Board of Teacher Registration, Queensland.

Response to the Draft Research Report, Evaluation of the Mutual Recognition Schemes

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Mutual Recognition in Practice (Box 5.1, p.67)
The main issue here is the written notice given by an applicant, and its relationship to an "Application for Registration". It is suggested that Australian teacher registration authorities develop a common notice for this purpose.
Another important issue is that of "deemed registration", permitting the applicant to practice the profession while a decision is being made about the application (within a time limit of one month).

The review acknowledges issues arising from the possibility that a teacher might have access to children before the outcomes of police checks are known. The suggestion that employers could make decisions in this regard is supported, and the Board recognises the significance of the documentation provided to acknowledge receipt of a notice from an applicant. The acknowledgement of receipt of a notice of application would provide evidence to employers of a teacher's "deemed registration", and should make it clear that a final determination is dependent on appropriate character checks.

Postponement of Registration Decision
A second ("receiving") registering authority may decide to postpone granting or refusing registration under certain circumstances, for a period of up to six months. There is some confusion about whether postponement can be based on pending or current disciplinary action. While the review document suggests that boards do not have this ability (p.73), this does not appear to be supported by the Acts or other documentation. It may be that this is dependent upon whether the applicant was aware of any action at the time of application.

Short-term Provisions / National Registration Systems (pp.74-76)
These issues relate to mobility, particularly in those professions whose members may practice in more than one state / country simultaneously. While the need for short-term registration may not seem an urgent matter for teachers, the on-going consideration of a national framework for (rather than a national system of) registration supported by databases accessible by all authorities is seen to have merit.

Jurisdiction Shopping (p.76)
Given the differences in entry / initial registration requirements that exist in the various teacher registration jurisdictions, there is scope for "shopping and hopping" to occur. While there does not seem to be evidence that this is occurring on a large scale at present, there is evidence that it does occur and this could increase among teachers.

The Board of Teacher Registration has some sympathy with the DEST proposal for a requirement for a period of practice or residency in the first jurisdiction (p.77). However the review does not support this, and proposes instead that jurisdictions work towards minimising the differences in requirements. This would also be our preferred approach to the issue. The report's suggestion about the establishment of inter-jurisdictional forums provides impetus for the current work of this nature occurring between teacher registration authorities.

Current Competency (p.79)
The comments here, and in particular the Preliminary Finding 5.9, have particular relevance for teaching at this time of national interest and movement in the area of professional standards.

Summary
In general, the Board agrees that the Mutual Recognition Arrangement facilitate the mobility of teachers between jurisdictions. Problems encountered are generally administrative in nature, and appear to be best addressed by adapting procedures and by ensuring that the various registration authorities co-operate to develop nationally consistent standards and practices. The regular meetings of what has come to be known informally as the National Registration Forum indicate that there is both a capacity and a willingness on the part of the authorities to achieve the intentions of the Arrangements through administrative reform and consensus.