COMMENT BY TEACHERS REGISTRATION BOARD ON THE DRAFT RESEARCH REPORT INTO MUTUAL RECOGNITION ARRANGEMENTS (Productivity Commission Report June 2003)

Preliminary Finding 5.1

Achieving MRA and TTMRA objectives (in relation to both goods and occupations) would be assisted by jurisdictions dissemination, in a coordinated manner, information on the obligations and benefits of mutual recognition. This campaign to enhance the knowledge and awareness of mutual recognition would be directed at their own regulators, local governments, relevant industries and professional associations.

Teacher registration authorities are working collaboratively to achieve MRA and TTMRA objectives. Processes and procedures to facilitate the effective exchange of information at a policy and operational level are being developed. However, differences between jurisdictional requirements are an issue. Attempts to minimise differences will need a high level of co-operation between states.

Preliminary Finding 5.2

As part of the awareness campaign referred to in preliminary finding 5.1, regulatory authorities could be informed that they have scope to obtain under mutual recognition relevant information about applicants, without contravening privacy laws.

Differences in jurisdictional requirements and the extent and scope of data collected will need to be addressed to achieve consistency between states.

Preliminary Finding 5.3

Given that there is provision for postponement in certain circumstances, the one-month period for registration boards to check applications under mutual recognition appears appropriate.

The registration authority is considered to be the 'gate-keeper' of the profession. It is not in the interests of the public, or the protection of children, to be registered and therefore eligible for employment, unless the appropriate checks have taken place.

The public interest would be better served by an approach which enabled a screening process to occur before a person was declared eligible for employment and before he/she took up that employment or occupation.

The intent of MRA or TTMRA would appear to be compromised if after receiving "deemed" registration a person was unable to be employed until appropriate checks had occurred at an employment level. Practices at an employment level vary in relation to "fitness and propriety" checks – far more effective for them to be done by the Teacher Registration Boards in a comprehensive way.

Preliminary Finding 5.4

Information flows among registration boards across jurisdictions would be enhanced by a greater use of electronic database registration systems with capacity for access by counter-party boards.

While this may be seen as an ideal situation the practicabilities and cost involved in achieving this are problematic.

Preliminary Finding 5.6

Australian occupational registration authorities should continue to consider developing national registration systems where the benefits justify the costs.

There has already been much work done by registration authorities to identify and address common issues and develop mechanisms to promote consistency on a national basis. A federation model similar to that established by the Nurses Boards would be a more acceptable model. The development of TRBs in most states and territories by 2004 will enhance the development of a Federal model.

Preliminary Finding 5.7

Jurisdictions in Australia and new Zealand continuing to work on reducing differences in relation to Registration requirements, helps to address concerns (including cost incurred) of jurisdictional "shopping and hopping".

The solution to jurisdictional "shopping and hopping" is the harmonisation of standards across Australia to a level acceptable to all. Mutual Recognition provides an incentive to work towards this end. The co-operative, federated emerging National Forum of Teacher Registration Organisations will continue to work towards this end in co-operation with respective State Governments

Preliminary Finding 5.8

Existing mutual recognition arrangements seem to be sufficiently flexible to address the needs for "local knowledge" requirements to be incorporated into the delivery of professional services and

The need for "local" knowledge requirements is another matter on the agenda of the meetings of the Teacher Registration National Forum.

Preliminary Finding 5.9

The efficacy of professional standards and therefore, confidence in the mutual recognition process, is being enhanced by the trend for jurisdictions to require some degree of "current competency" as a requirement of registration.

It would be in the best interests of the teaching profession and the wider community to achieve a level of consistency in professional standards. The work currently being undertaken by MCEETYA in relation to a National Framework for Standards is an example of co-operation and collaboration in this area.

Work done by jurisdictions in adopting standards will have implications for achieving uniformity at a National level.