

**STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL ISSUES
INQUIRY INTO TEACHER RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING**

PROPOSED QUESTIONS

Hearing 8 April 2005

Koori Centre, University of Sydney
Dr Arthur Smith, Academic Coordinator

1. **How many Indigenous teachers are currently teaching in schools in New South Wales?**
 - a) **Can you break these figures down into government and non government schools**

I DO NOT HAVE ACCESS TO THESE FIGURES AT THIS STAGE, BUT SUGGEST THAT THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING (DET-ABORIGINAL PROGRAMS BRANCH) OR THE NSW TEACHERS' FEDERATION ABORIGINAL EDUCATION COMMITTEE, WOULD HAVE STATISTICS FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS. I BELIEVE THERE ARE MORE ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ASSISTANTS (AEA'S) EMPLOYED THAN GRADUATES AT THE BACHELOR LEVEL. ONE INDIGENOUS STAFF MEMBER WHO RECENTLY WORKED FOR THE NSW DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, AND IS ALSO ACTIVE IN THE NSW ABORIGINAL EDUCATION CONSULTATIVE GROUP, SAID SHE THOUGHT THERE WERE ABOUT 200 AEA'S AND AROUND 200 OTHER GRADUATES WHO IDENTIFIED AS ABORIGINAL TEACHERS IN NSW. THE CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE WOULD HAVE INDIGENOUS STAFF EMPLOYMENT STATISTICS FOR THEIR SCHOOL SYSTEM AND, I WOULD EXPECT, OTHER RELIGION-BASED AND/ OR INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS WOULD HAVE INFORMATION REGARDING THEIR EMPLOYMENT OF INDIGENOUS TEACHERS.

Training

2. **Are university graduates, particularly Indigenous graduates, entering the school system sufficiently prepared for life in the classroom?**

UNLESS WE MOVE TO SIX YEAR PRESERVICE (PRE/POST ARTICULATED TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS), I'M NOT SURE THAT TEACHER EDUCATION GRADUATES IN GENERAL WILL EVER BE COMPLETELY AND SUFFICIENTLY PREPARED FOR THE COMPLEXITIES AND CHANGING DEMANDS OF TEACHING IN CONTEMPORARY AUSTRALIAN SOCIETY. GOOD AND EFFECTIVE TEACHERS CAN AND DO MAKE THE DIFFERENCE, BUT SUBSTANTIVE CHANGES IN THE SOCIETY AND IN THE BASIS OF KNOWLEDGE, TECHNOLOGY, CULTURE AND VALUES/EXPECTATIONS, PLACES AND ENORMOUS AMOUNT OF PRESSURE ON TEACHERS, OFTEN, ESPECIALLY, THE MOST EFFECTIVE AND DEDICATED PRACTITIONERS. TEACHERS AND THE CURRICULUM AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS OF SCHOOLS CANNOT CONTINUE TO BE SEEN BY AUSTRALIANS AS A PANACEA FOR THE ILLS AND CHALLENGES OF THE MULTICULTURAL

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SOCIETY. IN A NUTSHELL, WE DO THE BEST WE CAN AT THE PRESERVICE LEVEL AND WE RECRUIT AND GRADUATE MANY OUTSTANDING PRACTITIONERS.

3. How could Indigenous teachers be best supported when they begin teaching?

THERE ARE VARIOUS MENTORING PROGRAMS FOR BEGINNING TEACHERS ALREADY IN SCHOOLS AROUND THE STATE, AND SOME PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITIES HAVE BEEN INVOLVED IN SETTING THESE UP IN COLLABORATIVE WAYS WITH COLLEAGUES IN THE SCHOOLS. ON THE BASIS OF SOME BEGINNING TEACHER PERCEPTIONS, HOWEVER, POSSIBLY BECAUSE OF ACUTE TEACHER SHORTAGES IN SOME AREAS OF CURRICULUM, FIRST YEAR TEACHERS CAN BE ASKED TO TEACH IN SUBJECT AREAS FOR WHICH THEY ARE NOT PREPARED. OTHERS HAVE SAID THEY SOMETIMES END UP WITH VERY DIFFICULT CLASSES, THOSE WHICH MORE EXPERIENCED TEACHERS MAY BE HAPPY TO AVOID OR, AT LEAST NEED TO TAKE A BREAK FROM FOR A WHILE. WE SHOULD PERHAPS BE LOOKING AT A CROSS-SECTION OF BEST PRACTICE IN THIS AREA. SOME SCHOOLS ARE DOING BETTER THAN OTHERS AND SOME TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS IN UNIVERSITIES ARE BETTER CONNECTED IN A COLLEGIAL, INTERACTIVE (TRANSACTIVE) WAY WITH TEACHER EDUCATORS IN THE SCHOOLS AND IN THE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND TRAINING.

4. How does the Koori Centre support Indigenous students (particularly students planning a career in education) at Sydney University?

WE PROVIDE A TERTIARY PREPARATION COURSE FOR KOORI STUDENTS WHO MAY HAVE WITHDRAWN FROM THEIR FORMAL SCHOOL-BASED EDUCATION EARLY. WE ARE ALSO ACTIVE IN COMMUNITIES AND THROUGH ABORIGINAL ORGANISATIONS AND FAMILY NETWORKS IN ATTRACTING INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AND PROMOTING TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS. OUR STUDENTS AND EX-STUDENTS THEMSELVES ARE EFFECTIVE ROLE MODELS. WE RUN STUDY SKILLED DEVELOPMENT COURSES FOR NEW STUDENTS DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER AT LEAST (AND BEYOND IF NECESSARY), EMPLOY SPECIALIST TUTORS IN SOME SUBJECT AREAS UNDER THE FEDERALLY FUNDED INDIGENOUS TUTORIAL ASSISTANCE SCHEME (ITAS), AND WE RUN A VERY SUCCESSFUL HIGHER SCHOOL CERTIFICATE (HSC) PREPARATION COURSE FOR KOORI YEAR 12 STUDENTS DURING THE YEAR LEADING UP TO THE HSC. THERE ARE MANY OTHER MORE CULTURALLY SPECIFIC WAYS THAT STUDENTS ARE SUPPORTED, RESPECTED AND ENCOURAGED. SOME OF THESE ARE AS REFERRED TO IN ATTACHED PROMOTIONAL MATERIAL AND POLICY/PRACTICE GUIDELINES.

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5. Are career change courses such as the Accelerated Teacher Training programs a good way of attracting Indigenous people to the teaching profession?

THEY MAY WELL BE BUT WE DO NOT SPECIFICALLY RUN SUCH PROGRAMS OUT OF THE KOORI CENTRE. OUR INTENSIVE BLOCK RELEASE TYPE PROGRAMS MAY BE CLASSIFIED, IN PART, AS ACADEMICALLY ACCELERATED, I'M NOT SURE ABOUT THIS. THERE ARE MANY ABORIGINAL AND TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER GRADUATES AROUND THE COUNTRY WHO MIGHT BE ATTRACTED INTO AN ACCELERATED PRE-SERVICE OR INSERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAM. I KNOW THIS KIND OF ACTIVITY IS PRODUCING POSITIVE RESULTS IN AREAS OF TEACHER SHORTAGE.

6. Can you indicate the numbers of Aboriginal Education Assistants who undertake training to become a full time teacher?

WE CURRENTLY HAVE 21 STUDENTS IN THE FIRST YEAR OF THE DIPLOMA OF EDUCATION (ABORIGINAL) AND 8 STUDENTS IN YEAR 2. THIS 2 YEAR DIPLOMA IS REGARDED IN THE SCHOOL, AND IN THE PROFESSION IN GENERAL, AS A BASIC QUALIFICATION FOR BEING AN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION ASSISTANT (AEA), OR ABORIGINAL EDUCATION WORKER IN A BROADER CONTEXT. THIS QUALIFICATION ARTICULATES WITH YEARS 3 AND 4 OF THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION ABORIGINAL STUDIES, HISTORY AND STUDIES OF SOCIETY AND ITS ENVIRONMENT (SOSE) DEGREE, WHICH IS TAUGHT COLLABORATIVELY BETWEEN KOORI CENTRE AND FACULTY OF EDUCATION STAFF. THE BACHELOR OF EDUCATION (ABORIGINAL STUDIES, HISTORY, SOSE), IS CONFERRED BY THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK AT SYDNEY UNIVERSITY AS A SECONDARY SCHOOLS TEACHING QUALIFICATION. KOORI CENTRE STAFF ALSO TEACH MAINSTREAM CLASSES FOR NON-INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN AND INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS IN INDIGENOUS STUDIES AND INDIGENOUS EDUCATION. OUR CURRENT ENROLMENT IN THE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIA CORE UNIT OF STUDY IS 152 AND IN THE INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION UNIT: 108.

Recruitment

7. Are Departmental scholarships providing sufficient incentive to prospective Indigenous students?

THESE SCHOLARSHIPS WERE WELL RECEIVED BY INDIGENOUS STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY (WE HAVE 6 TEACHER EDUCATION STUDENTS WHO HAVE ENROLLED THIS YEAR IN MAINSTREAM PRESERVICE TEACHER EDUCATION COURSES RUN BY THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION AND SOCIAL WORK), BUT I AM ADVISED THAT ONLY 3 KOORI STUDENTS ACROSS ALL TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS RUN BY THE UNIVERSITY HAVE TAKEN UP THESE SCHOLARSHIPS

8. What kinds of incentives could be provided to attract more Indigenous students to the profession?

IT IS DIFFICULT FINANCIALLY FOR INDIGENOUS STUDENTS TO CONTEMPLATE 2-4 YEARS, OR LONGER, OF STUDY IN ORDER TO COMPLETE AN UNDERGRADUATE TEACHING DEGREE, EVEN IN BLOCK PROGRAM FORMAT, WHICH REQUIRES 6 X 1 WEEK INTENSIVE PERIODS OF STUDY ON CAMPUS EACH YEAR, PLUS ON-GOING COURSEWORK DELIVERED THROUGH VARIOUS FORMS OF DISTANCE MODE EDUCATION, AND PRACTICE TEACHING IN COOPERATING STATE SCHOOLS BETWEEN BLOCKS. THERE COULD BE SCHOLARSHIPS AND PERHAPS PAYMENT FOR CLINICAL WORK IN SCHOOLS, AND OTHER INCENTIVES IN TERMS OF CHILD CARE PROVISION IN COMMUNITIES. MOST OF THE STUDENTS IN THESE COURSES ARE MATURE-AGED ABORIGINAL WOMEN WITH SUBSTANTIAL FAMILY AND OTHER OBLIGATIONS IN THE COMMUNITY. WE HAVE NOT BEEN AS SUCCESSFUL AS WE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE BEEN IN ATTRACTING INDIGENOUS MALES INTO TEACHER EDUCATION PROGRAMS.

9. Are the current incentives provided by the Department to teach in rural and remote areas sufficient?

- a) **Would you suggest other incentives to attract teachers to rural and remote areas?**
- b)

THERE MAY BE APPROPRIATE INCENTIVES FOR NON-INDIGENOUS TEACHERS, BUT INDIGENOUS STUDENT'S GRADUATES INVARIABLY WANT TO GO BACK TO THEIR OWN COMMUNITY TO TEACH, YET THERE CAN BE NO GUARANTEED VACANT POSITION THERE AT THE TIME THEY GRADUATE. ON THE BASIS OF ENROLMENTS, SCHOOLS HAVE AN ESTABLISHMENT STAFFING LIMIT TO WORK WITH. PERHAPS THERE COULD BE MORE FLEXIBILITY IN THIS AREA. ABORIGINAL TEACHERS ARE OFTEN HEAVILY INVOLVED IN COMMUNITY BUSINESS AFTER SCHOOL HOURS AND ARE IMPORTANT COMMUNICATION LINKS BETWEEN SCHOOL, COMMUNITY AND INDIGENOUS ORGANISATIONS. THERE COULD BE A SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITY ALLOWANCE FOR THIS KIND OF WORK. ALSO, THE PAY SCALES FOR AEA'S COULD BE UPGRADED MORE IN LINE WITH WHAT ABORIGINAL TEACHERS ACTUALLY CONTRIBUTE IN THIS WIDER SENSE. WE PROBABLY NEED TO RECRUIT MORE ACTIVELY IN RURAL, REMOTE AND ISOLATED AREAS OF THE STATE, AND INCREASED FUNDING COULD BE PROVIDED FOR MORE ELECTRONICALLY EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION AND TEACHING/ LEARNING BETWEEN BLOCKS. A COMPUTER AND PRINTER ALLOWANCE OR HIRING SYSTEM FOR STUDENTS MAY BE BENEFICIAL IN THIS RESPECT.

10. It has been suggested that many new teachers, particularly new Indigenous teachers, leave the profession after a short time in the job. Do you believe this is this the case?

- a) Why?
- b) How could they be encouraged to stay?

I DO NOT KNOW WHY THIS IS SO BUT HAVE BEEN ADVISED THAT IT IS BECAUSE SCHOOLS ARE NOT IN A POSITION TO OFFER JOBS IN THOSE AREAS WITHIN REASONABLE TRAVELLING DISTANCE OF HOME BASE THAT EX-STUDENTS APPLY TO TEACH IN.

NSW Institute of Teachers

11. What kind of role do you foresee for the NSW Institute of Teachers?

ON THE BASIS OF WHAT I KNOW OF THE QUEENSLAND BOARD OF TEACHER REGISTRATION, WHICH IS THE ONLY SIMILAR BODY I AM AWARE OF IN AUSTRALIA, I THINK THE PROPOSED NSW INSTITUTE COULD BE A VERY USEFUL AND APPROPRIATE PROFESSIONAL BODY TO PROVIDE LEADERSHIP, REBUILD ASPECTS OF PROFESSIONALISM IN THE FIELD AND CONDUCT QUALITY, RELEVANCE-DRIVEN CLASSROOM ENQUIRY AND OTHER FORMS OF RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT. I HAVE HAD LIMITED TIME AT THIS STAGE TO READ ALL OF THE CONCEPTUAL OUTLINE MATERIAL THAT HAS BEEN DISTRIBUTED BY THE INSTITUTE, BUT ITS ESTABLISHMENT COULD BE POTENTIALLY A VERY GOOD THING FOR TEACHERS, STUDENTS, SCHOOLS, AND THE NSW COMMUNITY IN GENERAL.

The Committee's Inquiry

12. What would you like to see come out of this inquiry?

AN ACTION PLAN THAT IS BASED ON GENUINE CONSULTATIVE PROCESSES AND EVALUATION OF OUTCOMES WITH INDIGENOUS PROFESSIONALS AND THEIR NON-INDIGENOUS COLLEAGUES WHO WORK IN THIS IMPORTANT AREA OF EDUCATION. WE NEED MORE INDIGENOUS TEACHERS AND QUALITY TEACHERS ACROSS THE BOARD, BUT WE NEED TO CREATE AN ENVIRONMENT IN THE SCHOOLS, AND IN THE COMMUNITY, IN WHICH DEDICATED, SKILLED AND TALENTED PEOPLE WILL BE RECOGNISED, UNDERSTOOD AND REWARDED IN WAYS AGREED TO BE APPROPRIATE. IDEALLY, INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS NEED TO BE ACTIVELY REPRESENTED IN ALL AREAS OF THE AUSTRALIAN WORKFORCE, BUT PERHAPS THERE WILL STILL NOT BE ENOUGH TEACHERS (OR HEALTH WORKERS, LAWYERS, POLITICIANS, OR ALL THE OTHER TRADES, PROFESSIONS AND OCCUPATIONS NEEDED) TO 'GO AROUND'. WHO THEN WILL ADDRESS THE NEEDS AND INTERESTS OF ABORIGINAL CITIZENS AND OTHERS IN THE COMMUNITY? IN THIS CONTEXT WE POSSIBLY NEED TO FORM AN ARMY OF APPROPRIATELY QUALIFIED, MOTIVATED AND

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SKILLED NON-INDIGENOUS GRADUATES WHO ARE KEEN TO WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIGENOUS TEACHERS AND ADMINISTRATORS IN PLANNING AND DELIVERY OF CONTINUING HIGH QUALITY TEACHER EDUCATION IN NSW. SUCH PEOPLE ARE ALREADY OUT THERE, OF COURSE, AND HAVE BEEN SINCE 1788, BUT WE REALLY NEED MORE AT THIS DEVELOPMENTALLY PIVOTAL TIME IN AUSTRALIAN AND NSW HISTORY.

Dr Arthur Smith

In association with other Koori Centre staff

The University of Sydney

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