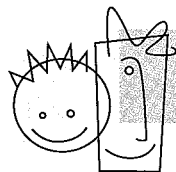


INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF TEACHERS

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Date Received: 23/02/2005

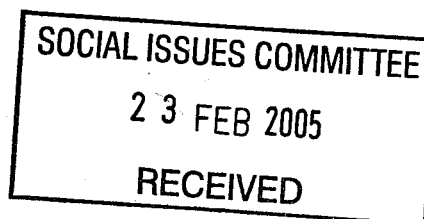
Theme:

Summary



nsw commission for
children & young people

The Hon Jan Burnswoods, MLC
Chair
Standing Committee on Social Issues
Parliament House
Macquarie St
SYDNEY NSW 2000



Dear Ms Burnswood

I am pleased to enclose the NSW Commission for Children and Young People's submission to the Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Training.

With the Committee's approval, I would like to place a copy of the submission on the Commission's website. Making work such as this publicly available is one mechanism I use to be accountable to the children and young people and Parliament of New South Wales. I would appreciate your consideration of this request at an appropriate time.

If you require any further information, please contact the Commission's Manager, Policy, Mr David Evanian-Thomas, on 9286 7270 or david.evanian-thomas@kids.nsw.gov.au.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Calvert
Commissioner
17 February 2005

**Submission to the Legislative
Council Standing Committee on
Social Issues**

***Inquiry into the Recruitment and
Training of Teachers***

February 2005

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**SUBMISSION BY THE
NSW COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE
TO THE LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL STANDING COMMITTEE ON SOCIAL
ISSUES INQUIRY INTO THE RECRUITMENT AND TRAINING OF
TEACHERS**

FEBRUARY 2005

1. THE COMMISSION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

- 1.1 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People ('the Commission') promotes the safety, welfare and well-being of children and young people in NSW.
- 1.2 The Commission was established by the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998* (NSW) ('the Act'). Section 10 of the Commission's Act lays down three statutory principles which govern the work of the Commission:
 - a) the safety, welfare and well-being of children are the paramount considerations;
 - b) the views of children are to be given serious consideration and taken into account; and
 - c) a co-operative relationship between children and their families and community is important to the safety, welfare and well-being of children.
- 1.3 Section 12 of the Commission's Act requires the Commission to give priority to the interests and needs of vulnerable children. Children are defined in the Act as all people under the age of 18 years.
- 1.4 Section 11(d) of the Act provides that one of the principal functions of the Commission is to make recommendations to government and non-government agencies on legislation, policies, practices and services affecting children.

2. GENERAL COMMENTS

- 2.1 The Commission is pleased to make a submission to the NSW Parliament's Standing Committee on Social Issues Inquiry into Teacher Recruitment and Training.
- 2.2 This submission draws on the comments that children and young people across New South Wales have made to the Commission about teachers, schooling and training. Between December 2004 and February 2005 the Commission spoke with children and young people about their views on

the NSW Department of Education and Training *Futures Project: Excellence and Innovation*.

- 2.3 Rarely do children and young people specifically mention teacher education or teacher recruitment when they talk to the Commission. They do, however, often praise and criticise the quality of teachers, teaching, schools and colleges.
- 2.4 This submission presents what children and young people have said about the qualities and expertise that are characteristics of the best teachers. By inference then, it is development of these characteristics in trainees and prospective employees as well as nurturing them in current employees that should be the objective of teacher education and recruitment in New South Wales.
- 2.5 The Commission submits these suggestions in the hope that they will assist the Committee to incorporate the views of children and young people into recommendations that will inform future teacher education and recruitment practices.

3. CONTEXT OF TEACHER TRAINING AND RECRUITMENT

3.1 *The emerging 'knowledge age'*

- 3.1.1 In 2002 the Commonwealth government set up the Committee for the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education as part of its *Backing Australia's Ability: Commitment to Innovation* initiative. The Committee said that the social and economic progress of Australia is increasingly dependent on the population's capacity, both individually and collectively, to solve problems, to be creative and to generate new and better ways of doing things. (Kwong Lee Dow, 2003)
- 3.1.2 In a similar way, globalisation and the tools, skills and demands of work in the emerging knowledge age are revolutionising the structures of workplaces, communities and nations that have governed human existence for generations. The pace is rapid.
- 3.1.3 Those individuals, families, groups, communities and nations that learn, adapt and keep up will achieve or maintain the benefits of economic prosperity. Those who can't afford to keep up, are unable to keep up or who resist change, may quickly find themselves marginalised.

3.2 *Children and young people at the beginning of the 'knowledge age'*

- 3.2.1 At the beginning of the 21st century children and young people are faced with a world that is undergoing fundamental social change. Signs of the changes to come have already been experienced by many children, young people and their families, but their implications have only dimly registered in the consciousness. For example, in many families today it is the youngest members who know more about, have more experience

with and teach adults how to use computers, computerised appliances, touch screens and the internet.

3.2.2 Children and young people have knowledge and expertise that the adults in their families and communities do not. As a consequence, there are times when traditional roles and hierarchies within families are disrupted, when the young step out of being 'kids' to supplant adults as 'elders'. Social change of this magnitude alters perceptions, relationships and communities.

3.2.3 The emergence of the knowledge age coincides with growing dissatisfaction among children and young people, particularly those in secondary schools, many of whom feel trapped in academic courses that don't suit them. Dissatisfaction, dis-engagement and alienation among children and young people are reaching 'critical-mass' proportions, so they can no longer be ignored or labelled the fault of a troublesome few.

3.3 *The challenge of the 'knowledge age' for schooling and training*

3.3.1 Parents, teachers and education authorities are finally coming to recognise what many children and young people have known for years, that the current structures and emphases of schooling are no longer relevant for a significant number of children and young people.

3.3.2 In Australia, many prior-to-school programs adopt the student-centred learning which promotes the creativity, cooperative teamwork, problem solving and adaptability required in the emerging age. Beyond this stage few schools or colleges in New South Wales adopt student-centred learning or focus on promoting innovation. Where there are innovative programs they tend to be 'special' or 'add-on' courses chosen by individuals rather than the dominant approach of mainstream curriculum, classes or lectures.

3.3.3 Sullivan et al (2003) highlight many of the assumptions about knowledge that regrettably continue to dominate expectations of schooling and training. They suggest that schooling in the 'old knowledge' aimed at producing compliant persons, not just compliant learners. Learners who would put personal interests and talents 'on hold', accept that 'transmitted content' had abiding value because school said so, and then after examination time, curiously, discard most of what they learned and never go near education for the rest of their lives. Sullivan et al believe that such assumptions and approaches are now counter-productive.

3.3.4 Lee Dow (2003) says that some schools are already creating exceptional and innovative educational environments. He says that such schools are:

- open to change and new ideas
- see challenges as opportunities
- empower staff and have leaders operating at all levels within the school
- facilitate professional learning and support the needs of teachers

- have flexible school structures
- meet a diverse range of student needs yet focus on achievement for all
- focus on students as innovators, problem solvers and communicators, to be adaptive, technologically skilled and life-long learners, and
- place importance on relationships within schools and with the community.

3.3.5 From what children and young people have told the Commission, in many schools and colleges the innovative educational environments described by Lee Dow are constrained by outdated notions of uniformity, competition, traditional academic disciplines, centrally determined mandatory requirements, shallow assessment tools and undue emphasis on university admission.

3.3.6 Although many can identify **what** needs to be done, there is little in the way of solid, researched and proven strategies to convince parents and communities that the familiar ways are no longer sufficient or to show teachers and education authorities **how** to bring the changes into reality.

4. WHAT CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAY ARE THE QUALITIES OF THE 'BEST TEACHERS'

4.1 In the Commission's recent consultations, children and young people have consistently identified a range of factors that they say are characteristic of 'good teachers' and that are lacking among 'poor teachers'.

4.2 There is remarkable coherence between the factors identified by children and young people and those identified in research literature of adult researchers. This coherence may be surprising to some, and yet, as children and young people spend so much time in schools and colleges it really shouldn't be all that startling. Children and young people's regular observations help them to identify the very things that researchers and evaluators write about after visiting their schools to investigate what is happening.

4.3 For this submission the consistent messages of the children and young people we spoke with have been summarised into four messages about the key characteristics of teachers for the knowledge age. Children and young people suggest that schooling and training would be improved by teachers who:

- are friendly and respectful
- genuinely incorporate children and young people's participation in planning, evaluation and decision-making
- are expert at applying quality teaching and learning strategies, and
- collaborate with other caring adults to support children and young people.

5. TEACHERS WHO ARE FRIENDLY AND RESPECTFUL

5.1 Teachers make a difference

- 5.1.1 Children and young people of all ages say that teachers make a difference to the quality of their experience of schooling and training. It is worth stressing that children and young people placed 'teachers' and not 'teaching' as the most important element.

It's probably the individual teacher, like, their personality and that, that's what you get along with, teachers, their personality.

- 5.1.2 Teacher education should aim to select teachers that have the skills and temperament to engage and form strong relationships with children and young people. It is worth considering whether advice for young people thinking of a career in teaching and the criteria for acceptance into education degree courses should include some assessment of interpersonal skills in addition to academic attainment.

5.2 Good teachers

- 5.2.1 Children and young people are unanimous in explaining that the most important quality of 'good teachers' is their ability to connect and nurture quality relationships with their students. Good teachers are like friends, but know how to maintain fair boundaries of acceptable behaviour without demeaning, bullying or being disrespectful.

Teachers should know how to talk to you, to communicate with you and get along with you just like friends.

I like my teacher 'cause he listens to what you have to say and lets you explain.

Need to reach a balance between being nice to students and in control of the class.

5.3 Bad teachers

- 5.3.1 Children and young people are not reticent about identifying characteristics of poor teachers.

Teachers who lose it and shout.

If I don't take that shit (yelling, bad treatment) at home, why should I take at school from a teacher?

Sometimes the teachers aren't as understanding as you'd like them to be.

They are conservative and don't listen to all views.

5.4 Teachers influence learning for good or bad

- 5.4.1 Another perhaps unexpected impact of the relationships between teachers and students is that good relationships 'turn children and young people on' to learning and poor relationships 'turn children and young people off' learning.

My Maths teacher likes me. I like Maths.

I have two teachers for English. One's really bad and one's really good. The good one teaches us a lot and our class always listens – we don't do that in every class.

I hate woodwork because I hate my teacher.

I've got a Maths teacher who only picks on me and three other guys and no-one else. He makes me not enjoy it even more. That's the only subject I don't like.

- 5.4.2 Children and young people said that in their schools and colleges there are many teachers who are 'good enough' at relating to students, there are some teachers who can establish quality relationships with some kids but not others, and there are a few teachers who are 'really cool' and who gain the respect and admiration of most if not all students.
- 5.4.3 Children and young people also make it clear that there are a substantial number of teachers who have not developed or who do not sufficiently display this critical competency.

5.5 Being a 'good teacher' is more important than a teacher's gender

- 5.5.1 The Commission acknowledges that the shortage of male teachers, particularly in primary schools is a concern. The imbalance between the numbers of male and female teachers means that schools are not reflective of broader society. It sends a message to children and young people that teaching is largely a female occupation. This gender imbalance also limits potential male role models for both male and female children and young people at school.
- 5.5.2 However, being male is often not sufficient to being the sort of male that boys need as role models.
- When they (boys) do meet male role-models, usually later in school, these men may not always possess fatherly or nurturing qualities themselves. It can be the damaged leading the damaged.¹*
- 5.5.3 Biddulph (1994), West (2000) and Fletcher (2002) have suggested that outdated ideas about 'being a man' are disrupting the relationships, education and psychological well-being of some boys and men. They speak of 'father hunger'.

¹ Biddulph S (1994) *Manhood: An action plan for changing men's lives*, Finch: Sydney, p. 144.

5.5.4 Although the notion of 'father hunger' may be helpful in understanding the feelings and personal stories of some boys and men, it is inadequate in education and training. The ultimate fallacy of 'father-hunger' is the simplistic suggestion that recruiting more male teachers will make a difference to the learning outcomes of boys (and girls) who are currently not doing so well at school.

5.5.5 Research has not established a link between male teachers and improved outcomes for boys. A 2003 Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (HREOC) judgement recognised the limitation of such a link and denied an application from the Catholic Education Office for temporary exemption to offer university scholarships to male high school students to become primary school teachers. The judgement declared:

There is insufficient evidence to support a finding that gender imbalance in the primary teaching profession will have adverse social or educational effects or will detrimentally affect school culture or the education of boys enrolled in primary schools.²

5.5.6 Gilbert and Gilbert (1998), Rowe (2002), Pallotta-Chiarolli and Martino (2003) assert that it is the capacity of teachers to connect with children and young people and to provide quality teaching and learning environments in their classrooms that make the difference, not the gender of teachers. Gilbert and Gilbert warn:

...if men (and women) who are encouraged to teach, provide restrictive, stereotyped discipline, gender attitudes and subject preferences, they will simply do more harm than good.³

5.5.7 Children and young people, from what they have said, and just as importantly from what they haven't mentioned, agree that the professional and personal qualities of teachers are more important than their gender. In the Commission's consultations, children and young people have never identified the gender of teachers as a factor in determining whether or not they are good or bad teachers. When children and young people mention the gender of teachers it is in passing as they identify other factors.

It's probably the individual teacher, like, their personality and that, that's what you get along with, teachers, their personality.

5.5.8 Strategies to recruit more males to teaching have often been attempted and rejected. From 1969 throughout the 1970s both Queensland and New South Wales attempted to increase the number of men in teaching by awarding teaching scholarships preferentially to men. The Australian Education Union states that what resulted was not a sustained increase

² Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission (2003) *Notice of rejection of Catholic Education Office - Application for Exemption from certain provisions of the Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, Sydney: HREOC, at http://www.humanrights.gov.au/sex_discrimination/exemption/decision.html

³ Gilbert R & Gilbert P (1998) *Masculinity goes to school*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, p. 244.

in the number of male teachers but a drift of these male graduates to other more lucrative positions elsewhere. (Davis, 2003)

- 5.5.9 Research shows that teaching is not an attractive career option for men due to concerns about salary and the perception of a risk of allegations of abusing children in schools.
- 5.5.10 Strategies that are likely to succeed in increasing the number of male teachers in public schools will be those which also benefit the entire teaching service. This would include making teaching more attractive as a profession, by improving working conditions, financial rewards, career opportunities and work satisfaction. Attempts to implement affirmative action strategies for male teachers are likely to be divisive and, based on international experience, such strategies are unlikely to succeed.
- 5.5.11 As far as a strategy to improve the outcomes of schooling for boys and girls is concerned, recruiting teachers who demonstrate the qualities identified by children and young people as those of 'good teachers' is more important than the gender of teachers.

Recommendation 1

Pre-service teaching training include experiences for trainees in establishing and maintaining the ability to develop relationships with children and young people. Assessments during the period of probationary service in schools prior to obtaining registration from the NSW Institute of Teachers should include certification that graduate teachers have demonstrated such skills.

6. TEACHERS WHO INCORPORATE CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE'S PARTICIPATION INTO PLANNING, EVALUATION AND DECISION-MAKING

6.1 Children and young people can promote change

I like having a say, not telling them (teachers) what to do, just having a say like about how I see things.

- 6.1.1 When things change for the better in school communities it is often the result of the participation of children and young people. Adults often say that the participation of children and young people can be the driving force behind their success.

Students showed that, given the opportunity, they have the capacity and energy to promote change, to identify racism, to challenge discriminatory behaviours and to uncompromisingly demand radical change in themselves, their peers and their families.⁴

- 6.1.2 Varnham suggests that the active participation of children and young people in the decision making of their schools and colleges benefits all stakeholders.

⁴ NSW Department of School Education (1995) *School communities investigating racism*, Department of School Education, Sydney p. 74.

Not only does the greater inclusion of children in school decision making benefit schools themselves but society benefits through the growing up of children who understand the importance of respect for human rights and the practical reality of democratic decision making.⁵

6.2 Children and young people's participation in teacher training

- 6.2.1 The Commission is interested in the exciting potential of work by Helen Cahill at the University of Melbourne who has developed a new pedagogy which involves young people playing a key role in assisting teachers to develop relationship skills. As part of the program, young people conduct workshops with teaching students, using role-play and problem solving activities to educate teaching students on communicating with young people about social, emotional and health issues.
- 6.2.2 This work arose from the observation that despite considerable expertise and knowledge in their subject areas, teachers often complete their training with limited practice in communicating or understanding children and young people who will be their students.
- 6.2.3 The Commission considers that this work could be adapted for teacher training in New South Wales.

6.3 Children and young people's participation at school

- 6.3.1 One way to make teaching engaging and the curriculum relevant is to get feedback from students and to encourage their participation in curriculum development, the choice of subjects offered and the manner in which subjects are taught.

We made some good suggestions about rules and uniform and sports. They work. It's the best way.

Should have students on Board of Studies to keep curriculum relevant...some of the books we have to read are bad. I think the books should be challenging, but more interesting and relevant to now

- 6.3.2 Both pre-service and ongoing teacher training should include components on how to involve children and young people in planning and decision making, as well as the importance of getting regular feedback from students on teaching performance.
- 6.3.3 Children and young people can play a valid role in staff selection processes by sitting on interview panels. This gives children and young people the chance to assess whether potential staff demonstrate a capacity to relate to and 'connect' with children and young people.
- 6.3.4 Another way to involve children and young people is to ask them to evaluate teacher performance. While appraisal of teachers has to be

⁵ Varnham S (2004) *Let's ask the kids – yeah right! Reaction or proaction – the case for greater student participation in school decision making*, Massey University, Wellington NZ, p. 12.

handled sensitively, it can bring real benefits to teachers in alerting them to aspects of their teaching that can be changed or improved. Many young people want to have the opportunity to give feedback on their teachers and have suggested that this could occur at the end of each year or once students graduate from school. Feedback will assist teachers to identify their strengths and weaknesses and to organise further education accordingly.

6.3.5 Bringing about a greater student-centred approach will require a shift in community views about the place of children and young people in shaping their experience. This shift, however, has the potential to enrich the schooling and training experience and limit the spread of disengagement and alienation that is such a concern today.

6.3.6 After all, children and young people are the ultimate consumers of education. Their insights and views will be of great value both in developing solutions at school and college and in convincing anxious and potentially resistant family members of the validity and good sense of changes being made in the education and training system.

Recommendation 2

Strategies be developed for the participation of children and young people in pre-service teacher training, as well as ongoing teacher training and evaluation of teachers.

7. TEACHERS WHO ARE EXPERT AT APPLYING QUALITY TEACHING AND LEARNING STRATEGIES

7.1 The best teaching and learning is fun

7.1.1 Children and young people spend the bulk of their time at school in lessons with teachers. They told us that the quality of what they experience in those lessons varies greatly from teacher to teacher, class to class, school to school. They have said while it is essential that teachers have a good understanding of content, strategies that make learning fun is a characteristic they admired in the best teachers.

I reckon a good teacher is willing to actually try to make it fun to learn than just plain old boring copy off the board.

Good teachers make learning interesting and fun.

When lessons are fun it's easier to learn.

7.1.2 What children and young people meant when they said teaching or lessons were 'fun' depended on their age, experience and interests. The range of meanings of fun could be summarised as:

- Hands-on activities such as art, sports, music, computing, experiments in Science and VET-related activities such as horticulture and mechanics.

- Extra-curricula activities such as debating, sport, chess, choir, clubs, SRC, cadets, excursions and community service. The main point about these activities was that children and young people themselves chose to participate and the activities provided social opportunities.
- Children and young people often exemplified fun at school as getting away from the desk and classrooms to be outside more and playing games or doing activities such as observing in Science and measuring in Maths.
- The use of equipment and technologies, particularly computers, was a frequently identified example of how teachers could make learning more fun. Children and young people spoke of the best teachers using technologies to promote learning, to make learning easier and to break the monotony of teacher talk and books.

7.1.3 While children and young people agreed that schooling and training would be improved if the fun content of lessons overall was increased, there was only limited agreement about how this could be achieved. Whatever the suggestions, there were children and young people, who by virtue of their talents, interests and personal preferences, did not agree that following it would result in more fun for them at school.

I like lessons. I don't want to go outside and play.

I'm hopeless at woodwork and crafts. That wouldn't suit me.

Extra curricula activities are often not interesting for many students, eg sports carnivals, especially for girls as they get older.

7.2 The best teaching makes learning and success feel easy

7.2.1 An important aspect of the fun in lessons envisioned by children and young people is the notion of learning being easy. By 'easy', children and young people said that what they were recalling were those lessons in which teachers introduced them to new concepts or tasks in ways that they could understand. It doesn't matter if the activities are challenging, as long as the teacher provides enough support and guided practice.

Things are much easier here because you get help, I'm good at Maths and English now, but wasn't at school.

7.3 The best teaching and learning captures interest

7.3.1 Children and young people say they want all teachers to be able to capture and motivate their interest in learning. They suggested that some teachers have this skill already, but not all teachers.

It doesn't have to be fun all the time, not fun, just worthwhile.

I like how she varies the way we learn, it keeps us awake and alert and helps us memorise stuff.

A teacher's passion for their subject helps.

- 7.3.2 Children and young people had no trouble identifying things that they considered poor teaching strategies.

You have those ones who just read it out of a textbook. You can't relate to them. You don't feel like they are a person, they're just like this machine spitting out information.

Teachers need to teach students, not just give them questions to answer.

Don't learn from homework and repetition, just making mistakes over and over again.

7.4 Teachers make a difference if they have the time and know how to help

- 7.4.1 There is agreement about the role of schools, especially primary schools, in helping all children and young people to acquire the basics of literacy and numeracy.

You need the basics, like reading and writing...and numbers.

Reading needs to be targeted in primary school. As soon as you hit high school, you are expected to read.

It's so shocking to see people in our year who can't read properly. Like they just slipped through the system. That shouldn't be happening.

- 7.4.2 The National Report on Australian Schooling 2000 reports Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD, 2000) statistics revealing that on average children and young people in New South Wales do better in reading and mathematics than the young people of most developed countries.

- 7.4.3 Nevertheless, there remain concerns, ranging from mild to serious, for those children and young people who do not reach anticipated benchmarks for their age. Young people in this group confirmed that appropriate support from teachers and schools makes a difference.

I'm not good at reading and writing, but I'm learning it here. The teachers and other kids who have had trouble help me.

Both the school and carers have been very supportive, helping me keep doing well at school.

There are people to support you if you need extra help with work or personal problems.

- 7.4.4 Children and young people often identified large classes as a barrier to teachers being able to provide enough help for all students who need it.

7.5 Overseas trained teachers

7.5.1 In recent years, one strategy to reduce the shortage of Mathematics and Science teachers in secondary schools has been to recruit overseas trained teachers. Many of these teachers have been assisted to transfer their prior skills to suit Australian schools, students and teaching and learning methods.

7.5.2 On the other hand, young people have told the Commission that some overseas trained teachers have experienced severe difficulties adjusting to the expectations of Australian schools and students.

We couldn't understand what she was saying.

Our science teacher was hopeless. The kids just mucked up every class.

It was bad...the teacher was crying cause the class was so bad.

7.5.3 These few comments highlight the expectation in schools that teachers be able to manage classroom behaviours. In reality, it takes time to develop the expertise to create and maintain effective learning environments. When a teacher has serious difficulty with this aspect of the craft, there simply are not adequate resources to support them.

7.5.4 If recruitment practices are to expand re-training programs for overseas trained teachers, then sufficient practise teaching time, mentoring programs and support during periods of probationary service after appointment need to be provided. The current practice of leaving newly appointed teachers to under-resourced induction and support services in schools just isn't adequate. It is unfair on the teachers and results in poor teaching and learning for children and young people.

Recommendation 3

The quality teaching framework introduced in the discussion document *Quality teaching and learning in New South Wales schools* be investigated and implemented extensively in schools.

Recommendation 4

Greater investment be made in the ongoing professional development of teachers. It is suggested that rather than 'train the trainer' packages, this development provides opportunities for teachers to come together to consider and solve common teaching and learning concerns.

Recommendation 5

The Commission agrees with the issues of concern raised by Vinson and supports his recommendations for additional funding for pedagogic innovation in schools. The Commission believes that an ongoing across-the-board commitment to developing innovative pedagogy should form a key part of pre-service teacher education programs and the ongoing professional development of practising teachers.

Recommendation 6

The training and induction programs for overseas trained teachers must be adequately resourced to enable sufficient observation and practice teaching components during training. In addition, a period of probationary service should follow appointment and be sufficiently resourced to assist those teachers who face classroom management difficulties.

8. TEACHERS WHO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER CARING ADULTS TO SUPPORT THE EFFORTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

8.1 Teachers can be trusted adults for children and young people

- 8.1.1 The Commission's report of its *Inquiry into the Best Means of Assisting Children and Young People With No One to turn To* (2002) highlighted the importance of good relationships in the lives and learning of children and young people.

*For children and young people to be happy, healthy and safe the most important thing is to have good relationships with their families, friends and the communities they live in. When one of these relationships is bad, kids will generally be okay if they have good relationships with the others. But when all of these relationships are bad then things can be really tough.*⁶

- 8.1.2 If possible, children and young people prefer to get help from family and friends.

*If you had a good father and a good mother, then you'd be laughin'
Your friends are always there, so you've got a lot of trust in them*

- 8.1.3 Beyond friends and families, adults they know and trust, like school and college staff, are acknowledged as sources of quality support.

School counsellor is good, helps with problems.

This school is really good. The teachers here are good friends with other teachers, but they're also good friends with students. You know they are going to be there and that they won't go and gossip to other people...

- 8.1.4 The most critical factor determining whether children and young people will turn to adults in schools and colleges is the degree of trust they have that the private business they share will be treated confidentially. Once this trust is broken, it is extremely difficult to regain.

The normal schools...a guidance counsellor tells everyone your business.

Talking to teachers is OK... if they won't talk bout you.

No use talking to teachers. They just tell your parents.

⁶ NSW Commission for Children and Young People (2002) *Kids summary of Report of an inquiry into the best means of assisting children and young people with no-one to turn to*, CCYP, Sydney, p. 3.

8.2 *Involve parents and caregivers*

8.2.1 The involvement of parents and caregivers has long been a feature of the best schools and colleges. Traditionally this involvement has been confined to fundraising, canteen, grounds-work and teacher assistant roles. In an increasing number of schools and colleges, inspired leadership is extending this involvement to decision-making within the operation of the teaching and learning programs.

8.2.2 Young people who have left school early often say that if their parents had been more involved in their schooling it may have helped them.

My parents were heaps involved when I was in primary school and then they just got busy. That's probably when I started to lose interest, in high school. No-one to help me do my homework or going up to the school.

8.2.3 Teachers need training and support of their schools to develop such relationships and work with families and others in the community.

Recommendation 7

The pre-service and in-service training of all teachers should contain developmental experiences which enable them to develop quality relationships with their students and communities and to identify students in need of additional support.

Recommendation 8

The Department of Education and Training remove the requirement that school counsellors must hold teaching qualifications to increase the pool of potential counsellors.

9. CONCLUSION

9.1 The four qualities highlighted in this submission present what children and young people say are characteristics of the best teachers. Children and young people have told the Commission that there are some teachers in schools and colleges who already display these characteristics. They also make it clear that not all teachers in New South Wales demonstrate these characteristics sufficiently.

9.2 The Commission considers that the major implication from what children and young people have told us is that teacher educators and employers need to revise pre-service and in-service programs so they better assist all teachers to acquire the characteristics of the best teachers for the 'knowledge age'. Clark and Hollingsworth (2002) state that:

The key shift is one of agency, from programs that change teachers, to teachers as active learners shaping their professional growth through

*reflective participation in professional development programs and practice.*⁷

- 9.3 The Commission also believes that changes in teacher education and recruitment practices will be ineffectual if outdated and ill-informed expectations from parents, educational administrators, employers, governments and lobby groups force schools and colleges to retain syllabuses, pedagogy and expectations that constrain rather than encourage innovation and creativity amongst teachers and students.
- 9.4 The Commission believes that it would be a great service to the children and young people of New South Wales if recommendations of the *Inquiry into the Recruitment and Training of Teachers* led to:
- improvements in the preparation and ongoing professional support of teachers; and
 - understanding and informed expectations about the purpose of schooling and training for the 'knowledge age' among the broader community.
- 9.5 Changes of similar magnitude occurred in the 1960s when Wyndham overturned the previous system to bring in the *School Certificate* and *Higher School Certificate* regime that is so familiar today. At the beginning of the 'knowledge age' the time is ripe for comparable adjustments in schooling and training so that teachers are better able to prepare children and young people for their futures.

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