



A response from the Independent Education Union of Australia  
to the Australian Government Productivity Commission:

*Productivity Commission Inquiry into the  
Education & Training Workforce:  
Schools  
Draft Report*

**Friday 17 February 2012**

## Introduction

1. The Independent Education Union of Australia (IEU) is the federally registered union that represents teachers and support staff in non-government education institutions including early childhood centres, schools and post secondary training institutions, across all the states and territories of Australia. The union currently has a membership of over 70,100.
2. The IEU has always taken an active role in the various debates and government funded projects and forums concerned with issues relating to factors affecting the supply of school workers, the knowledge and skills base of the workforce and policy settings that impact on the operation and quality of work for staff employed in schools.
3. The IEU response to the Draft Report will focus on three specific items.

### Draft Finding 4.1 and Information Request 4.1

4. In relation to Draft Finding 4.1 and attendant Information Request 4.1, the IEU would draw the Commission's attention to the recently released Staff in Australia's Schools 2010 Report and in particular findings in relation to 'Out of field' teaching and 'Unfilled Positions'.
5. Essentially the SiAS 2010 report indicates that it is not a simple map of specific subjects that are hard to staff.
6. With respect to 'Unfilled Positions' the SiAS 2010 shows that it is a range of subjects, and certainly not just those traditionally quoted, that indicate apparent shortages. For instance the report finds that the unfilled positions in secondary schools in Term 3<sup>4</sup> were the following: English - 5%, LOTE - 6%, Mathematics – 8%, Science - 5%, SOSE – 5%.
7. Further the SiAS 2010 report provides data on 'apparent' shortage in the measure of 'Out of field' teaching. This measure provides some indication of apparent shortage in schools where teachers without the formal training in a subject area are being asked to take classes in other disciplines. Whilst some caution needs to be considered here, for instance the impact will be magnified for smaller school student populations and even consideration of different year levels, the measure would not be dissimilar to many of the traditional considerations of teacher shortage.
8. SiAS 2010 shows that 'out of field' teaching is spread across all subject areas. For instance in 2010 the amount of 'out of field' teaching per subject was reported as English – 19%, LOTE – 15%, Mathematics – 25%, Biology – 15%, Chemistry – 17%, Physics – 34%, General Science – 33%, Geography – 48%, History – 30%, Computing IT – 42%, and VET – 45%.
9. Essentially, SiAS 2010 indicates that embedding a remuneration allowance or variation into current industrial agreements would be particularly fraught and a very blunt instrument unlikely to deal with other underlying issues such as school size, location and community background.

Further, apparent shortages will also be impacted in a very volatile manner by changed requirements in schools with respect to the introduction of Australian Curriculum.

10. In relation to remote or isolated schools there are already a range of formal instruments including industrial agreements and informal employer incentives with respect to such schools.
11. These arrangements include additional remuneration, usually in the form of allowances, entitlement to supported housing and even subsidized travel arrangements to return to 'home towns' during the year.
12. However, and especially in remote indigenous communities, these incentive arrangements do not operate on their own and invariably are impacted by local community decisions and expectations.

### **Draft Recommendation 5.2**

13. The IEU rejects outright the recommendation to revise Program Standard 1.3 of the Accreditation of Initial Teacher Education Programs in Australia; Standards and Procedures, to indicate that the two-year course for graduate entry should be optional rather than mandatory.
14. The teaching profession is an increasingly complex profession and with greater knowledge about how students learn, increased understanding about brain development, increased legal, legislative and regulatory requirements, the formal learning provided at an accredited tertiary institution is essential.
15. The IEU would argue strongly that the expectations on teachers and the needs of school children require no less a commitment to formal, structured learning than has been the case in the past and indeed, probably more so.
16. The IEU has supported and encourages more flexible delivery to teacher training programs and improvements in the practicum experience and interaction between tertiary providers and the schools and teachers.

### **Information Request 6.2**

17. The IEU has previously provided some commentary with respect to the establishment of a performance-based career structure including noting the Australian Government's policy in relation to 'Rewarding Great Teachers' and the intersection of this policy setting with questions posed in the Inquiry Issues paper and subsequently the Information Request.
18. The IEU believes that there are a number of key principles that should guide the development of any approach or scheme to remunerate teachers.
19. Teachers' base salaries must always be set at a professionally appropriate rate and not undermined by the adoption of a scheme for identifying and recognising Accomplished Teachers. This principle is particularly salient in light of the revelations of the OECD report (August 2011) in

relation to the relative salaries of experienced Australian teachers compared to other OECD countries.

20. Any scheme must include teachers and their unions in its development.
21. The appraisal of accomplished teachers must be on the basis of agreed criteria, and that the appraisal must be conducted fairly and impartially by trained personnel.
22. Finally, the IEU notes that international research reveals that competitive remuneration arrangements undermine the collaborative approach which characterises teachers' work. Teachers find themselves competing with colleagues which can lead to an unproductive work environment and adversarial relationships among staff.
23. The 'cost effectiveness' of an scheme should be measured by the cost to Australia's school children and the economy more broadly if the best teachers are not attracted, retained and rewarded.
24. Any alternative to an automatic progression must recognize that the minimum salary for an Accomplished Teacher is no less than the current top step of teacher salary scales and again data from other OECD countries provides an appropriate point of comparison.