The Australian College of Educators (ACE) is well placed to assist the State Government in its deliberations. The College has a long history as a professional association and is the oldest association in the country that represents educators across the nation. ACE members are drawn from both the government and non-government sectors of schooling and across all levels of education from early childhood through tertiary. It is the professional voice for educators. As a self-funding body, the College is clearly focussed on providing the best outcomes in education for young people and operates free of agendas that do not relate to good education. The responses to the government paper 'New Directions' should be informed by a clear educational rationale that provides a solid basis for setting goals, parameters and priorities now and into the future. ACE welcomes the opportunity to respond to "New Directions" which raises issues of great importance to ACE, its members and the community at large.

ACE sought feedback electronically from its Victorian members to the 'New directions for School Leadership and the Teaching Profession' report over the month of August 2012. The feedback has been collated here. ACE notes that while there was disparity in the feedback relating to some areas an attempt has been made to represent the those views held in common by the majority of members. Individual members with knowledge and expertise in specific areas were also consulted.

This paper has been prepared by members of the Victorian Branch of the Australian College of Educators.

## General comments

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The Australian College of Educators (ACE) supports the Government's goal of building what is already a good education system into one that is world class. ACE also welcomes the recognition that a pre-requisite of such a system is the provision of equity: in the words of *New Directions*, 'that the circumstances of a child's birth or geographical location does not limit that child's life chances'.

It is ACE's view that though equity is cited as a focus for the government, this paper does little to address the equity issues arising in Victorian education.

In the major part of this report ACE will look at those specific proposals put forward in the discussion paper that were of most concern to members, but there are some general observations to be made at the start.

A study of overseas systems needs to be balanced with a reflection on Australian systems. What has worked and not worked in Australia? What can Victoria learn from other states and territories and their performance? In particular, why have many previous attempts at educational reform not succeeded and what can we learn from this.

Are there particular issues in Victoria that need to be addressed? ACE feels these include negative effects on teacher morale of the current contract system in Government schools or the apparent lack of confidence in Government schools.

There also needs to be a far greater alignment with many of the discussions and changes that are taking place at the national level such as developments in the



Australian Curriculum, the Teacher Performance and Development Framework, National Standards for Teachers and Principals, the Productivity Commission Report on the teaching workforce and the Gonski Report on school funding. Else education reform again becomes fractured and piecemeal across the country resulting in ineffective practices for teachers and students.

A general observation is that the report places too much emphasis on top-down management at the school level. The role of the principal is already so demanding there needs to be support from other stakeholders such as professional associations, the Catholic systems and greater interaction with teacher education institutions. ACE notes that the independent sector is not, by definition, a system, hence support in this sphere may often be variable in nature.

Where moves towards such autonomy have occurred in other countries, such as the UK, there is evidence that it has led to the outsourcing of many school functions to for-profit companies. We need to move with great caution.

The reforms carried out in Ontario Canada, also demonstrated the importance of working together *with* teacher unions, and making them a partner in the process. The work of Michael Fullan in Ontario provides a valuable model for whole system reform.

### *The College approach to the Discussion Paper*

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While the College agrees with the overall aim of New Directions – that of having a world class education system - ACE believes there has to be a far clearer focus on how this might be achieved.

The paper has a total of 50 dot points some covering issues central to this goal, while others points raise issues that are either peripheral or in some cases questionably linked to the central goal. The Government will need to prioritise the areas on which it needs to concentrate.

The College highlights the issues that we consider the highest importance. These centre on the support, development and encouragement of the classroom teacher. School education is primarily what happens when the teacher walks into the classroom. Everything else – the school executive structure and the departmental bureaucracy- only exists to support this.

The focus of improvement must be on ensuring that teaching of the highest quality occurs in all classrooms and that all children have equal access to quality learning experiences, irrespective of their school, location or socio-economic background

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## Area 1: Supporting and encouraging the classroom teacher

- 2.1 Make teaching an attractive career option for high quality candidates (p12)
- 3.1 Build a culture of evidence-based performance management (p 18)
- 3.2 Exit teachers who are unable to improve after training and development (p 18)
- 3.3 Trial new ways of rewarding effective teachers (p 18)
- 3.4. Improve professional development and collaboration (p 18)

### *Attracting high quality candidates (page 12)*

- There is little point in looking elsewhere for teachers – such as candidates from other professions - until teaching becomes a rewarding career for those already in it.
- There is no conclusive evidence that programs like “Teach for Australia” give value for money, and the high attrition rate (only 20 out of 45 of the initial intake remained in any school system) could be partly attributed to them seeing no real future recognition for their talents if they remained in the profession
- A ‘first-class marketing campaign to reposition the profession’ will only be a camouflage unless teachers are already recognised as true professionals.

### *Rewarding the best teachers*

- The College rejects crude one-off performance bonuses, based on restricted data. Dan Pink **has shown, repeatedly and persuasively that bonus pay doesn't work**: <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2011/01/08/AR2011010800379.html>  
To quote Pink “The old carrot-and-stick notion of motivation is failing - in large part because it works very well for a type of work that most Americans aren't doing anymore. It's very good for simple, algorithmic, routine, rule-based sorts of tasks: adding up columns of figures, turning the same screw the same way. But there's 50 years of science that says it's ineffective for creative, conceptual, complex work. And that's what most people in both the blue-collar and the white-collar workforce are doing today.”  
[http://www.openculture.com/2010/06/daniel\\_pink\\_the\\_surprising\\_truth\\_about\\_what\\_motivates\\_us.html](http://www.openculture.com/2010/06/daniel_pink_the_surprising_truth_about_what_motivates_us.html)  
Pink drives home the point that traditional motivation schemes – namely, bonuses – rarely achieve their intended results. In fact, the bigger the bonus, the bigger the decline in performance. Or so studies show again and again. So what does motivate us? The desire to be self-directed, the will to master something and the hope to make a contribution. It's all what Pink calls “the purpose motive”.

### **Peter Dolton's Work**

Peter Dolton, from the London School of Economics has also done some good work on the relationship between teachers' pay and student outcomes. Short version is the better teachers' comparative salaries the better student outcomes on PISA etc. A summary of his paper is here:  
<http://cep.lse.ac.uk/pubs/download/cp352.pdf>



- The College maintains recognition of quality teaching should be through **a salary structure that encourages the best teachers to remain in the classroom.**
  - The current system, where teachers' salaries peak in their early thirties either encourages the best teachers to move out of the classroom into administrative positions or, if they remain in the classroom, to feel demoralised as their contemporaries in other professions are rewarded with regular growth in salary through their career commensurate with their experience and achievements.
  - As Professor Steve Dinham has pointed out (Dinham, 2011), the development of national teaching and learning standards can provide the basis for creating two categories of excellence beyond the current top of the scale for classroom teaching. Using the language of AITSL, these would be Highly Accomplished teacher and Lead Teacher. Entry into these positions would not be automatic and would be restricted to teachers who are outstanding in their field.
- The College recognises that there are a number of key issues to be addressed.
  - While there are national performance standards, performance indicators have yet to be developed.
  - How teachers are assessed and who conducts these processes are crucial questions. *The profession must be meaningfully involved and feel ownership of the process.*
  - Such a process would not be cost neutral, but by having quality teachers remaining in the classroom and acting as mentors for others it could be possible to reduce other positions in the executive level in schools and in the educational bureaucracy.
- A study by Peter Dolton and Oscar Marcenaro-Gutierrez (2011), based on OECD data has shown a close correlation between pupil performance and teacher salaries and concluded that a 10% rise in teacher's salaries would give rise to a 5-10% increase in pupil performance.

#### *Response to ineffective teachers*

- The College recognises that there is no place in the profession for the teacher who is actually harming the educational development of their students but the difference between "ineffective" and "less effective" must be addressed,
- The Government's statement (page 5) that 5% of teachers could be ineffective and needed to be removed, not only lacked any genuine evidential base but at the same time was the one aspect of the report that was, as should have been expected, most emphasised by the press. As a consequence of this, the release of this report became an opportunity to demoralise the education profession and to undermine anything of value in the report.
- Such action would also be completely impractical. Both the cost of the drawn out process of dismissing teachers and the training of new teachers to take their place would be an enormous waste of an educational budget.

#### *Teaching as a co-operative and collegial activity*

- The best teachers are those who are capable of critical reflection on what they do and who work co-operatively with others. While classroom observation and feedback can play an important role in this it is vital that teachers themselves have an impact



on how this is managed. Because the Discussion paper adopts a ‘top-down’ approach, it does not sufficiently recognise this.

*Use of “non-attendance time”*

- The best teachers not only spends hours in evenings and weekends on professional development activities during school term but also use the non-term time for individual study or for planning meetings.
- If this time was to be formalised, as seems the intent here, teachers must either (1) have a say in the course they do so that the course is specifically related to their individual development goals or (2) be allowed to propose their own course as one individual study or as a group activity.
- Compared with most other high performing countries teachers in Australia spend far more of their time in the classroom and have far less time for professional learning.

**Area 2: School Leadership**

4.1 Attracting and preparing school leaders (p 22)  
 4.2 Supporting and evaluating school leaders (p 23)  
 4.4 Acting at a system level to enable continuous improvement of schools (p 24)

- Attracting and preparing quality school leaders is crucial to bringing in supporting the classroom teacher. In recent times many qualified and experienced principals have retired and this is likely to continue, while at the same time student enrolments rise. As a result the pool of suitable school leaders is diminishing and currently there are a declining number of suitable applicants for Principal positions.
- The Bastow Institute has the potential to help meet this demand, but if it is to do so, it needs to be far better resourced, and to fund programs that are seen by principals to be directly relevant to the needs of schools and their own professional development needs. It would also need to work cooperatively and appropriately with leadership training developments in the non- government sectors. The DEECD should liaise closely with the Principal Associations to ensure that their members’ needs are being met.
- Just as teacher’s salaries have fallen behind on a comparative basis, the salary differential for principals in Government and Catholic systems has fallen behind in relation to classroom teacher’s salaries. Within the independent system significant bonuses can be awarded for reaching clearly expressed and measurable goals. This may have some of some value in encouraging a quality principal to work in and change the culture of what is seen as a ‘difficult’ school.
- School selection panels do need a rethink. Unless the panel is composed of people who are themselves of the highest quality and have a commitment to the future of the school there is no guarantee that the best decision will be made. There seems to be an assumption that a teacher representative would want an ineffectual principal, but an experienced teacher from the school who had shown commitment to school improvement could provide valuable insights to the selection panel on the qualities needed in the school principal at some stage in the process.
- It would be in the interest of all sectors to have greater movement in school leadership positions across sectors. It would allow a wider perspective to be brought



to the individual schools, as well as revealing what all the school systems have in common.

- It is hard to see how bringing people from outside the profession would help. One would first have to establish a case for why this would provide any advantage. A person with ‘new ideas’ but no practical experience in the complexity of managing educational professionals could be a disaster, especially as the profession recognises the importance of ‘instructional leadership’ in schools.
- Evaluation of a principal’s performance and if necessary, her/his removal is a fraught one. Obviously some schools are more difficult than others and bringing about change cannot be done in a short time frame. As with teacher evaluation, collection and appropriate analysis of the right data in the relevant context needs to occur.
- Again the use of the word “exiting” – showing the door – is a crude one. The person should continue in a position where those qualities demonstrated in their initial appointment could still be used.

### Area 3: Entry into Teaching

2.3 Raise the bar for applicants to the teaching profession (p 13)

2.4 Make pre-service education fit for the 21st century learning environment (p 13)

- These two provisions have not been examined in detail because, as ACE have argued, the current status of the profession has to be raised as a pre-requisite to increase interest from more able candidates.
- There is also an overlap between state and federal responsibilities in the tertiary education sector and ACE would encourage maximum federal/state cooperation.
- The College, however, is supportive of raising the standards of pre-training. This may include a two year post graduate course and renewed emphasis on the clinical model of training to ensure appropriate experience by pre-service teachers of the ‘real world’ work life of the teacher. ACE notes such models already exist.



## Area 4: Equity

### 2.2 Provide greater incentives for teachers to work in areas of high need. (p.13)

In this area ACE notes little reference to Aboriginal Victorians. Koories are still not economic equals with non-Koorie Victorians.

- Current policies are failing. Every year school principals, teachers, and Koorie parents face a barrage of 'new' and 'improved' ways to educate Koorie children. These programs bring Koorie children into classrooms with teachers who may not know from one week to the next what hurdle they will have to jump to satisfy new accountability measures.
- The 'New Directions' document aggregates a number of approaches designed to improve teacher effectiveness but the approach only provides the end-point measurement of the process and is policy driven.
- The College notes that there is a distinct lack of focus on how to support teachers and principals to effectively educate Koorie children despite the significant Australian government focus on 'Closing the Gap'. This document does not enable
- There needs to be Koorie involvement in decision making in the system, as is their right under the Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- There is no provision by which to train teachers or support them in their on-going professional development; no mention of how to support teachers to bring standards-based training to progressive classroom methods; and, no mechanism by which to bring Indigenous education rights into this discussion.
- Money has been used as an incentive to attract teachers to this highly specialised field for many years with little evidence of its success as a policy or strategy.
- Annual reports produced by the Productivity Commission (see, for example, SCRGSP, 2011) exposed serious gaps in academic achievement between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Australian schools. MCCETYA (1994, p.2) argued for an 'equity strategy' to address this failure. They say: *Equity doesn't just happen ... we need a national strategy for equity in schooling as a framework for concerted national action - by teachers, parents, students and the community.*

### *And Finally*

There is little in the paper to excite, re-energise and enthuse the profession. Education reform needs clear, informed and well researched thinking so as to prepare our schools for tomorrow.

Nor is there any serious acknowledgement of the need to address the long-term decline in salary and working conditions if the best of the younger generation are going to be attracted into teaching as a profession.

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