



AUSTRALIAN PARENTS COUNCIL Incorporated

The National Federation of Organisations Representing Parents of Non-government School Students

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ALTERNATIVE PATHWAYS INTO TEACHING

APC supports programs which enable individuals who already hold a bachelors degree and have developed expertise in a specialist field to build upon their professional base to become accredited teachers without having to complete a traditional teacher training program.

In the current context where the average age of the teaching workforce is rapidly increasing and numbers are expected to decline in the next few years, it is essential that any viable steps are taken to ensure a high quality teaching force is available into the future to service the schooling needs of all young Australians. Creative solutions will be required to fast track appropriate people into the teaching profession. APC is therefore open to considering any strategies that might provide a solution, so long as the safety and wellbeing of children and academic quality and rigour are not compromised.

We are aware of one model which requires teacher candidates to document their expertise in a subject area and if they are considered to fulfil specified alternate pathway requirements for provisional licensing they might then be approved to begin teaching as soon as they have obtained a position, under the supervision of a designated mentor. They are then required to undertake a specified number of hours of coursework in professional education during their first year of teaching and at the end of the specified hours of course work, successful candidates are eligible for teacher accreditation.

Such a model may help to reduce the financial barrier that often deters knowledgeable and skilled people who might otherwise be prepared to consider teaching as an alternative and attractive career path.

Another model is the Adjunct Teacher Corps in the United States, which provides opportunities for professionals with subject-matter knowledge and experience to teach middle and high school courses in the core academic subjects, particularly in mathematics and science, where there is a shortage of teaching personnel to meet specialised teaching needs. Our understanding is that such positions can be on either a contract or tenured basis, depending upon the particular needs of a school or schooling district. Such a model could also be very appropriate for the teaching of trades and foreign languages.

We are also aware of many parents who have gained extensive experience tutoring their own children through distance education or school of the year, etc, and in the process have developed excellent teaching skills which may be able to be utilised in supporting small rural schools where it is difficult to access support staff and/or relief staff.

There is scope for greater recognition of the knowledge, skills and attributes that many people develop in such undertakings, which are key elements of effective teaching practice, and which can be framed within the contexts of prior learning and current competencies.

APC will continue to participate in ongoing conversations in respect of alternative pathways into teaching, as more concrete proposals are developed and progress made towards implementing creative solutions.

However, we believe there are two factors that will be imperative to achieving a successful response to the challenges that lie before us in respect of this issue:

- adequate levels of additional resources will have to be provided by all levels of government to ensure the best possible outcomes can be achieved This would be enhanced by the Australian and State and Territory Governments entering into the cost sharing contractual arrangement promoted by APC; and
- the teaching profession needs to be encouraged to move beyond its traditional closed mindset that reflects a negative perspective of professional collegiality and often puts unnecessary barriers in the way of solution focused endeavours aimed at reinvigorating and sustaining the schooling enterprise in this country.