



Education and Training Committee

Final Report

Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning

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Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning

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Chair's foreword

It is my pleasure to present the report of the Victorian Parliament Education and Training Committee on its Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning. From the outset of this inquiry, the Committee has recognised that quality teaching, more than any other single factor, has the greatest impact on the quality of student learning. The Committee has therefore welcomed the opportunity to acknowledge and support Victorian teachers, whose work makes such a critical contribution to educational outcomes in the state.

The Committee is aware that teacher professional learning is a complex issue, which must be underpinned by a sophisticated policy framework. A key aspect of investigations for this inquiry was comparing the Victorian policy context with other jurisdictions, to see what lessons international best practice may offer to policy-makers in Victoria. The Committee believes that Scotland and the Canadian province of Ontario offer some particularly instructive policy models for teacher professional learning, which have been reflected in the Committee's recommendations.

A challenge for the Committee in researching this inquiry has been dealing with the range of activities that teacher professional learning may include. Teacher professional learning can occur in many ways, from undertaking a master's degree to talking to a colleague about something that has happened in the classroom. One of the key messages the Committee received is that no single model of professional learning is sufficient in itself, and that a broad range of professional learning activities should be valued and recognised. Like their students, teachers must be provided with a variety of learning experiences to meet their individual needs and learning styles.

While policy-makers may play an important role in supporting teacher professional learning, its effectiveness will ultimately depend on the support it receives at the school level. The Committee was impressed by the range of innovative approaches Victorian schools are taking to offer quality professional learning to their teachers, and to make the most of available resources. In particular, rural and regional schools are finding ways to capitalise on local resources and emerging technologies, to overcome the 'tyranny of distance' and improve teacher access to professional learning opportunities. Victorian schools are also getting smarter at incorporating professional learning into teachers' day-to-day work, and reducing reliance on professional learning activities undertaken away from the school.

Another highlight of this inquiry was the opportunity for the Committee to reflect the views of the Victorian early childhood sector in its investigations for the first time. The Committee recognises the role of early childhood professionals in supporting children's learning in the crucial early years of development, as has been demonstrated in research and policy trends both in Australia and overseas. The Committee hopes that the recommendations it has made to support professional learning in the early childhood sector will serve to further reinforce the importance of this essential group within the Victorian education community.

The Committee extends its sincere appreciation to all participants who took the time to contribute to this important inquiry. The evidence received has been incredibly diverse, ranging from complex theoretical models, to personal stories about the difference that effective teacher professional learning can make in Victorian schools. The Committee thanks all of those who helped piece together a picture of the present situation in teacher professional learning in Victoria, and proposed recommendations for its future development.

I would like to personally thank my fellow Committee members for contributing their time, ideas and expertise to the evidence-gathering and deliberation phases of this inquiry. Special thanks are also extended to the staff of the Committee secretariat, for their tireless efforts in assisting the Committee to conduct investigations and prepare the final report to a high professional standard.

I trust that the recommendations in this report will assist both schools and policy-makers to develop and implement effective strategies for teacher professional learning, to support the best possible educational outcomes for all Victorian students.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Geoff Howard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, stylized initial 'G'.

Geoff Howard MP
Chair

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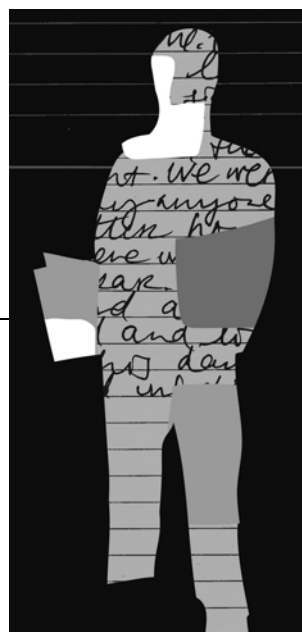
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Executive summary



Chapter 1 Introduction

Teachers are the most important individual factor affecting the educational outcomes of their students. This importance has been reflected in the priority that has been given to teacher professional learning in the Victorian policy environment to date. The Victorian education policy context is characterised by recognition of the expertise and professionalism of Victorian teachers, as well as growing levels of accountability for achieving the best possible outcomes in student learning. While acknowledging past and current efforts to support professional learning for Victorian teachers, the Committee believes that there is now scope for further improvement both to teacher professional learning policy, and to its implementation in Victorian schools.

The Committee received evidence to the inquiry from a wide range of education stakeholders, at a state, national and international level. A significant contribution to the inquiry was made by organisations representing the Victorian teaching profession, including government agencies, teaching unions and subject associations, through public hearings and written submissions. Written and oral submissions were also received from universities, schools, not-for-profit associations, individuals and private providers in the professional learning industry. These submissions were supported by a literature review and a large body of supplementary material, including recent quantitative research on teacher professional learning from the Victorian Institute of Teaching.

The Committee conducted additional, targeted evidence-gathering activities over the course of the inquiry. A Learning Community Forum in Ballarat brought together school leaders and others with an interest in teacher professional learning in the region, including participants from rural and remote locations. Investigations in Canberra enabled the Committee to hear from national bodies involved in teacher professional learning, as well as to explore teacher professional learning policies and programs for ACT schools. In the later stages of the inquiry, the Committee conducted two dedicated public hearings for groups whose views had been under-represented in the general evidence: providers of professional learning programs, and representatives of the Victorian early childhood sector. Various Committee members and staff also visited six Victorian government schools that have demonstrated exemplary strategies for supporting teacher professional learning through the Performance and Development Culture program.

A key source of evidence was the Committee's international investigations in overseas jurisdictions identified as being of particular interest to the inquiry. The Committee first travelled to Finland, to investigate how teacher professional learning is being addressed in an internationally-recognised high-performing education environment. The Committee then visited Scotland, where significant reforms have been made to support teacher professional learning over recent years, many of which complement and reflect the current policy direction in Victoria. International investigations for the inquiry concluded in Canada, where the province of Ontario has also implemented successful teacher professional learning policies which the Committee believes to be instructive for the Victorian context.

Chapter 2

Towards an effective policy framework

International best practice indicates that teacher professional learning will be most effective when it is supported by a robust policy framework, which includes mechanisms for defining, certifying and recognising the development of teaching expertise. Good progress towards an effective policy framework for teacher professional learning has already been made in Victoria through policies implemented by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The Institute has put in place a strong framework for developing teaching expertise at the point of entry into the profession, including a well-regarded professional learning program for provisionally registered teachers. The Institute has also recently commenced work on a strengthened regulatory framework for ongoing teacher professional learning. In 2007, the Institute introduced a new requirement that all Victorian teachers must complete 100 hours of professional learning every five years to renew their teacher registration. The Committee believes that there is scope for this regulatory framework to be developed further, to better support professional learning for Victorian teachers at all stages of their careers.

A key concern to emerge with respect to the new professional learning requirements is that they regulate only the quantity of professional learning that Victorian teachers undertake, not its quality. The Committee believes that this concern may be addressed by the development of a system of accreditation for Victorian teacher professional learning providers, based on models implemented in Scotland and New South Wales. Such a system would build on current Victorian Institute of Teaching initiatives to provide some level of quality assurance for professional learning programs, and to help Victorian teachers locate professional learning activities appropriate to their needs. The Committee believes that this system should be accompanied by a requirement that no less than 50 of Victorian teachers' requisite five-yearly 100 hours of professional learning are sourced from an accredited professional learning provider.

Another of the Committee's core recommendations is the development of a system of additional credentials for professional learning activities not accredited within the Australian Qualifications Framework. Systems for further credentials have been implemented successfully in Scotland and Canada, with the Ontario system of Additional Qualifications providing a particularly instructive model. In addition, the Committee believes that opportunities to progress through higher categories of teacher registration should be made available to teachers who develop their practice to an advanced level. Progression to a higher category of registration may be based on professional learning that leads to further credentials, as well as the demonstration of advanced teaching practice.

The Committee believes that an improved policy framework for teacher professional learning should also extend to school leadership roles. Victorian school leaders currently have a wide range of professional learning options, reflecting the high priority placed on leadership development in Victorian schools. However, these are not linked to a structured framework to define or develop the specific expertise necessary to perform effectively in a leadership role. The Committee found that various overseas jurisdictions have developed compulsory standards for educational and managerial expertise, which must be attained as

a condition of eligibility for a school leadership position. These standards are often accompanied by specific professional learning programs and leadership qualifications that aspiring leaders may undertake to develop and demonstrate this expertise. The Committee recommends the development of a mandatory standard for entry into a school leadership role, linked to a credentialed professional learning program, to ensure that Victorian school leaders enter their roles confidently, with a sound basis of professional expertise.

Chapter 3

Types of content and delivery

A key message to emerge in the inquiry was that variety is an essential characteristic of teacher professional learning, both in terms of its content and the mode through which it is delivered. The delivery of high-quality curriculum and associated pedagogies was identified as a priority for Victorian teachers to address in their professional learning. A range of cross-curricular content for professional learning was also identified, including managing student engagement and behaviour, supporting students with special learning needs, supporting post-school student transitions, and using information and communication technologies. In addition, participants suggested that teacher professional learning should cover student wellbeing, teacher wellbeing, engaging with parents and communities, and building skills to overcome current gender imbalances in the teaching workforce. Furthermore, the content of teacher professional learning should remain responsive to current and emerging government initiatives.

Suggested modes of delivery for teacher professional learning were equally diverse, although a preference was widely expressed for inquiry-based, action-oriented learning over 'top down' delivery styles. This was supported by a consensus that adherence to 'traditional' models of professional learning, in which teachers are sent to activities outside the school, is now being supplanted by greater recognition of the value of school-based programs. The Committee heard that a wide variety of effective professional learning activities may be undertaken within the school environment, including reflecting on teaching practice, peer observation, mentoring and working in professional learning teams. Collegial approaches to professional learning may also extend beyond the immediate school context, and incorporate networking with teachers in other schools, either face-to-face or using collaborative web-based technologies. Many schools also bring in external sources of expertise to support school-based professional learning programs, including expert consultants or coaches, university academics, or other professionals from industry or community backgrounds.

While recognising the value of school-based professional learning activities, the Committee believes that they should continue to be supplemented by opportunities for teachers to undertake professional learning away from the school. Off-site professional learning enables teachers to access new environments and facilities, and may also provide valuable opportunities to network with like-minded teaching colleagues or other professionals. Subject association and teacher network events, university courses and placement in industry were all identified in the inquiry as effective off-site professional learning opportunities. However, the Committee heard that off-site professional learning will be most effective when it is undertaken by teams of teachers, and closely integrated with school-based professional learning programs. This means providing teachers who attend off-site activities with meaningful opportunities to share their learning once they return to the school, and linking off-site activities to whole-school improvement plans and professional learning goals.

Chapter 4

Implementing the policy framework in schools

The effectiveness of teacher professional learning policies depends upon how well they are implemented and supported at the school level. Evidence to the inquiry suggests that one of the most important ways schools may support professional learning is by integrating it into teachers' day-to-day work. The Committee heard that teachers generally prefer to undertake professional learning during the school day, and also notes that certain practice-based professional learning activities must necessarily take place within school hours. Schools may support day-to-day professional learning by setting clear expectations for teachers to participate in professional learning in non-teaching hours during school day, or in their designated after-school working hours. Pupil-free days and professional leave programs may be used to provide additional opportunities for teachers to undertake professional learning during the school year. The Committee heard that many teachers are also willing to undertake professional learning in their own time, especially if high-quality programs are offered during school holiday periods.

Integrating professional learning within teachers' everyday work is one way in which schools may make the best use of the resources they have available for teacher professional learning. Regular, school-based activities can reduce reliance on travel to external programs and on replacement staff to cover teacher absences. Schools can also improve the cost-effectiveness of teacher professional learning by pooling resources across a cluster, region or school network, or drawing on other resources in the local community. Strategies for capitalising on local resources may include sharing knowledge with other schools in the area, or forming partnerships with local universities and TAFE institutes, industry or community organisations. The growth of online delivery has also created opportunities for improving access to teaching professional learning, although may be most effective when used as a supplement to, rather than substitute for, face-to-face delivery.

As well as allocating resources effectively, schools must implement effective strategies for planning and evaluating their teacher professional learning programs. This requires school leaders to mediate between the priorities and preferences of the school, system and individual teachers, to develop and implement professional learning programs appropriate to local needs. These programs should be informed by, and evaluated against, evidence of how professional learning activities have contributed to demonstrable improvements in teaching practice and student learning. The recent Performance and Development Culture initiative has gone some way towards establishing effective processes for planning and evaluating teacher professional learning in Victorian government schools. The Committee nevertheless believes that some school leaders in underperforming schools may benefit from further targeted assistance in developing effective professional learning and school improvement plans. In addition, these processes may be further enhanced by the development of an integrated system to enable teachers to plan, record and evaluate all aspects of their professional learning online.

While evidence to the inquiry was generally positive about the support Victorian schools provide for teacher professional learning, the Committee heard that casual relief teachers (CRTs) often have limited access to such support. This is an issue of particular concern in light of the new requirements that link a minimum quantity of professional learning to the renewal of teacher registration. The Committee believes that it is in the interests of schools to offer CRTs in their area opportunities to participate in their professional learning programs, both to support CRTs and to ensure that schools have access to an appropriately skilled CRT workforce. The Committee believes that continued system support for CRT professional learning is also warranted, to ensure that professional learning opportunities are available to address specific CRT needs.

Chapter 5

Early childhood sector

In August 2007, the Victorian Office for Children was combined with the Education Department to form the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This merger has provided the basis for greater cooperation between early childhood teachers and teachers in Victorian schools. At the same time, recent policies at both the state and national level have sought to improve integration between early childhood education and care, and to recognise that young children learn in a range of environments. The Committee heard that skilled and qualified staff are therefore increasingly regarded as desirable in all early childhood services, to provide young children with the best possible support in the crucial early years of their development.

The Victorian early childhood profession does not currently have a regulatory body comparable to the Victorian Institute of Teaching. However, industrial agreements and general children's services regulations set out some expectations regarding workforce professional learning and expertise. The industrial agreement for degree-qualified early childhood teachers in kindergartens and preschools makes provisions for professional learning similar to those for teachers in Victorian schools. Early childhood teachers must complete a minimum of four days' professional learning annually to be eligible for an incremental salary increase. They also have opportunities to gain recognition for developing their expertise through a system of higher teaching classifications. Diploma-qualified, certificate-qualified or unqualified child care professionals do not currently have such specific expectations for the quantity of ongoing professional learning they undertake. Instead, recent policy developments for professional learning in child care have focused on increasing the level of formal qualifications in the workforce.

In addition to formal qualifications, the Committee heard there are a range of other activities that early childhood professionals may undertake to develop their professional expertise. Various early childhood peak bodies offer workshops and short-term professional learning programs in identified priority areas. Although many programs focus on compliance issues, the Committee was pleased to note a growing interest in the sector in deeper-level programs relating to early childhood learning and development. The Committee also believes there is scope for increased use of collegial professional learning activities in the early childhood sector, to enable early childhood professionals to learn from one another, either within centres or across professional networks. Improved links with primary schools may also be used to expand opportunities for collegial professional learning.

Early childhood professionals have some regulatory measures in place to ensure that their professional learning is supported at the workplace level. Degree-qualified early childhood teachers have access to two 'child free days' per year, and may also undertake professional learning in non-teaching working hours, or when services are closed for designated holiday periods. For child care workers, a general expectation that employers will support their professional learning is set out in national quality assurance measures for the child care industry. The Committee nevertheless heard that early childhood professionals often encounter certain barriers to professional learning, such as limited access to time and funding, or may not be confident with pursuing formal academic study.

The Committee recommends that measures be taken to further support the growth of a culture of professional learning in the early childhood sector. This may include the provision of further support for early childhood professionals to upgrade their qualifications, including improving pathways for articulation between certificate, diploma and degree courses. It may also include setting clearer expectations for professional learning in the child care industry, as well as encouraging all early childhood professionals to engage in a diverse range of professional learning activities, both within and outside their workplaces.

Recommendations

Chapter 2 Towards an effective policy framework

Page 46

- 2.1. That the Victorian Government develop a strengthened policy framework for all levels of the teaching profession, linking teacher professional learning to standards, certification and recognition for teaching expertise.
- 2.2. That the Victorian Government further support the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program, by:
 - enhancing opportunities for beginning teachers and their mentors to work together; and
 - strengthening assessment processes for provisionally registered teachers, including the possible involvement of an external assessor.
- 2.3. That the Victorian Government strengthen the requirements for registered teachers to undertake 100 hours of professional learning in every five-year registration period, by:
 - developing a system of accreditation for providers of teacher professional learning;
 - modifying the requirement for at least 50 hours to be sourced from outside the school environment, to require that no less than 50 hours be delivered by an accredited professional learning provider; and
 - developing a system of credentialing for teacher professional learning programs not recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework, and listing any credentials gained by teachers in records of teacher registration.
- 2.4. That the Victorian Government develop advanced categories of teacher registration, incorporating:
 - standards for higher levels of teaching practice beyond full registration; and
 - opportunities for teachers to demonstrate the attainment of these standards through completion of credentialed professional learning programs and/or evidence of advanced teaching practice.
- 2.5. That the Victorian Government develop a mandatory standard for entry into a school leadership role, linked to a credentialed school leadership preparation program, to reflect international best practice.

Chapter 3

Types of content and delivery

Pages 88–89

3.1. That the Victorian Government and individual schools promote and facilitate access to teacher professional learning that addresses a variety of content, including:

- high quality curriculum and pedagogy, including the development of subject area specialisations;
- student engagement and behaviour;
- supporting students with special learning needs;
- supporting student transitions;
- use of information and communications technology;
- student wellbeing;
- teacher wellbeing;
- parent and community engagement; and
- ongoing and emerging government initiatives.

3.2. That the Victorian Government and individual schools prioritise school-based modes of delivery for teacher professional learning, including:

- action research;
- peer observation;
- mentoring; and
- professional learning teams.

3.3. That the Victorian Government and individual schools ensure that school-based professional learning is supplemented with input from external sources, by:

- bringing sources of external expertise into schools, including the development of professional learning coaching and consultancy roles; and
- providing opportunities for teams or individual teachers to attend off-site professional learning activities, which then inform school-based programs.

Chapter 4

Implementing the policy framework in schools

Pages 129–130

- 4.1. That the Victorian Government ensure that adequate resources for teacher professional learning are available to all Victorian schools, including resources to meet the special needs of rural and regional and underperforming schools.
- 4.2. That the Victorian Government assist schools to optimise the use of available resources for teacher professional learning, by:
- continuing to develop and promote flexible models for integrating teacher professional learning within teachers' working hours;
 - supporting and enhancing collaboration through school clusters and networks;
 - supporting and enhancing partnerships between schools and other sectors in the delivery of locally-based professional learning;
 - incorporating adequate resources for high-quality teacher professional learning in all government education reforms; and
 - supporting schools with an identified professional learning need to access additional resources through targeted programs.
- 4.3. That the Victorian Government support schools to establish and maintain effective processes for planning and monitoring teacher professional learning, in line with a performance and development culture, by:
- requiring all teachers to maintain annual professional learning plans and records of their professional learning activities and outcomes;
 - requiring schools to maintain professional learning plans, available for public viewing, that balance system, school and individual teacher priorities; and
 - making additional support available for the development of professional learning and school improvement plans in schools with an identified need.
- 4.4. That the Victorian Government provide teachers with an online facility to:
- search a database of accredited professional learning providers, including descriptions of their programs and participant feedback;
 - plan and organise their professional learning, including online registration for programs delivered by accredited providers;
 - reflect on their current practice against relevant professional standards, to identify future professional learning needs; and
 - record their professional learning activities, including analysis of the impact of professional learning on teaching practice and student outcomes.

4.5. That the Victorian Government promote and facilitate improved professional learning opportunities for casual relief teachers, by:

- encouraging schools to include casual relief teachers in relevant professional learning activities; and
- exploring options for assisting professional learning providers to develop and deliver professional learning activities that address the specific needs of the casual relief teaching workforce.

Chapter 5

Early childhood sector

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5.1. That the Victorian Government support professional learning for all professionals involved in the delivery of early childhood education and care, by:

- supporting expectations for early childhood professionals to engage in ongoing professional learning, and for their employers to provide opportunities for them to do so;
- facilitating clearer pathways for articulation between certificate, diploma and degree qualifications, including opportunities for the recognition of prior learning where appropriate;
- continuing to make scholarships and other forms of support available for existing early childhood professionals seeking to upgrade their expertise; and
- encouraging early childhood professionals to pursue opportunities for collegial professional learning, through site-based programs, networks or collaboration with schools and other service providers.

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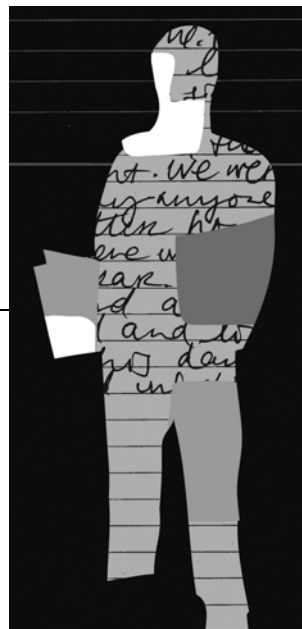
List of abbreviations

AEU	Australian Education Union
AGQTP	Australian Government Quality Teaching Program
AQF	Australian Qualifications Framework
ASISTM	Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics
Cell	Creating eLearning Leaders
CERES	Centre for Education and Research in Environmental Strategies
CoP	Community of Practice
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CRT	Casual Relief Teacher
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
ENTER	Equivalent National Tertiary Entrance Rank
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HM	Her Majesty's
ICT	Information and Communications Technology
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
MIP	Managed Individual Pathway
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
P&D	Performance and Development
PD	Professional Development
PDEP	Professional Development and Enhancement Plan
Pdi	Professional Development Interface
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
PLAT	Professional Learning Assistance Teams
PLATO	Professional Leave and Teacher Outcomes
PoLT	Principles of Learning and Teaching
PTT	Permission to Teach
QIAS	Quality Improvement and Accreditation System
RMIT	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology
RPL	Recognition of Prior Learning
SBA	School Based Apprenticeship

SCRAYP	Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance
SPELD	Specific Learning Difficulties Association
SPRT	Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers
SQH	Scottish Qualification for Headship
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TESOL	Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages
TRIP	Teacher Release to Industry Program
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VELS	Victorian Essential Learning Standards
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VIT	Victorian Institute of Teaching
WEYA	Western Edge Youth Arts

Chapter 1

Introduction



Teachers are the most important single factor affecting the educational outcomes of their students. This importance has been recognised in the attention that has already been given to teacher professional learning in the Victorian policy environment. Teacher professional learning is Flagship Strategy 5 of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's *Blueprint for Government Schools*, and a wide variety of policies and initiatives have been undertaken to date to reflect this priority.

Nevertheless, the Committee believes there are still many ways in which strategies for teacher professional learning in Victoria can be further enhanced. Some aspects of the policy framework surrounding teacher professional learning are still in their early stages, with substantial opportunities for future expansion. As this policy framework is developed and implemented in schools, certain barriers to teacher professional learning are also coming to light that must be addressed. The teaching profession itself is also changing, and emerging synergies with professionals in other sectors are creating new imperatives for professional learning, both for teachers within schools and beyond.

With these considerations in mind, the Education and Training Committee undertook its *Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning*. Throughout the Committee's investigations, participants welcomed the inquiry as a timely opportunity to examine an essential element of Victorian school education, through which a genuine difference can be made to student learning.

'There is no other way to influence students significantly and lastingly than through their teachers. The best resource we have in education is the teachers.'

Mr Douglas Williams,
Black Douglas Professional
Education Services

Functions of the Committee

The Education and Training Committee comprises seven Members of Parliament, with five drawn from the Legislative Assembly and two from the Legislative Council. Mr Geoff Howard MP chairs the Committee.

The Education and Training Committee is constituted under the *Parliamentary Committees Act 2003*. The Committee's specific function under the Act is to:

Inquire into, consider and report to the Parliament on any proposal, matter or thing concerned with education or training if the Committee is required or permitted so to do by or under the Act.

Terms of reference

On Thursday 1 March 2007, the Legislative Assembly referred to the Education and Training Committee, an inquiry into effective strategies for teacher professional learning.

To the Education and Training Committee — inquire into, consider and report on effective strategies for teacher professional learning with particular regard to:

- a) the relationship between ongoing professional learning for teachers and teaching expertise;
- b) which factors will support high quality professional learning for teachers, including learning methods and environments for the development of professional knowledge, and the pedagogy relevant to professional development of teachers;
- c) national and international trends regarding ongoing professional learning for teachers and report on innovative initiatives;
- d) determining how best practice in ongoing professional learning for teachers can be delivered into schools and learning communities;
- e) examining the potential for greater cross-sectoral links between industry, training institutions and schools in the delivery of ongoing professional learning for teachers; and
- f) examining gender issues in the delivery of ongoing professional learning for teachers.

Inquiry methodology

Call for submissions

The terms of reference were initially advertised in the following newspapers:

- Herald Sun Saturday 5 May 2007
- The Age Saturday 5 May 2007
- Education Age Monday 7 May 2007
- Herald Sun Learn Tuesday 8 May 2007
- Australian Higher Education Supplement Wednesday 9 May 2007
- Education Times Thursday 17 May 2007

Following a decision by the Victorian Parliament to extend the inquiry, the terms of reference were re-advertised in May 2008 in the following newspapers:

- Education Age Monday 26 May 2008
- Herald Sun Learn Tuesday 27 May 2008

A customised advertisement was also placed in the Education Times on Thursday 10 April 2008, providing focus questions aimed at attracting teacher participation in the inquiry.

In addition to advertising, an initial mail-out of approximately 470 organisations and individuals was conducted, advising them of the terms of reference and inviting written submissions. The mail-out targeted teacher professional associations, peak bodies in the school sector, universities, teachers and schools recognised through the National Awards

for Quality Schooling, and schools and other organisations involved in major professional learning programs.

Two further mail-outs were subsequently conducted:

- May 2008: A mail-out to approximately 50 providers of professional learning programs, as it was felt this group was under-represented in the evidence.
- July 2008: A mail-out to 27 peak bodies in the early childhood sector, to encourage the sector to participate in the inquiry.

The Committee received 93 written submissions to the inquiry (Appendix A), along with a substantial body of supplementary written material. Submissions came from a wide range of peak education organisations, subject associations¹, universities, other professional learning providers, and individuals involved in school education.

Literature review

The Committee found that a vast body of research exists addressing the issue of teacher professional learning. As a comprehensive review of all available literature lay beyond the scope of the inquiry, the Committee relied primarily on written and oral submissions to summarise or draw attention to salient research. At the same time, the Committee drew on many research papers and articles from Australia and overseas to support or expand on various issues raised in formal evidence.

Early in its investigations, the Committee became aware that the Victorian Institute of Teaching was conducting extensive quantitative research into teacher professional learning, as part of a broader project by the Australian Research Group. The project collected surveys from 6 753 teachers in six Australian states and territories, investigating the quality, quantity and relevance of their professional learning. In addition, the survey investigated sources of funding and information for professional learning, and teacher preferences for future professional development activities. A report on the project was provided to the Committee by the Institute in February 2008. The Committee used the quantitative data from this report to supplement the written and oral evidence received in the inquiry.

Briefings and public hearings

A series of formal hearings took place during the period July 2007 to September 2008, involving 102 witnesses (Appendix B). Participants included representatives of peak government agencies for the teaching profession, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development and the Victorian Institute of Teaching. Several non-government peak organisations for the teaching profession also attended, including the two major Victorian teaching unions and representatives from five subject associations. The university sector was represented by the Australian Council of Deans of Education and delegates from two Victorian universities.

On 13 August 2008, the Committee hosted an all-day Learning Community Forum at the Ballarat Mining Exchange. The morning session involved 20 representatives from 17 schools in the Grampians region, as well as a representative of the Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The afternoon session involved 19 representatives from non-school organisations involved in teacher professional learning in the region, including the University of Ballarat, Catholic Education Office and a variety of community organisations.

¹ The term 'subject association' has been adopted throughout the report to refer to professional associations representing teachers in particular subject areas. Although these associations are also often referred to as 'professional teaching associations', the term 'subject association' is preferred to differentiate them from associations with a more general purpose, such as teaching unions and networks.

Finland, Scotland and Canada as countries of particular interest to its inquiries. The Committee travelled to five major cities across these three countries to meet with representatives of key organisations in their education systems. Individuals involved in these discussions are listed in Appendix D.

Finland

Finland has captured the attention of the education world by consistently achieving the highest results in the triennial Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) in 2000, 2003 and 2006. A 2007 report on potential reasons behind Finland's success identified the quality of Finnish teaching as a major contributing factor.² The report commented that the high calibre of the Finnish teaching workforce is established from the point of entry to the profession. It noted that teaching is a highly respected and sought-after profession in Finland, where only 10 percent of applicants for teacher training courses are accepted. Finland also requires all prospective teachers to complete a master's degree in education to be eligible for qualification.³

The Committee believed it was important to investigate the policies and programs that have been implemented to support ongoing professional learning for the high-calibre and high-performing Finnish teaching workforce. The Committee was aware that the Finnish education system is facing issues similar to those affecting Victorian teachers, including: an ageing teaching workforce; a need to develop skills in emerging technologies; and a need for better coordination between pre-service and ongoing teacher skill development.⁴ The Finnish Government has recently invested in providing further training for teachers and principals in priority areas, but demand for places in government-sponsored programs far exceeds supply.⁵ The Committee's investigations in Finland explored how the country intends to respond to these challenges, to maintain its exemplary educational performance.

Scotland

Scotland has been recognised in a recent OECD report as having one of the most equitable and best performing education systems among OECD countries. The report especially noted the high degree of dedication and proficiency among education professionals in the Scottish system.⁶

Scotland has recently introduced significant policy changes recognising the importance of continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers. Previously, teacher professional learning in Scotland had largely been 'voluntary and spasmodic', with no agreed framework in which teachers could plan their career development.⁷ The recent reforms include:

- A contractual obligation for teachers to undertake 35 hours of CPD per year, alternatively viewed as a 'requirement'⁸ or an 'entitlement'⁹ for teachers. This is to be undertaken on top of teachers' contracted 35-hour working week, with most CPD

² J. Välijärvi et al. 2007, *The Finnish Success in PISA – and Some Reasons Behind It 2*, Authors and Institute for Educational Research, University of Jyväskylä, Jyväskylä.

³ *ibid.*, p. 49.

⁴ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture n.d., *The Education System in Finland 2007/2008*, Eurydice, Brussels, pp. 162–175.

⁵ *ibid.*, p. 181.

⁶ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *OECD gives good marks to Scottish schools, recommends further improvements*, OECD website, <http://www.oecd.org/document/40/0,3343,en_2649_33723_39767016_1_1_1_1,00.html>, accessed 15 October 2008.

⁷ J. O'Brien and K. Jones 2006, *Politics, Professionalism and Pragmatics: Teacher professional development and learning – perspectives from Wales and Scotland*, paper presented to the 2005 Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, AARE, Parramatta, p. 2.

⁸ *ibid.*

⁹ European Commission, Directorate-General for Education and Culture n.d., *The Education System in Scotland 2006/07*, Eurydice, Brussels, p. 12.

expected to occur during weekends and holidays. However, schools are encouraged to exercise flexibility to support quality professional learning experiences.¹⁰

- A National Register of CPD Providers who meet approved standards for the delivery of teacher professional development. This is maintained by CPD Scotland, with a searchable database provided to teachers to facilitate access to quality CPD programs.
- A framework of standards for teacher career progression, linked to accredited professional learning. Recent additions to the framework include the Chartered Teacher qualification for teachers wishing to pursue career advancement without entering administrative roles,¹¹ and the national Standard for Headship, which is now a requirement for any teacher seeking advancement to a principal or deputy principal position.¹²

Scotland's reforms and policy context have a number of elements in common with recent policy developments for Victorian teacher professional learning. Discussions in Scotland focused on whether additional aspects of these reforms would also be suitable for adaptation to the Victorian context.

Canada

In the Canadian province of Ontario, teacher professional learning has been the focus of two major reforms in recent years. In 2001, the Ontario Government established the mandatory Professional Learning Program. This required teachers to complete 14 approved courses over each five-year cycle of employment. Each course was required to be a minimum of five hours, and seven of the 14 courses were to address the seven priority areas identified by the government.¹³

The Professional Learning Program was received with some optimism in its early stages, with nearly 4 200 approved courses available to teachers by 2003.¹⁴ However, in 2004, the new Ontario Government discontinued the program, describing it as 'the most centralized, bureaucratic and overly prescriptive program of professional learning to be found anywhere'.¹⁵ In discontinuing the program, the new government claimed to be recognising teachers as professionals who are willing to engage in professional learning voluntarily, without the need for mandatory requirements.¹⁶

In April 2005, a Working Table on Teacher Development was established to provide advice to the Ontario Government on issues related to teacher professional learning. Policies resulting from the Working Table's recommendations at May 2007 included:

- legislation introducing a New Teacher Induction Program, providing professional learning for teachers in the crucial first year of their careers;
- legislation introducing an additional two student-free days for teacher professional learning relating to key provincial initiatives, bringing the total 'professional activity' days for the year from four to six; and

¹⁰ Scottish Executive 2003, *Continuing Professional Development: Teaching in Scotland*, The Scottish Government, Edinburgh, p. 13.

¹¹ *ibid.*, p. 4.

¹² *ibid.*, p. 6.

¹³ S. M. Phillips 2002, *Teacher Quality in Canada*, SAE Research Series, Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education, British Columbia, pp. 67–68.

¹⁴ L. Browne 2003, 'Gathering Momentum – an evolving PLP', *Professionally Speaking*, September 2003.

¹⁵ Hon G. Kennedy, Minister of Education (Ontario) 2004, *Statement to the Legislative Assembly: Introduction of An Act to Amend the Ontario College of Teachers' Act 1996*, Ministry of Education (Ontario) website, <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/04.05/st0513.html>>, accessed 15 October 2008.

¹⁶ *ibid.*

- strengthened requirements relating to teachers' annual learning plans, encouraging teachers to incorporate parent and student input, and ensuring teachers have one appraisal every five years.

The Working Table submitted its final recommendations in May 2007. These covered:

- five characteristics of effective professional learning to be considered by anyone seeking to provide professional learning for Ontario's teachers;
- structures to better coordinate professional learning, including longer-term planning, helping teachers better identify professional learning opportunities and maximising the use of human and financial resources;
- improved opportunities for experienced teachers to share exemplary practice; and
- strategies for ensuring that professional learning of support staff and school administrators keeps pace with that of teachers.¹⁷

As a jurisdiction that has undergone two significant and contrasting reforms to teacher professional learning policy over the last decade, Ontario's experience was considered especially valuable to this inquiry. The experience of the Ontario College of Teachers, the regulatory body for the teaching profession in Ontario, was of particular interest, as it is the organisation on which the Victorian Institute of Teaching is most closely modelled.

The Committee also conducted meetings in the Canadian province of Quebec during its international investigations. Although investigations in Quebec were primarily initiated by the Committee's concurrent inquiry into participation in higher education, teacher professional learning in the province also has some relevance to the Victorian experience.

Definitions

“Teacher”

In general, 'teacher' in Victoria is used to refer to the group of professionals registered with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, currently employed by and practising in Victorian schools. This includes teachers in casual or part-time employment, as well as casual relief and emergency teachers (CRTs). The Committee nevertheless found that the definition of 'teacher' is expanding to encompass an increasingly broad range of professionals. Significantly, the establishment of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development in August 2007 recognised the role of early childhood educators and carers as teachers of young children before they enter the school system. The Committee has therefore specifically addressed professional learning for early childhood professionals as part of the inquiry.

The Committee acknowledges that the term 'teacher' is also widely used within the TAFE sector. The Committee received three submissions addressing professional learning for TAFE teachers, from the Victorian TAFE Association, the Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE and the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch). The submissions raised a number of concerns, including: the need for TAFE teachers to maintain both pedagogical and industry-specific expertise; the perceived lack of incentives for TAFE teachers to upgrade their professional knowledge; and limitations on the support available from their employers in assisting them to do so. While the Committee recognises the importance of professional learning for TAFE teachers, resources for the inquiry did not extend to a full investigation of the distinct issues and circumstances affecting teacher professional learning in the TAFE sector. The Committee is aware that the sector is currently undergoing a period

¹⁷ Working Table on Teacher Development 2007, *Report to the Partnership Table on Teacher Professional Learning: Recommendations of the Working Table on Teacher Development*, Ministry of Education, Ontario.

of substantial reform, in which various workforce issues including teacher professional learning are likely to come under review.

“Professional learning” (and “professional development”)

The use of the term ‘professional learning’ is distinct from the term ‘professional development’, which has previously been used to describe teachers’ ongoing work-related education and training. The School of Education, Victoria University, provided a useful explanation of the two terms in its written submission to the inquiry:

Professional development is defined as referring to the range of formal and informal activities undertaken by teachers to develop their professional knowledge, professional practice, and professional engagement.

Professional learning is defined as the learning that results from a wide range of professional development activities.¹⁸

This is similar to a distinction made by the NSW Institute of Teachers in its professional learning policy:

Professional learning refers to the growth of teacher expertise that leads to improved student learning...

Professional development refers to the processes, activities and experiences that provide opportunities to extend teacher professional learning. Participation in continuing professional development assists in the development of teacher professional learning.¹⁹

The Committee supports this differentiation between the learning that results from activities aimed at developing professional expertise, and the activities themselves.

A theme throughout the inquiry was that a wide range of professional development activities should be recognised as potential opportunities for teacher professional learning to occur.²⁰ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey identified the top ten activities Australian teachers believe can be defined as professional development (PD).

Table 1.1: Top ten activities accepted as professional development (2007)

Activity	Victorian teachers accepting activity as PD	Total teachers accepting activity as PD
Programs/courses/conferences off-site	94%	95%
Programs/courses/conferences in the school setting	96%	95%
Professional teaching association PD events	93%	92%
Tertiary study related to your teaching field	89%	89%
Structured networking with teachers from other schools	91%	89%
School visits/exchanges	92%	89%
Faculty or staff meetings involving discussion of approaches to teaching/learning	91%	87%
Professional reading	85%	82%
Mentoring another teacher	85%	82%
Being mentored by another teacher	85%	80%

Source: Australian Research Group 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers’ Professional Development*, commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 4.

¹⁸ School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

¹⁹ NSW Institute of Teachers n.d., *Continuing Professional Development Policy – Supporting the maintenance of accreditation at professional competence*, NSW Institute of Teachers, Sydney.

²⁰ For example, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3; South Gippsland Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr P. Rose, Principal, Ballarat Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 7.

The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) also provided the Committee with a list of activities that its members included in the definition of professional development in a recent survey. In addition to the activities listed above, the Union suggested:

- formal representation on professional bodies;
- participation in the work of professional and industry associations;
- collaborative planning and evaluation;
- working with other teachers, including reflection, mentoring, modelling, work shadowing and resource centres;
- release to industry;
- system-initiated courses to meet system objectives;
- writing, developing and monitoring curriculum;
- writing articles for professional journals;
- conducting various forms of research, often using an 'action research' model;
- participation in local 'education setting' communities and councils; and
- internet and email research and discussion groups.²¹

The above lists illustrate the incredibly diverse range of professional development activities through which teacher professional learning may be achieved.

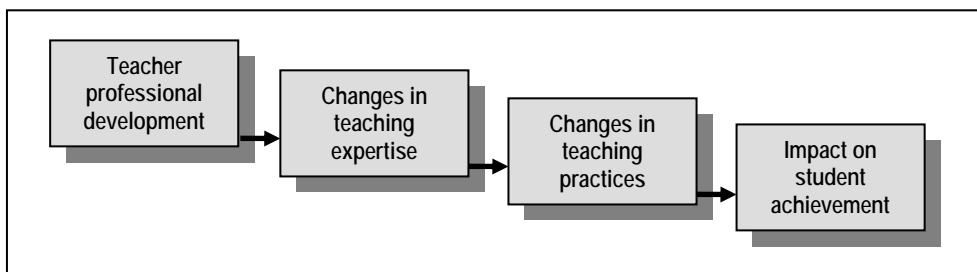
“Effective”

Evidence to the inquiry revealed two main approaches to defining effectiveness with respect to strategies for teacher professional learning. Most common was the assumption that an effective strategy for professional learning can be identified by its outcomes. However, many participants also approached effectiveness from the input side, by identifying the desirable qualities of an effective professional learning activity or program.

Defining effectiveness by outcomes

As with all aspects of education, the Committee believes that the end goal of teacher professional learning is to improve student learning. Throughout the inquiry, participants indicated that this will occur through a 'chain reaction': professional learning results in changes to teacher expertise, resulting in changes to teaching practice, which in turn results in changes to student achievement. Two participants provided a diagram to illustrate this idea, adapted in Figure 1.1 to reflect the terminology used in this report.

Figure 1.1: Theoretical construct of effective teacher professional learning



Source: Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007; Mr P. Cole, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008 (adapted).

²¹ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria nevertheless noted that the relationships along each stage of this continuum are complex, and difficult to establish through empirical analysis.²²

The effect of teacher professional development on teacher expertise is implicit in the term 'teacher professional learning'. Put simply, if a professional development activity does not enhance teacher expertise, then professional learning has not taken place. However, the

'Another outcome of appraisal of professional learning is building a sense of optimism and celebration and recognition for things that are well done. One of the things we suffer from as professionals is that people do not know the excellent work that has been done within the school and the school community more broadly.'

Mr Jim Delaney,
Primary Education
Consultant,
Catholic Education Office,
Diocese of Ballarat

Committee found that teachers do not necessarily need to have acquired *new* knowledge for professional learning to have occurred. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey suggested that teachers are more likely to identify reinforcement of their existing skills as a positive outcome of their professional development activities (60%), rather than the acquisition of new knowledge or skills (55%).²³

Similarly, the survey revealed that enhancements to teacher expertise may not necessarily lead to changes in teaching practice. While almost all Victorian teachers in the survey indicated that they have modified their teaching to some extent as the result of their professional development, almost as many said that they have only done so 'occasionally' (43%) as have done so 'frequently' (49%).²⁴ While the Committee believes that Victorian schools should continue to look for changes in teaching practice as a determinant of the effectiveness of professional learning, it also notes the subtleties that must be taken into account in doing so. The Committee recognises that professional learning may still benefit teachers even if their practice does not noticeably change, by increasing their confidence in their existing practices or contributing incrementally to changes in practice over time.

Given the complexities identified at each point in the 'chain reaction' shown in Figure 1.1, it is little surprise that the relationship between teacher professional learning and student learning is most complex of all. Several participants commented that the impact of teacher professional learning on student learning can only be accurately assessed over a substantial period of time.²⁵ Short-term evaluations may yield favourable but superficial results,²⁶ or may overlook the value of programs that achieve deep, sustained improvements in the longer term.²⁷ The Committee also heard that the number of variables between classrooms can make it hard to determine the impact of teacher professional learning on student results.²⁸ Furthermore, some teacher professional learning may impact on student learning outcomes indirectly, by focusing on non-academic areas such as student engagement.²⁹ Similar complications in the relationship between teacher professional learning and student achievement were also identified in a major 2005 Australian Government report in this area.³⁰

²² Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 9–10.

²³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 97.

²⁴ *ibid.*

²⁵ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 16; School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

²⁶ Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 4.

²⁷ Ms W. Baker, Principal, Pleasant Street Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 16.

²⁸ Glen Waverley Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Microsoft Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1.

²⁹ Professor L. Angus, Head, School of Education, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 36.

³⁰ M. Meiers and L. Ingvarson 2005, *Investigating the links between teacher professional development and student learning outcomes*, study conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research for the Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 1.

The Committee strongly believes that effective strategies for teacher professional learning will ultimately result in improved student outcomes. However, the Committee acknowledges the complex causal relationship that exists between teacher and student learning, and the many factors that may complicate it along each step of the process. The Committee is pleased to note the innovative and varied approaches currently used for determining the effectiveness of teacher professional learning in Victorian schools, including teacher satisfaction levels, parent opinions, and student surveys. The Committee believes that such methods help the effectiveness of teacher professional learning to be assessed holistically, in the context of the many variables that contribute to effective teaching and learning in Victorian schools.

Defining effectiveness by attributes

While considerable complexity remains in defining effective teacher professional learning by its outcomes, there is a much stronger research base that defines effective professional learning by its characteristics. Some participants commented on the relatively high degree of consensus that currently exists among educators and researchers with respect to what effective teacher professional learning involves.³¹ In 2005, the then Department of Education and Training encapsulated the characteristics supported by current research into seven 'principles of highly effective professional learning' (refer Figure 1.2).

Figure 1.2: Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning

1.	Focused on student outcomes <i>(not just individual teacher needs)</i>
2.	Focused on and embedded in teacher practice <i>(not disconnected from the school)</i>
3.	Informed by best available research on effective teaching and learning <i>(not just limited to what they currently know)</i>
4.	Collaborative, involving reflection and feedback <i>(not just individual inquiry)</i>
5.	Evidence based and data driven <i>(not anecdotal)</i> to guide improvement and measure impact
6.	Ongoing, supported and fully integrated into the culture and operations of the system – schools, networks, regions and the centre <i>(not episodic and fragmented)</i>
7.	An individual and collective responsibility at all levels of the system <i>(not just the school level)</i> and is not optional

Source: Department of Education and Training 2005, *Professional Learning in Effective Schools: The Seven Principles of Highly Effective Professional Learning*, DE&T, Melbourne, pp. 14–16.

These seven principles were explicitly endorsed by a number of participants in the inquiry.³² Many other participants supplied their own lists of characteristics of effective teacher professional learning, ranging from desirable attributes for professional learning activities, to how professional learning should be supported at a school or system level. Elements of the seven principles developed by the Department were often present among these characteristics, although the terminology and order of priority varied extensively.

³¹ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 12; Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 2.

³² Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 2; School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 10; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3.

The purpose of this inquiry is not to rediscover the characteristics of effective professional learning that have already been so widely researched. Instead, the Committee has focused on effective strategies for making professional learning experiences that embody these characteristics available to as many Victorian teachers as possible. It is hoped that the effectiveness of these strategies will be demonstrated by widespread improvements to teaching practice, and consequent improvement to student learning across the whole of the Victorian education community.

Context for the inquiry

A number of participants noted that Australian teachers are currently operating in an environment of heightened professional accountability.³³ Some put forward the view that this environment is likely to have a positive effect on teacher professional learning.³⁴ One principal argued that increases in teacher accountability are necessary to motivate underperforming teachers to undertake professional learning in areas of need. He commented that the Victorian education system still protects underperforming teachers 'far too much', and that such teachers should be subject to stronger expectations to improve their practice.³⁵

On the other hand, the Committee heard that teacher professional learning in a climate of heightened accountability must be approached with care. Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, cautioned against an paradigm of professional learning that conceptualises it as a 'a remedy for deficiencies and gaps in teachers' existing practices'.³⁶ Others commented that professional learning can foster considerable resentment if it is perceived as 'a weapon to discipline teachers',³⁷ and that requiring reluctant teachers to attend professional learning is likely to do little to improve their practice.³⁸ The Committee also heard that pressure to improve performance may reduce teachers' confidence,³⁹ undermine existing goodwill towards professional learning,⁴⁰ or disempower teachers in their relationships with their students or the wider community.⁴¹

Many participants suggested instead that schools and education systems should provide teachers with a sense of agency and ownership over their own professional learning.⁴² This approach requires professional learning to be regarded as a means of recognising and supporting teacher professionalism, not as a way to address perceived 'deficits' in teacher expertise. It also acknowledges teachers not simply as *recipients* but as *creators* of

³³ For example, Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 13; Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 12; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1.

³⁴ Representatives of the Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, pp. 3–6.

³⁵ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 14.

³⁶ Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³⁷ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

³⁸ Mr P. Martin, President, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 37.

³⁹ Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 2.

⁴⁰ Mr P. Rose, Principal, Ballarat Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 8.

⁴¹ Mr B. Maher, Principal, Emmaus Catholic Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 16.

⁴² Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 3; Mr W. Morgan, Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 9; Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 27; Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 3; Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 3.

professional expertise, who constantly develop new knowledge about teaching and learning through their day-to-day work. Such an approach serves to support positive perceptions of teaching both within the profession and in the broader community, as a skilled and complex occupation undertaken by expert professionals.⁴³

Curriculum Corporation noted that many countries are beginning to give greater recognition to teacher professionalism, and to regard teachers as ‘the most significant change agents’ in education reforms, not simply education ‘variables’ that are themselves in need of changing.⁴⁴ Other participants drew on this idea in their recommendations, suggesting that the Victorian Government should take the lead in using professional learning as a means of recognising the importance and expertise of the teaching profession.⁴⁵ One made the observation that it is particularly important to support teacher morale in the current climate of increased public scrutiny.⁴⁶

Evidence suggests that Victorian policy-makers have generally approached teacher professional learning in a way that recognises teacher professionalism. In 2007, the Victorian Government published an article in which prominent US educationalist Dr Richard Elmore commented on the importance of teacher professional learning in the overall Victorian strategy for educational improvement. Dr Elmore commended Victoria’s commitment to supporting and developing human capital in its teaching workforce, in contrast to the more punitive, accountability-driven approaches that have been adopted overseas.⁴⁷

The Committee believes that the current climate of increased accountability for Victorian schools will support the improvement of educational performance across the state. It is the Committee’s view that the Victorian Government should continue to focus on teacher professional learning within this context, as one of the cornerstones of school improvement. At the same time, the Committee believes that measures to increase accountability must also continue to be underpinned by recognition of the high levels of expertise and professionalism that currently exist in the Victorian teaching workforce.

‘Surely, teaching isn’t rocket science. No, it’s much more important than rocket science. Australia’s future is not critically dependent upon rockets, but is so upon the next generation of students.’

Associate Professor
Kerry Hempenstall,
Division of Psychology,
School of Health Sciences,
RMIT University

⁴³ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁴⁴ Curriculum Corporation, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 11.

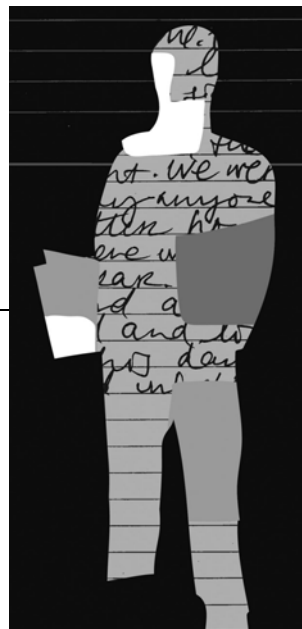
⁴⁵ Mr P. Martin, President, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 34; Mr T. Brandenburg, Executive Officer, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 38.

⁴⁶ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 28.

⁴⁷ R. Elmore 2007, *Educational Improvement in Victoria*, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education (Victoria), Melbourne, pp. 4–5.

Chapter 2

Towards an effective policy framework



The Committee believes that one of the most effective strategies to enhance professional learning for Victorian teachers may be to strengthen the policy framework that supports it. During investigations in Victoria and overseas, the Committee heard many suggestions as to how the Victorian professional learning policy framework could be improved. Some participants, including some peak bodies for the teaching profession, identified a need for a more strategic policy approach to supporting professional learning for teachers over the course of their careers.⁴⁸ Evidence from Victorian participants assisted the Committee to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the current policy framework in Victoria, and identify priority areas for improvement. International investigations enabled the Committee to contrast the current Victorian context with the experience of jurisdictions that have developed more comprehensive policies and regulations for teacher professional learning.

Particularly instructive models were found in Scotland and the Canadian province of Ontario. Regulatory bodies for the teaching profession in both these jurisdictions (the General Teaching Council for Scotland and the Ontario College of Teachers) were considered as models for the initial development of Victoria's regulatory teaching authority, the Victorian Institute of Teaching.⁴⁹ The Committee has therefore given particular consideration to policies implemented by these bodies in developing recommendations for enhancements to the policy framework that supports professional learning for Victorian teachers.

'It is important that an education system develops a coherent framework for teacher professional learning, to support student learning and enhance the status of the profession.'

Faculty of Education,
Australian Catholic
University

Components of an effective policy framework

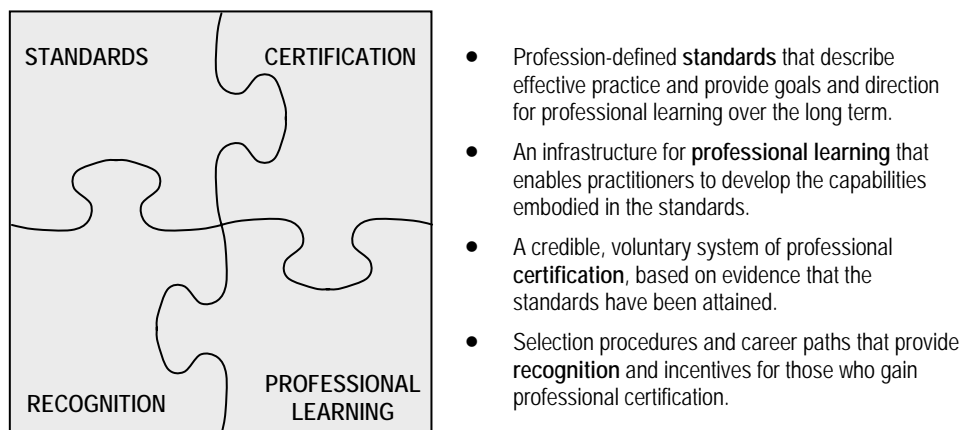
The Committee heard that professional learning may be regarded as one component of a broader policy framework that supports the development of expertise within the teaching profession. This framework also includes policies for defining teaching expertise through professional standards, and policies for certifying teaching expertise through professional credentials. The fourth component of the framework consists of policies for recognising teacher expertise through rewards or incentives.

⁴⁸ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 9; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P-9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁴⁹ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 7.

The Australian Council for Educational Research has conducted extensive research into the policy framework for teacher professional learning in Australia. The Council provided the Committee with a diagram to illustrate this framework, with further explanation of each of its components. These are shown in Figure 2.1.

Figure 2.1: Components of a policy framework for supporting teacher professional learning



Source: Written submission and supplementary information provided by the Australian Council for Educational Research, August 2007 (adapted).

The Council explained that the four components of this framework are interdependent, and that the removal of any one component would compromise the effectiveness of the system as a whole. If implemented together, however, the four components form a powerful system for encouraging and recognising teacher professional learning, and for bringing about large-scale improvements in knowledge and practice across the Victorian teaching profession.⁵⁰

Current policy framework for supporting teacher professional learning

The Committee found that the four components of this framework have already been implemented to some extent in Victoria. A notable development in this area was the establishment of the Victorian Institute of Teaching in 2001.⁵¹ The Institute is charged with recognising and promoting the profession of teaching, and regulating members of the Victorian teaching profession.⁵² The Institute is therefore ideally positioned to assume responsibility for the implementation of an integrated regulatory framework for the teaching profession, as described above. The Committee notes that comparable regulatory bodies for the teaching profession have been established in all but one of the other Australian states and territories over the last decade. A national institute of teaching, Teaching Australia, was also established in 2005.

The statutory responsibilities of the Victorian Institute of Teaching reflect all four components of the policy framework shown above. With respect to professional learning, the Institute is expected to 'develop and maintain a Professional Learning Framework to support and promote the continuing education and professional development of teachers', and to 'undertake professional development programs and activities', where they relate to the functions of the Institute.⁵³ In addition, the Institute is charged with developing,

⁵⁰ Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5.

⁵¹ The Victorian Institute of Teaching was established by the *Victorian Institute of Teaching Act 2001*. The Act was later repealed by the *Education and Training Reform Act 2006*, under which the Institute continues to function.

⁵² *Education and Training Reform Act 2006* (Victoria), s. 2.6.3.

⁵³ *ibid.*

establishing and maintaining standards of professional practice 'for entry into the teaching profession and for continuing membership of the profession'.⁵⁴ The Institute's responsibilities relating to the certification and recognition of teacher expertise are reflected in its role in conferring and recording teacher registration, which is a condition of employment in all Victorian schools.

During its initial operating phase (2002–2006), the Institute's activities focused on implementing a policy framework to support expertise at the point of entry into the teaching profession. The Institute developed two sets of standards for teaching expertise: one for graduate teachers, and one for teachers making the transition from provisional to full registration. Both are based on eight general standards developed by the Institute to apply across all levels of teaching practice.⁵⁵ The Institute has also assumed a role in accrediting Victorian pre-service teacher education courses, to define the professional training required in order for entry-level teaching standards to be attained. In addition, it has developed policies for certifying entry-level teaching expertise through the conferment of both a teaching degree and provisional teacher registration, which may be upgraded to full registration after a year of teaching practice.

The Institute has also made some progress towards developing a Professional Learning Framework to further support teachers in their ongoing learning and development. A significant step towards this objective was the introduction of new requirements in 2007, under which teachers must undertake a minimum of 100 hours of professional learning every five years as a condition of renewal of teacher registration. This represents the first significant regulation for Victorian teachers addressing professional learning beyond the level of entry to the profession. The Institute also continues to provide some professional learning programs directly to certain target groups, although the direct delivery of a broader range of professional learning programs lies beyond the scope of its role.⁵⁶

As noted in its five-year review, the accomplishments of the Institute in its initial years of operation have been commendable, especially when evaluated against the complexity of its statutory functions.⁵⁷ However, while recognising the Institute's achievements in regulating entry into the teaching profession, the Committee believes there is now a need for an improved policy framework to be implemented for the subsequent stages of a teaching career. This should encompass all four components of the policy framework described in Figure 2.1, to facilitate and recognise the professional growth of teachers at all levels of expertise.

Table 2.1 summarises how each component of the policy framework described in Figure 2.1 is currently applied to different career stages within the Victorian teaching profession. It shows that the current policy framework becomes weaker as Victorian teachers progress further through their careers, especially for those aspiring to advanced teaching or leadership roles.

⁵⁴ *ibid.*

⁵⁵ Victorian Institute of Teaching, *Professional Standards*, VIT website, <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=23>, accessed 2 June 2008.

⁵⁶ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 76.

⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 156.

Table 2.1: Current policy framework to support professional learning for Victorian teachers

	STANDARDS <i>What expertise do teachers need to have?</i>	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING <i>How do they acquire this expertise?</i>	CERTIFICATION <i>How is this expertise certified?</i>	RECOGNITION <i>How is this expertise recognised or rewarded?</i>
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS	VIT Standards for Graduating Teachers	VIT-accredited pre-service teacher education course	Teaching degree conferred by course provider and provisional registration conferred by VIT	Eligibility for employment as a provisionally registered teacher
PROVISIONALLY REGISTERED TEACHERS	VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration	VIT Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program	Full registration conferred by VIT	Eligibility for employment as a registered teacher
REGISTERED TEACHERS	VIT general standards for professional practice	VIT requirements for 100 hours of professional learning every five years, at least 50 of which must provide access to knowledge from outside the school environment	Renewal of registration conferred by VIT, based on records of professional learning maintained at school/teacher level Australian Qualifications Framework degrees and credentials	Ongoing eligibility for employment
EXPERT TEACHERS	Standards for higher levels of teaching developed by some teacher employers National standards under development by Teaching Australia	No specific professional learning requirements, other than for renewal of teacher registration	No formal certification – principals or employers verify when higher standards are attained	Possible salary increase
SCHOOL LEADERS	Standards for school leadership developed by some employers National standards under development by Teaching Australia	No specific professional learning requirements, other than for renewal of teacher registration	No formal certification – employers verify when standards are attained	Employment as principal or deputy principal

Source: Compiled by the Education and Training Committee, October 2008.

Pre-service teachers

The first step in a teaching career is to make the transition from pre-service teacher education to provisional registration. Aspiring Victorian teachers must complete a minimum four-year teacher education program comprising formal university study with a practicum component, leading to the attainment of a teaching degree. For a degree program to be considered sufficient for provisional registration, it must be accredited by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The Institute accredits pre-service teacher education courses using its *Standards for Graduating Teachers*, which set out what beginning teachers are expected to know and be able to do.

The Committee has already given extensive consideration to the policies affecting Victorian pre-service teachers in its previous *Inquiry into the Suitability of Pre-service Teacher Training Courses in Victoria*. It is therefore not the place of this inquiry to address pre-service teacher education in detail. However, the Committee notes that the comprehensive policy framework that has been implemented for Victorian pre-service teachers has been effective in ensuring that teachers enter the profession with a sound and consistent basis of professional expertise. This supports the case for the development of a strengthened policy framework for advanced levels of teaching practice.

Provisionally registered teachers

Although provisional registration marks the end of a teacher's formal pre-service teacher education, there is a need for new teachers to undertake further professional learning to achieve the standard for full registration. Evidence to the inquiry revealed some difference in opinion as to whether beginning teachers should be expected to undertake further professional learning early in their careers. One participant argued that new teachers should not face any additional professional learning requirements while they build their confidence in teaching practice. She described a US model whereby beginning teachers undertake no formal professional learning at all in their first year of employment, to give them time to 'learn their craft and become a member of the team'.⁵⁸

Others were concerned that the expectation that new teachers will undergo further professional learning places undue demands on schools. One principal suggested that some schools feel they are being expected to compensate for insufficient pre-service training:

What is actually happening in our universities? Surely they should come to us with enough training to last the first few years of their teaching career.⁵⁹

Mr David Hornsby, Consultant, told the Committee that many beginning teachers are 'let down' by their pre-service education, and enter the profession inadequately prepared. Mr Hornsby identified reduced time spent on pre-service teacher education as a significant contributing factor to this inadequacy.⁶⁰ The Committee's previous inquiry also revealed significant concerns about the amount of time spent in authentic classroom situations during pre-service teacher education. The Committee notes that recent Australian Government initiatives to offer shortened or accelerated teacher education courses have met with criticism that they will further compromise the quality of teacher preparation.⁶¹

At the same time, the Committee believes that translating teacher training into practice will inevitably involve a steep learning curve, whether it is undertaken during pre-service

⁵⁸ Ms W. Baker, Principal, Pleasant Street Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

⁵⁹ Mr P. Clifton, Principal, Magpie Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 10.

⁶⁰ Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 2.

⁶¹ F. Tomazin, 'Gillard faces clash on teacher training', *The Age*, 8 September 2008.

education or during the first year of employment. The Teacher Learning Network endorsed this argument:

Teaching is one of the most complex professions that an individual can undertake. Each day a teacher interacts with the minds of 20 to 120 young people, working to increase their personal growth, their social capacity and their intellectual learning. An initial degree cannot provide a teacher with all of the skills, knowledge and emotional competencies they require to achieve these outcomes for every student in every interaction.⁶²

In the view of the Network, it is impossible for any degree 'no matter how well researched and delivered', to fully equip an individual for the complexities of teaching.⁶³ Another participant commented that teachers today are 'arguably better prepared now in many respects', noting that ENTER scores for entry into teaching degrees have increased. Nevertheless, he agreed that the realities of frontline teaching will still challenge even the best-prepared graduate.⁶⁴

The Committee heard that providing new teachers with professional learning does not necessarily mean adding to the knowledge that they gained in their pre-service teacher education. Some participants associated the need for professional learning for new teachers with a need simply for support or encouragement as they apply the knowledge they bring with them to their day-to-day work.⁶⁵ Others observed that the high rate of attrition for beginning teachers suggests a particular need to ensure that teachers have access to adequate professional support when they commence their careers.⁶⁶

The Committee believes that beginning teachers should be provided with access to external professional learning programs where it is appropriate to their needs. However, it agrees that the emphasis for early career professional learning should be on providing support within the school environment to help new teachers translate their knowledge into practice. This may include structured opportunities for self-reflection, alongside practice-based mentoring and support. The Committee found that this need has been recognised in the current policy framework for supporting Victorian teachers at the beginning of their careers.

Current policy framework for provisionally registered teachers

Once Victorian teachers have achieved provisional registration through pre-service teacher education, they have 12 months to complete full registration. This may be extended for an additional 12 months if required, but it is expected that full registration will normally be achieved in the first year of teaching practice. To be eligible for full registration, the Victorian Institute of Teaching requires that new teachers with provisional registration must undertake at least 80 days of teaching practice. Beginning teachers must also undertake an evidence-based assessment process to demonstrate that their teaching meets or exceeds the Institute's *Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration*.⁶⁷

⁶² Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 2.

⁶³ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁶⁴ Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 41.

⁶⁵ Associate Professor M. Cooper, Coordinator, Bachelor of Education Program, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 23; Dr J. Anderson, Representative, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 15; Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 5.

⁶⁶ Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr P. Martin, President, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 34.

⁶⁷ Victorian Institute of Teaching 2008, *A Guide to Provisional Registration: Information for teachers entering the profession*, Standards and Professional Learning Branch, VIT, Melbourne.

Since 2004, the Victorian Institute of Teaching has worked with schools and system authorities to strengthen the process of initial teacher registration through the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers (SPRT) Program. The program was designed to change teacher registration from a 'rubber stamp' event at the end of a university course, to an ongoing process of learning and support throughout the first year or two of teaching.⁶⁸ The five major components of the SPRT Program are shown in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2: Major components of the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program

1.	The VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration, which provide Provisionally Registered Teachers with a clear framework for their professional learning and their discussions with mentors and colleagues over the first year or two of practice.
2.	Three structured activities for Provisionally Registered Teachers whereby they provide evidence of their professional practice against all of the Standards.
3.	Two half-day seminars for Provisionally Registered Teachers that provide training in the Standards and methods for gathering evidence of performance.
4.	A two-day state-wide training and support program for teacher mentors and mentor coordinators who support Provisionally Registered Teachers.
5.	Guidelines for school-based panels that assess the Provisionally Registered Teacher's evidence and make recommendations to the Victorian Institute of Teaching about whether to grant registration.

Source: L. Ingvarson et al. 2007, *The VIT Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers: Evaluation of Implementation in 2005*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 8.

The SPRT Program has been implemented across all school systems and sectors in Victoria. Induction seminars and two-day mentor programs are delivered by the Institute, in partnership with the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Catholic Education Office and Association of Independent Schools of Victoria. As at March 2008, almost 8 860 provisionally registered teachers and 1 540 casual relief teachers or people returning to teaching had been supported through the mentor program.⁶⁹ In addition, 6 490 registered teachers had been trained as mentors.⁷⁰

Mr Andrew Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, commented that Victoria is unique among Australian states in running a 'fully coordinated cross-sectoral support program' for entry into the teaching profession.⁷¹ Mr Ius reported that the SPRT Program has received acclaim both within Australia and overseas, as well as through ongoing independent evaluation.⁷² In a written submission, the Institute reported that the program has been 'overwhelmingly successful' both in encouraging new teachers and 'reinvigorating' their mentors.⁷³ A 2007 Australian Council for Educational Research evaluation of the SPRT Program concluded that it has been a major contributing factor to the spread of effective mentoring practices for beginning teachers throughout Victorian schools.⁷⁴

⁶⁸ L. Ingvarson et al. 2007, *The VIT Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers: Evaluation of Implementation in 2005*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 9.

⁶⁹ Victorian Institute of Teaching, 'Mentors speak the right language at Richmond West PS', *Media Release*, 3 March 2008, p. 2.

⁷⁰ *ibid.*

⁷¹ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 31.

⁷² *ibid.*

⁷³ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 3–4.

⁷⁴ L. Ingvarson et al. 2007, *The VIT Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers: Evaluation of Implementation in 2005*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 7.

The Committee also heard that the SPRT Program has been received favourably by the individuals involved. One experienced teacher described her mentoring role as an invaluable professional learning experience:

Taking on mentoring was a really big decision for me. I would say it was one of the most worthwhile [professional learning experiences] I have had in the last couple of years – working with a teacher in their first year out – learning, watching, working with her, learning from her experiences.⁷⁵

The 2007 Australian Council for Educational Research evaluation of the program also indicated a positive response among program participants.⁷⁶

The 2007 evaluation found that the strongest influencing factor on the level of satisfaction with the program from both mentors and mentored teachers was the extent of support received from school leadership.⁷⁷ The Committee heard that provision of time to participate in the program is a critical aspect of this support, with beginning teachers receiving a small reduction in their teaching workload. The 2008 review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching nevertheless reported that the work required to complete the SPRT Program is still a significant concern for some new teachers struggling with classroom teaching and preparation.⁷⁸

The Committee heard that time is also an issue for mentor teachers involved in the program. The Victorian Independent Education Union commented that there is no guaranteed workload reduction built into the program for mentor teachers.⁷⁹ The experienced teacher who described her mentoring experience to the Committee reported that she often felt she had 'short changed' the beginning teacher because she did not have enough time to support them. She argued that increased funding and time are necessary if the mentoring program is to be 'taken seriously'.⁸⁰

The Victorian Institute of Teaching suggested to the Committee that possibilities should be canvassed for providing time release for mentors, and increasing the time release for new teachers to at least four hours per week.⁸¹ Similarly, the 2008 review of the Institute recommended that employers of new teachers, especially the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, consider ways to structure the working week to give mentors and beginning teachers sufficient time to work together.⁸² However, the Department's response to the review did not support this recommendation, arguing that schools already have the capacity to build mentoring responsibilities into leadership roles, or to provide a 'responsibility allowance' for experienced staff to act as mentors.⁸³

The Institute also suggested that the trend for new teachers to be placed on short-term contracts may have an impact on the SPRT Program, by limiting the commitment of both mentors and mentored teachers to 'high quality ongoing dialogue and support'.⁸⁴ The Committee recognises that contract employment is a common experience for beginning teachers in Australia and internationally. It encourages schools, mentors and beginning

⁷⁵ Ms J. O'Shannessy, Representative, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 19.

⁷⁶ L. Ingvarson et al. 2007, *The VIT Program for Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers: Evaluation of Implementation in 2005*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 7.

⁷⁷ *ibid.*

⁷⁸ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 44.

⁷⁹ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁸⁰ Ms J. O'Shannessy, Representative, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 19.

⁸¹ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

⁸² FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 173.

⁸³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Interim Response to the Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 6.

⁸⁴ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

teachers to regard short-term initial employment contracts as an opportunity to establish strong foundations for potential longer-term working relationships.

An evaluation of the SPRT Program's initial pilot suggested that another challenge for the program may be the conflation of mentoring, support and assessment functions in the employing school. The evaluation suggested that this may compromise the rigour and objectivity of the assessment process.⁸⁵ The Committee notes that while the professional learning aspect of the SPRT Program has been used as a model for other Australian jurisdictions, it has typically been accompanied by the assessment and accreditation model developed by the NSW Institute of Teachers.⁸⁶ In the NSW model, beginning teachers applying for Accreditation of Professional Competence (equivalent to full registration in Victoria) must submit documented evidence of their practice against professional standards to an external (rather than school-based) assessor.⁸⁷ The Committee suggests that this model be considered in future reviews of the SPRT Program in Victoria.

Registered teachers

Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard the view that teaching is not a skill that can simply be learnt, but one which continues to grow throughout the course of a teaching career.⁸⁸ Even as teachers gain mastery of their craft, the shifting context in which they work perpetuates the need for ongoing skills development. The Committee heard that continual change is a feature of teachers' working lives, due to new developments in policy and research, technology and social, cultural and economic contexts. Not only must teachers continually update their own expertise, they must model the lifelong learning skills their students will need to succeed in a rapidly changing world. Some participants described lifelong learning as an essential skill for teachers in today's 'knowledge economy'.⁸⁹

As well as renewing and reinvigorating their knowledge, teachers may require professional learning throughout their careers to renew and reinvigorate their passion for their work. A theme throughout the inquiry was that increased teacher enthusiasm and morale are important outcomes of teacher professional learning.⁹⁰ The Committee is aware that 'burnout' is a genuine risk for experienced teachers in Victorian schools, as noted by the Teacher Learning Network:

Without the opportunity to research, reflect and renew the community risks having stale, out of date or even 'bored' teachers. Our children are worth more than that.⁹¹

Another participant commented that the ageing teaching workforce means teachers are 'further away' from the formal studies that initially excited their

'I do not want to teacher bash, but... there are teachers who really have done very little continued professional development since beginning their career... You can, if you are in the right – or the wrong – setting, certainly get away with doing very little.'

Ms Kath Murdoch,
Consultant

⁸⁵ E. Kleinhenz and L. Ingvarson 2004, *Evaluation of the Standards and Professional Learning Project 2003*, commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 24.

⁸⁶ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 6.

⁸⁷ NSW Institute of Teachers 2006, *Information for New Scheme Teachers*, NSW Institute of Teachers, Sydney.

⁸⁸ Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 2; Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 41.

⁸⁹ Ms T. Taylor-Cox, Teacher, Thebarton Senior College and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence by a Beginning Teacher, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007), Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Associate Professor J. Henry, Committee Member, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 12.

⁹⁰ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 2; Ms S. Bennett, Vice President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 32.

⁹¹ Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 6.

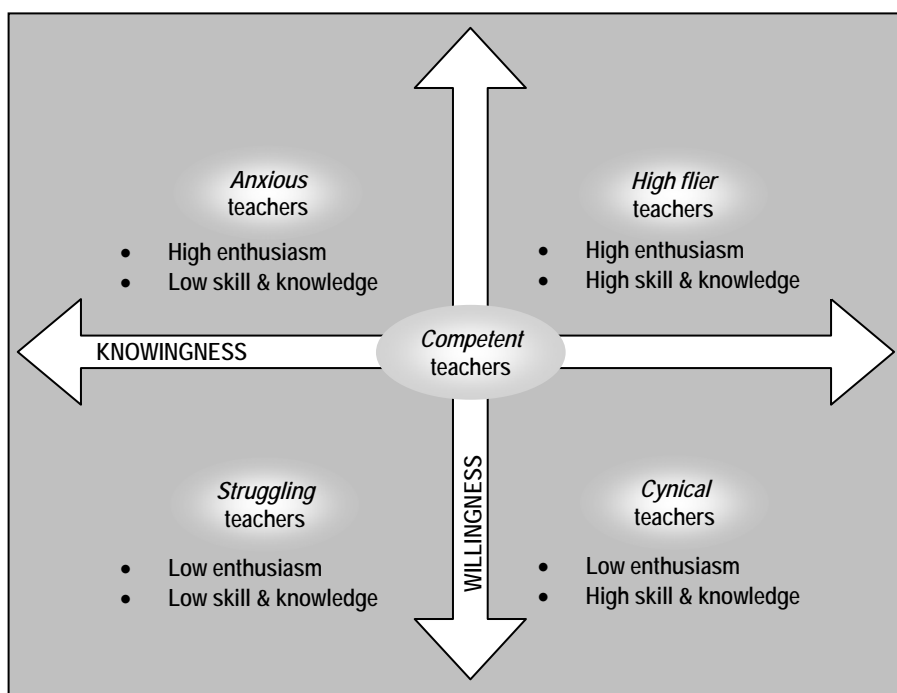
interest in teaching. Professional learning is therefore increasingly important to reinvigorate and challenge teachers throughout their careers.⁹²

In general, the Committee found that Victorian teachers currently have a positive attitude to teaching, and to ongoing professional learning. In the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey, 90 per cent of Victorian teachers reported high levels of enthusiasm about teaching. Over three quarters (77%) demonstrated a high level of willingness to continue to learn as a teacher, and felt that they still had a lot to learn.⁹³

At the same time, the Committee heard that attitudes to professional learning among teachers are not universally supportive. Several participants reported that some teachers are resistant to the idea of maintaining and improving their practice through ongoing professional learning.⁹⁴ Interestingly, concerns also arose about the dangers of *over*-enthusiasm for professional learning. The Committee was introduced to the term 'PD junkie', used to refer to a teacher who enthusiastically signs up for as many professional development activities as possible, with little resulting change to their practice.⁹⁵

A written submission from Mr John Joseph, Director, Focus Education Australia, provided a detailed explanation of the underlying factors that may contribute to different teacher attitudes to professional learning. Mr Joseph categorised teachers into five broad groups, depending on their position along intersecting continuums: skill in teaching (knowingness) and passion for teaching (willingness). These are shown in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2: 'The Willingness and Knowingness Graph'



Source: Mr J. Joseph, Director, Focus Education Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, pp. 4-5 (adapted).

⁹² Ms J. O'Shannessy, Representative, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 22.

⁹³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 50.

⁹⁴ Ms T. Taylor-Cox, Teacher, Thebarton Senior College and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence by a Beginning Teacher, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007), Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 7; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 14.

⁹⁵ See, for example, Ms V. Fenelon, Acting Director, Professional and Organisational Learning, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 37. The term was also used in informal discussions during Performance and Development Culture Open Sessions attended by Committee members and staff.

Mr Joseph proposed that teachers in each group will take a different approach to professional learning. These may be summarised as follows:

- *Anxious* teachers
Seek answers and explanations. Peer coaching strategies likely to be effective.
- *High flier* teachers
Seek challenge and extension. Likely to be effective peer coaches and leaders.
- *Competent* teachers (the majority of teachers)
Seek practical tips without 'rocking the boat'. Likely to benefit from professional learning with individual accountability (e.g. sharing what they have learnt).
- *Struggling* teachers
Seek professional learning to escape from the classroom. Likely to benefit most from retraining 'with dignity' into other fields of work.
- *Cynical* teachers
Seek high quality, high credibility professional learning. Difficult to engage but powerful once 'reignited'.

These categories show that professional learning may be important for all teachers irrespective of their experience and expertise. Even the most highly accomplished teacher may have a need for professional learning to overcome cynicism, or reinvigorate their passion for their work. The Committee encourages schools and systems to recognise the importance of ongoing professional learning for all teachers throughout their careers, to maintain not only high levels of expertise in the Victorian teaching workforce, but also high levels of enthusiasm and professional satisfaction.

Current policy framework for registered teachers

Although registered teachers constitute by far the largest group in the Victorian teaching workforce, the regulatory framework for this group is considerably less developed than for teachers at the early stages of their careers. The Committee acknowledges that registered teachers may be expected to have attained a level of awareness and professionalism that may mean they are less in need of regulatory support. Nevertheless, recent policy developments suggest some ways in which the regulatory framework for registered teachers may be strengthened to further support their ongoing professional learning.

Fully registered Victorian teachers are currently required to renew their registration with the Victorian Institute of Teaching every five years. To do so, teachers must demonstrate their ongoing suitability to teach, including a national criminal history record check. They must also demonstrate that they have maintained their practice over the five-year registration period by undertaking a minimum of 50 days teaching, educational leadership or equivalent practice. From 2008, the Victorian Institute of Teaching is phasing in additional requirements to link the maintenance of teaching practice to participation in ongoing professional learning. All teachers will be required to undertake and document 100 hours of professional learning activities over the five-year registration period as a condition of eligibility for registration renewal.

The new requirements represent a significant step forward in the regulation of teacher professional learning in Victoria. A representative of the Institute told the Committee that reaching agreement on the 100 hours was a challenging exercise in consultation across the profession:

'I believe it is not enough to have a mentoring program and an induction program. What is important is to have that ongoing professional support, not only for new teachers, but for all teachers.'

Ms Jennifer Costello,
Professional Growth
Facilitator,
Carranballac P-9 College,
Point Cook

We started off with 150...There were many in the teaching community who were more than happy for the 150. There were many who wanted less than 100. There were others who did not believe we could tell them to do anything.⁹⁶

While the Committee notes that the 100 hours were still described by some as 'excessive and unrealistic' during the 2008 review of the Institute,⁹⁷ these concerns did not arise in evidence to this inquiry. Many participants indicated that in their experience, teachers already undertake more than 100 hours of professional learning activities in a five-year period,⁹⁸ and one suggested that the benchmark should have been set higher.⁹⁹ The Institute's chairperson added that, in principle, the Institute regards 100 hours as a starting point, which may be increased following further assessment.¹⁰⁰

Nevertheless, the primary objective of the new requirements is not necessarily to increase the amount of professional learning that Victorian teachers undertake. The Committee heard that they serve an important purpose simply in developing a professional culture that values and recognises ongoing learning.¹⁰¹ The requirements are consistent with trends in other Australian education systems, as well as in other professions in Victoria, to mandate specific requirements for maintaining professional expertise.

Quality not quantity

The main concern that arose during the inquiry about the new requirements for teacher professional learning is that they address only the quantity of professional learning that is undertaken, not its quality. Unlike pre-service teachers, registered teachers are not currently required to access their professional learning from accredited sources. Instead, they may choose from among a wide range of professional learning providers. A number of participants commented strongly on the absence of quality specifications, describing the new requirements as 'a Mickey Mouse approach',¹⁰² '100 hours of sitting on your bum',¹⁰³ or simply an 'arbitrary limit' that teachers will 'tick off' with no resulting change to their practice.¹⁰⁴

The new requirements do make some general provisions regarding the nature of the professional learning that Victorian teachers must undertake. Teachers are expected to refer to the Institute's eight general standards for professional practice when reflecting on their practice and identifying their professional learning needs. The Victorian Institute of Teaching suggested that this expectation provides a certain level of quality control:

⁹⁶ Ms S. Halliday, Chairperson, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 36.

⁹⁷ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 50.

⁹⁸ Mr R. Sawyer, Assistant Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 10; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 11; Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 13; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 7; Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 40.

⁹⁹ Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 7.

¹⁰⁰ Ms S. Halliday, Chairperson, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 36.

¹⁰¹ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 34; Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 14; Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 42.

¹⁰² Ms L. Devlin, Principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 12.

¹⁰³ Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11.

In requiring teachers to link this professional development they undertake to standards of professional practice, a mechanism for focusing on the quality of professional development and its associated professional learning has been introduced. This is likely to lead to more effective professional learning, be more cost effective, challenge whimsical decision making about professional development and ensure professional development is well grounded in contemporary knowledge and research.¹⁰⁵

However, in a 2006 paper, the Institute commented that its general standards for professional practice have been criticised as 'too general, perhaps to the point where they become meaningless'.¹⁰⁶ A similar view was put forward in the inquiry by Dr Lawrence Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, who described the Institute's standards as too broad to provide sufficient direction for worthwhile professional learning.¹⁰⁷ The Institute has suggested that the standards may be reviewed once they have 'become an instinctive reference point for teacher reflection in Victoria'.¹⁰⁸

In addition, the new requirements for professional learning state that at least 50 of the 100 hours must draw on 'research and knowledge sourced from outside the immediate school or work environment'. The balance of hours may consist of 'professional development activities identified by teachers as contributing to their professional learning', including formal or informal activities, undertaken collaboratively or individually, either within the school or off-site.¹⁰⁹ The importance of teachers accessing knowledge from outside their schools was supported by evidence to the inquiry. Many participants argued that teacher professional learning should draw on both external expertise and local knowledge, and that teachers must have opportunities to be exposed to and challenged by new ideas.¹¹⁰

The Committee nevertheless notes that this requirement has potential to cause some confusion in its current form. For example, several participants in the Committee's Learning Community Forum in Ballarat understood the requirement to be an expectation that teachers would attend off-site professional learning events.¹¹¹ A recent newsletter from the Institute provided some clarification about the kinds of activities that may be involved in accessing knowledge from outside the immediate school or work environment:

- teachers attend professional development activities away from their school or workplace;
- teachers bring new knowledge into their school or workplace and share it with their colleagues; or
- educational consultants and other experts work with teachers in their school or workplace to challenge or update their knowledge or practice.¹¹²

¹⁰⁵ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

¹⁰⁶ F. Cosgrove and J. Mildren 2006, *Professional Standards and Teacher Practice – the Role of a Professional Learning Framework in Victoria*, paper presented to the 2006 Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, AARE, Adelaide, p. 6.

¹⁰⁷ Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 7.

¹⁰⁸ F. Cosgrove and J. Mildren 2006, *Professional Standards and Teacher Practice – the Role of a Professional Learning Framework in Victoria*, paper presented to the 2006 Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, AARE, Adelaide, p. 6.

¹⁰⁹ Supplementary information provided by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, July 2007.

¹¹⁰ For example, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 23; Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 3; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 5; History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 3–4.

¹¹¹ Dr A. Ford, Director, Staff Development, Ballarat Grammar, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 3; Mr W. Morgan, Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 9; Ms S. Deans, Acting Principal, Buninyong Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6; Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 13; Ms W. Baker, Principal, Pleasant Street Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 13.

¹¹² Victorian Institute of Teaching 2008, *iTeach newsletter*, Issue 3, September 2008.

The Committee welcomes this clarification, but believes there remains scope to strengthen the requirements further to ensure that the professional learning of Victorian teachers reflects an appropriate level of quality and breadth.

At the same time, the recent experience of the Canadian province of Ontario suggests that it would not be advisable to prescribe teacher professional learning activities too narrowly. In 2001, the province introduced a requirement for all teachers to complete 14 professional learning courses every five years, seven of which had to address priority areas identified by the province. The program was discontinued in 2004 amid criticism that it devalued teachers' ability to assume responsibility for their own professional learning, and was replaced with a more flexible approach.¹¹³

The example of Western Australia demonstrates another way in which teachers may be provided with guidance in their professional learning, while retaining a high degree of autonomy and choice. The WA College of Teaching has identified fifteen types of professional learning activities, of which teachers must undertake at least three in every five-year registration cycle.¹¹⁴ While this model provides greater guidance regarding the *type* of professional learning that must be undertaken, the Committee notes that it may still do little to determine its *quality*. Evidence to the inquiry suggests that stronger quality assurance measures may be more appropriate in the Victorian context.

Current quality assurance for teacher professional learning in Victoria

The Committee heard that the Victorian teacher professional learning industry is currently subject to the same informal quality assurance processes as any unregulated private market. Many participants commented that word of mouth is a powerful natural quality assurance measure in the education sector.¹¹⁵ One consultant suggested that this alone is sufficient to support quality in the industry, as 'only the best succeed' in the competitive marketplace.¹¹⁶

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey supported the argument that most professional learning programs in Victoria are of a reasonable standard. Over three-quarters (77%) of Victorian teachers involved in the survey rated the quality of the professional learning available to them in the previous twelve months as 'good' or 'very good'.¹¹⁷ Almost nine out of ten (87%) gave a 'good' or 'very good' rating to the overall quality of the most recent professional development activity they had undertaken.¹¹⁸ While the Committee heard that some of the professional learning programs currently available in Victoria do not meet teachers' expectations for quality,¹¹⁹ evidence to the inquiry generally presented a favourable impression of the Victorian teacher professional learning industry.

Nevertheless, the sheer number and breadth of professional learning opportunities in Victoria poses a challenge for teachers in finding the opportunities most appropriate to their needs. One participant commented that teachers often rely on 'spasmodic and random

¹¹³ Hon G. Kennedy, Minister of Education (Ontario) 2004, *Statement to the Legislative Assembly: Introduction of An Act to Amend the Ontario College of Teachers' Act 1996*, Ministry of Education (Ontario) website, <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/document/nr/04.05/st0513.html>>, accessed 15 October 2008.

¹¹⁴ Western Australian College of Teaching 2007, *A Guide to Recording Professional Learning for the Renewal of Membership*, Western Australian College of Teaching, East Perth, pp. 6–7.

¹¹⁵ Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 21; Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 8; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 8; Ms A. Boulic, Communiq'Arte, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 26.

¹¹⁸ *ibid.*, p. 113.

¹¹⁹ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 18.

advertising' by the industry when selecting their professional learning, leading to 'equally spasmodic and random results'.¹²⁰ The Committee heard that concern about locating quality professional learning was one of the strongest messages the Victorian Institute of Teaching received in consultation about the new professional learning requirements.¹²¹ To coincide with the new requirements, the Institute and the Australian Council for Educational Research have therefore developed Professional Development Interface (Pdi) Online, a searchable online database of professional learning providers.

Currently, the primary function of the Pdi Online database is to help teachers locate professional learning programs appropriate to their needs. However, it also includes some measures to monitor the quality of those providers who register their services online. In order to appear in the database, providers must be able to reference their programs to the eight standards for professional teaching practice developed by the Institute.¹²² They must also indicate their compliance with eight designated principles of effective professional learning. This provides a notional level of quality assurance, although the Committee notes that the breadth of both standards and principles may make it difficult for providers to give specific information about the quality of the services they offer.

The Institute intends to strengthen the quality assurance function of the database in future by offering teachers the opportunity to offer online feedback on the professional learning courses they have completed.¹²³ The 2008 review of the Institute provided further insight into this process:

[Teachers will be] able to submit their own comments about the quality and relevance of the professional development, thereby creating a critique of courses that others can use. Some measures are in place to ensure the commentaries are fair and reasonable, since teachers must submit their name and teacher number as part of the feedback.¹²⁴

The Committee is aware that participant feedback is an important tool in the evaluation of professional learning, both for prospective participants and program providers. The Committee notes that the NSW Institute of Teachers has also included processes for participant feedback in its online database of professional learning providers. At the same time, such feedback can be highly subjective and may depend on many variables besides the quality of the program itself, such as the willingness of participants to have attended the program in the first place.¹²⁵ The Victorian Institute of Teaching is currently investigating ways in which teacher feedback may be communicated fairly through Pdi Online, without running the risk of legal action from providers that receive unfavourable reviews.¹²⁶

The Committee also notes that current resourcing arrangements for the Pdi Online database may compromise the extent of its coverage as a quality assurance measure. Professional learning providers are charged a fee to appear in the database, to cover the costs of maintaining the facility.¹²⁷ The response received from one professional learning consultant, Ms Lesley Wing Jan, suggests that successful providers may not feel a strong motivation to register their services:

I have never advertised except for this year when I became unsure about the role of VIT in teacher professional learning accreditation so I registered my services on Pdi. It is interesting to

¹²⁰ Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 14.

¹²¹ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 32.

¹²² *ibid.*, p. 37.

¹²³ *ibid.*, p. 32.

¹²⁴ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 76.

¹²⁵ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

¹²⁶ Ms S. Halliday, Chairperson, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 36.

¹²⁷ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 4–5.

note that, while I am fully booked for this year, none of my work has come through VIT's Pdi. I rely fully on word of mouth recommendations for my work.¹²⁸

Ms Wing Jan told the Committee that she will only retain her advertisement until the final purposes of the Pdi Online database have been made clear.¹²⁹ The Committee notes that the database is unlikely to fulfil its intended role as a repository of quality programs if other successful providers adopt a similar approach.

Mr Andrew Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, described the database in its current form as a 'fairly soft accreditation process'. However, he argued that the 'breadth and scope' of professional learning programs available in Victoria may prohibit the Institute from expanding this function into a more formal quality assurance role.¹³⁰ The Committee recognises the extent of the teacher professional learning industry in Victoria, and the complexity involved in implementing a more rigorous system of quality assurance. Nevertheless, the Committee believes that it is worthwhile for centralised efforts to map the range and quality of Victorian professional learning providers to continue, to help teachers to navigate the industry more effectively.

A need for a stronger quality assurance system

The concept of a formal system of quality assurance for Victorian teacher professional learning was supported by several participants in the inquiry.¹³¹ Professor Annette Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, suggested that the Victorian Institute of Teaching should assume responsibility for such a system.¹³² The Committee agrees that this may be an appropriate extension of the Institute's current role in accrediting providers of pre-service teacher education, and would also build on the quality assurance work commenced in the Pdi Online initiative.

The Committee encountered an example of such a system in its international investigations. As part of its extensive reforms to strengthen teacher professional learning, the Scottish Government has also recently developed an online register of professional learning providers. Like the Pdi Online database, inclusion on the register requires providers to agree to a set of professional learning principles. However, the Scottish principles are more specific than those developed by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, and include items such as employing qualified, experienced staff, and implementing evaluation procedures which incorporate participant feedback. Providers registering in Scotland must also complete a preliminary registration process involving at least two references, which must be updated every three years.¹³³

The NSW Institute of Teachers has also recently implemented a registration system for providers of teacher professional learning. NSW professional learning providers can apply for registration by submitting a sample of their courses and programs for consideration to the Institute, which then makes a recommendation to the NSW Quality Teaching Council.¹³⁴ Providers are evaluated against eleven specific criteria, similar to the Scottish principles. Registration must be renewed every five years, and providers must notify the Institute of any

¹²⁸ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

¹²⁹ *ibid.*

¹³⁰ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 35.

¹³¹ Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; School of Education, RMIT University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 14; Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5.

¹³² Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 25.

¹³³ Learning and Teaching Scotland, *Principles of CPD Provision*, LTS website, <<http://www.ltscotland.org.uk/cpdscotland/cpdfind/providerarea/principles.asp>>, accessed 20 October 2008.

¹³⁴ NSW Institute of Teachers, *Becoming a provider*, NSW Institute of Teachers website, <http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/CPD_Becoming-a-Provider.html>, accessed 17 September 2008.

substantial changes to their professional learning programs in the interim. Exemptions are made for providers that are already registered through the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), including universities.¹³⁵ The NSW Institute of Teachers is currently the only such institute in Australia that has adopted this kind of regulatory role in the professional learning industry.¹³⁶

In Scotland, the register of professional learning providers has been implemented separately from requirements for teachers to undertake an annual minimum of 35 hours of professional learning. It is up to teachers to decide how many of their mandatory hours are delivered by a registered provider. However, in New South Wales, the provider registration system has been more closely integrated with requirements for teachers' ongoing professional learning. At least half the five-yearly 100 hours of teacher professional learning mandated for NSW teachers must be delivered by a registered provider.

For Victorian teachers, a registration or accreditation system for providers may provide an ideal opportunity to enhance the current requirement for 50 hours of professional learning to provide access to knowledge from outside the school. The Committee believes that Victorian teachers should instead be required to ensure that at least 50 hours of their five-yearly professional learning is delivered by an accredited provider. This would ensure not only that teachers access external expertise in their professional learning, but that this expertise is delivered by a provider that has undertaken quality assurance processes. The Committee believes it would also improve teacher confidence in locating quality professional learning programs, and encourage providers to make their services available to all Victorian teachers through a recognised central database.

Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT)

Teachers in Victorian government schools have been provided with an additional tool to support the quality and relevance of their ongoing professional learning in the Principles of Learning and Teaching (PoLT). Introduced in 2004 as one of the major strategies for improving teacher quality associated with the 2003 *Blueprint for Victorian Government Schools*, the principles comprise six statements describing the characteristics of quality learning environments. Each statement is accompanied by a list of 'components' that describe in general terms what a teacher will do to demonstrate the principles in their practice.¹³⁷

In a background paper supporting PoLT, the Department explained that the principles are 'not standards or curriculum statements'.¹³⁸ However, they serve a similar purpose to teaching standards, in providing a 'basis for discussions' to help teachers reflect on their practice, and to 'find a focus for their professional learning'.¹³⁹ The Department envisaged that the principles would help teachers to engage in a continuous cycle of professional learning throughout their teaching careers, identifying goals for change, trialing solutions and reflecting on results.¹⁴⁰

'I think there is nothing much more satisfying than seeing an older teacher who has reinvented themselves through professional learning. That can be extremely rewarding.'

Mr Rodney Knight,
President,
History Teachers'
Association of Victoria

The Department has provided a professional learning program to support the implementation of PoLT in Victorian government schools. In PoLT professional learning

¹³⁵ NSW Institute of Teachers n.d., *Continuing Professional Development Policy – Supporting the maintenance of accreditation at professional competence*, NSW Institute of Teachers, Sydney, pp. 9–17.

¹³⁶ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 22.

¹³⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *The Principles of Learning and Teaching P–12 Background Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 2.

¹³⁸ *ibid.*

¹³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3.

sessions, teachers use a rubric to rank their practice against the principles, and then must provide evidence to support their ranking. A spokesperson for the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, which has delivered professional learning for PoLT since 2006, told the Committee that the process of self-assessment often proves highly beneficial.¹⁴¹ At the very least, it involves teachers in valuable thinking and discussion, and gives some 'a bit of a shock' as they realise their perceptions of their own practice are not supported by the evidence.¹⁴²

The Committee received a number of comments on PoLT in the course of the inquiry. A representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development told the Committee that PoLT has proved to be 'a significant strategy' in professional learning, enabling principals to target professional learning to identified individual, team and school-wide needs.¹⁴³ The Committee heard that many Catholic schools are also now accessing PoLT professional learning programs.¹⁴⁴ The Committee agrees that ongoing evaluation of actual teaching practice against professional standards is an essential starting point for identifying teacher needs in ongoing professional learning.

An improved system of certification

'...there should be some sort of graded certification – going from a certificate of participation, which is what is usually handed out, to actually getting some credit for it, so there is actually an assessment task that goes with it.'

Professor Annette Gough,
Board Member,
Australian Council of Deans
of Education

The Committee believes that the certification of professional learning is another area in which the policy framework for registered teachers could be improved. Currently, Victorian teachers have two primary methods available to them to certify the growth of their professional expertise. Renewal of teacher registration certifies the maintenance and development of professional knowledge to some extent, by verifying that the minimum quantity of professional learning has been undertaken. Teachers are expected to keep evidence of their own professional learning activities for the purposes of re-registration, with a random sample of individual records to be selected annually for verification by the Victorian Institute of Teaching.¹⁴⁵

In addition, Victorian teachers may certify the growth of their professional expertise by gaining an additional degree or other credential recognised through the Australian Qualifications Framework. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that many Victorian teachers currently choose to upgrade their qualifications through their professional learning. Around one in six (16%) Victorian teachers had undertaken tertiary study in the twelve months prior to the survey. Among these teachers, most pursued a higher qualification, with only 21 per cent completing only a single university course or module. The

most commonly completed course was a postgraduate diploma or certificate (33%), followed by a master's degree (28%).¹⁴⁶

The Committee heard arguments in support of professional learning that leads to a university credential. Both the Victorian Independent Education Union and the Australian College of Educators argued that teacher professional learning should lead to a higher

¹⁴¹ Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 2.

¹⁴² *ibid.*, pp. 2–3.

¹⁴³ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 13.

¹⁴⁴ Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 2.

¹⁴⁵ Victorian Institute of Teaching 2008, *Your Guide to Teacher Registration – How to Meet Professional Development Requirements*, VIT, Melbourne.

¹⁴⁶ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 65.

degree wherever possible.¹⁴⁷ Ms Cheryl O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Australian College of Educators, argued that a more highly qualified teaching profession is likely to perform more effectively in schools.¹⁴⁸ During international investigations, the Committee heard that the high-performing Finnish education system is underpinned by a highly qualified teaching workforce. All Finnish teachers are required to complete a master's degree as a minimum requirement to teach in schools.

The Committee agrees that further tertiary study is a valuable, high-level professional learning activity that teachers should be encouraged to pursue. However, it recognises that a higher university credential may be beyond the reach of many teachers, both in terms of time and cost. Many may therefore prefer to increase their knowledge incrementally through shorter-term professional learning programs.

The Committee heard that some opportunity for teachers to undertake short-term programs towards a higher qualification is currently provided through the Framework for Accredited Teacher Professional Development. The framework is a long-standing agreement between the Victorian Council of Deans of Education and Victorian school education authorities, which allows teachers to gain credit towards a university credential for professional learning programs with a minimum of 20 contact hours.¹⁴⁹ However, Professor Annette Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, suggested that these opportunities may be in decline, commenting that the framework of a graduate certificate and graduate diploma of professional development 'seems to have disappeared over the last few years'.¹⁵⁰ A representative of the Victorian Independent Education Union lamented that 'almost none' of the professional learning currently undertaken by Victorian teachers offers any credit transfer for higher degrees.¹⁵¹

The Committee believes that this points to a need for alternative methods for certifying the growth of teacher expertise through non-degree professional learning programs. The Canadian province of Ontario has addressed this issue by developing a separate system of credentialing specifically for teacher professional learning, known as the Additional Qualifications framework. The framework differs from the system of university degrees and credentials, in that it is developed especially for the teaching profession and administered by the Ontario College of Teachers.

Programs under the Additional Qualifications framework must be accredited by the Ontario College of Teachers, and may be offered by a range of providers, including both universities and local school boards.¹⁵² Successful completion of an Additional Qualifications program leads to a formal credential that is listed on the teacher's Certificate of Qualification, an annual teaching licence issued by the Ontario College of Teachers. This enables teachers to have their professional learning formally certified, without requiring them to pursue a further university degree.

Additional Qualifications courses may be run over either a one-session or three-session program, and must include mechanisms for formal assessment. A session comprises a minimum of 125 hours of classroom-based or structured online learning, as well as additional study time for assignments, course readings and other individual activities. Courses cover a wide range of topics, including subject area specialisations,

¹⁴⁷ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 8; Meeting with Ms C. O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Australian College of Educators, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

¹⁴⁸ Meeting with Ms C. O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Australian College of Educators, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

¹⁴⁹ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 25.

¹⁵⁰ *ibid.*

¹⁵¹ Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 19.

¹⁵² Ontario College of Teachers, *Course providers*, Ontario College of Teachers website, <http://www.oct.ca/additional_qualifications/providers.aspx?lang=en-CA>, accessed 2 October 2008.

cross-curricular teaching skills, and professional development skills such as mentoring and action research. The Committee heard that the three most popular courses are currently: Reading Part One; Special Education; and Teaching English as a Second Language.¹⁵³

In 2006, the Ontario College of Teachers introduced 59 new Additional Qualifications courses, and revised many of the existing programs. The 59 new courses are shown in Table 2.3, as an indicative sample of courses offered.

Table 2.3: New courses offered in 2006 under the Ontario Additional Qualifications framework

One-session courses (Intermediate/Senior)	
Business Studies – Entrepreneurship	Philosophy
Business Studies – General	
One-session technological courses (Basic/Advanced)	
Computer Technology	Hairstyling and Aesthetics
Green Industries	Health Care
One-session courses	
Aboriginal Peoples: Traditional Teachings, Histories, Current Issues and Cultures	Special Education: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Behaviour • Communication – Autism • Communication – Learning Disability • Communication – Speech and Language • Intellectual – Developmental Disabilities • Intellectual – Gifted • Multiple Exceptionalities • Physical • Special Education for Administrators
Action Research	
Adapting Curriculum for Second-Language Learners	
Adapting Curriculum for the Catholic School System	
Alternative Education	
Arts, Grades 7 and 8	
Education Law	
Enseignement en milieu minoritaire (French only)	
Geography, Grades 7 and 8	
Health and Physical Education, Grades 7 and 8	Teaching Aboriginal Children
History, Grades 7 and 8	Teaching and Learning Through e-Learning
Language Arts, Grades 7 and 8	Teaching Cayuga
Leadership en milieu minoritaire	Teaching Combined Grades
Mathematics, Grades 7 and 8	Teaching Delaware
Mentoring	Teaching Ojicree
Outdoor Experiential Education	Teaching Oneida
Science and Technology, Grades 7 and 8	Teaching in a French Immersion Setting
Student Assessment and Evaluation	Teaching in the Catholic School System
	Use and Knowledge of Assistive Technology
Three-session courses	
Aural and Oral Communication	Social Studies, Primary and Junior
Inclusive Classroom	Sign Language (American or québécoise)
Native Studies	Writing
One-session Honour Specialist courses	
Native Languages	Native Studies

Source: Ontario College of Teachers, *Additional Qualifications*, OCT website, <<http://www.oct.ca/additional%5Fqualifications/>>, accessed 31 October 2008.

¹⁵³ Meeting with representatives of the Ontario College of Teachers, Toronto, 5 September 2008.

The Ontario College of Teachers reported that around 84 per cent of Ontario teachers have indicated that they will be taking an Additional Qualifications course over the next two years.¹⁵⁴ The Committee was impressed by this level of uptake, especially given that teachers usually incur the relatively expensive course costs themselves, and complete their courses during holidays or weekends. The Committee believes that this demonstrates the interest and motivation that can be generated by offering a suite of accredited professional learning programs within a recognised system of certification.

Scotland introduced a model similar to the Additional Qualifications framework in January 2006, known as the Framework for Professional Recognition. Like the Ontario model, the Framework offers teachers the opportunity to gain recognition for professional expertise in three key areas: curriculum subjects; cross-curricular areas such literacy, special needs or health promotion; and other areas such as mentoring or leadership. However, unlike the Ontario model, professional recognition is not achieved directly through the completion of a specific professional learning program. Instead, teachers seeking professional recognition undertake a process of self-evaluation, reflection and discussion in their chosen area, including undertaking professional learning to address their identified learning needs. Teachers achieving professional recognition receive a certificate that remains valid for five years, and that may be renewed if the teacher demonstrates that they have maintained an interest and current knowledge in the area.

The Committee recommends that a system similar to the Additional Qualifications or Professional Recognition framework be developed and implemented for Victorian teachers. This would create meaningful opportunities for teachers to certify the knowledge they gain through professional learning programs not recognised through the Australian Qualifications Framework. The Committee recognises that there are various ways in which such a system may be implemented. An Additional Qualification may be gained directly from participation in a specific course, or may result from an ongoing learning and self-evaluation process in a designated area, similar to the Scottish model. Associated professional learning courses may be delivered by a range of providers, who have received formal accreditation through the system proposed earlier in this chapter.

Once a teacher has successfully completed an Additional Qualification, the Committee believes that this should be recognised on the Victorian Institute of Teaching's online database of registered teachers. This would help teachers to gain recognition for their particular skills or specialisations, and would assist schools in identifying teacher strengths and areas for future development. It may also facilitate teacher recruitment processes by enabling employers to identify teachers with specialist expertise in priority areas.

Accomplished and expert teachers

Another area in which the Committee believes that the policy framework supporting teacher expertise may be strengthened is in encouraging the development of advanced teaching practice. Some participants in the inquiry suggested that the current policy environment does not provide a sufficient incentive for Victorian teachers to extend themselves through professional learning. One suggested that creating conditions in which teachers will *want* to undertake professional learning would be preferable to introducing mandatory requirements,¹⁵⁵ while another recommended that incentives for teachers to undertake professional learning should be reviewed.¹⁵⁶

The Committee agrees that the current regulatory framework for Victorian teachers may not provide sufficient incentives and support to challenge teachers to advance to higher levels

¹⁵⁴ *ibid.*

¹⁵⁵ Mr J. Joseph, Director, Focus Education Australia Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 8.

¹⁵⁶ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

of professional expertise. Each time Victorian teachers renew their registration, they are currently required to assess their skills and professional learning needs only against the same general standards that applied when they first entered the profession. Once teachers have achieved full registration, they may therefore, notionally at least, remain at that level of teaching for the duration of their careers.

Although the Victorian Institute of Teaching does not set out professional standards for teachers beyond full registration, some such standards have been developed at the employer level. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development sets out a tiered structure for teacher employment that begins with a basic level (*graduate* teacher), comprising the eight broad standards set out by the Institute for ongoing teacher registration. The Department then provides standards for two further categories of Teacher Class employees: *accomplished* and *expert* teacher (refer Table 2.4).¹⁵⁷

Table 2.4: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development Professional Standards for Teachers

Graduate Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • know how students learn and how to teach them effectively • know the content they teach • know their students • plan and assess for effective learning • create and maintain safe and challenging learning environments • use a range of teaching practices and resources to engage students in effective learning • reflect on, evaluate and improve their professional knowledge and practice • are active members of their profession.
Accomplished Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a high level of knowledge of relevant curriculum areas, student learning processes and resources, and can apply it in implementing programs that enhance student learning • demonstrate high-quality classroom teaching skills and successfully employ flexible and adaptive approaches and constructive strategies to allow students to reach their full potential • successfully apply assessment and reporting strategies that take account of relationships between teaching, learning and assessment • respond effectively to emerging educational initiatives and priorities • demonstrate high-level communication skills and professional behaviour when interacting with parents or guardians, students and colleagues • successfully organise and manage aspects of the wider school program • demonstrate improved teaching and performance skills through critically evaluating professional practices • provide high-level professional assistance to other teachers in classroom related areas.
Expert Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a comprehensive knowledge of relevant curriculum areas • demonstrate and model excellent teaching and learning skills

¹⁵⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Professional Standards for Teachers*, DEECD, Melbourne, pp. 4–5.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a productive contribution to the school program
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a significant contribution to the development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum programs and policy, and respond to initiatives that enhance student learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a high level of commitment to student welfare within the school
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate strong ongoing professional learning.
Leading Teachers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate exemplary teaching and learning performance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a strong commitment to personal leadership growth
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provide high-level educational leadership in the school community and beyond
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • build and maintain effective teams and develop cooperative working relationships that promote excellence in teaching and learning within the educational and broader community
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • initiate, plan and manage significant change in response to new educational directions, and manage the planning, development, implementation and evaluation of curriculum policy and programs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • demonstrate a high level of ability to articulate educational issues and perspectives in communication with colleagues and others.

Note: The eight standards for Graduate Teachers are identical to the eight general standards for professional practice developed and promoted by the Victorian Institute of Teaching. The Institute has also developed specific 'Characteristics of Teaching' under each of these eight standards for new teaching graduates, and teachers achieving full registration.

Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Professional Standards for Teachers*, DEECD, Melbourne, pp. 4–5.

Progression through the levels is conditional on the demonstration of advanced teaching practice, evaluated against the applicable professional standards. At present, there is no specific professional learning that must be completed for a higher teaching standard to be attained. In government schools, the decision to progress a teacher to a higher level rests with the principal.¹⁵⁸

Higher salary brackets apply as teachers progress through each level of expertise.¹⁵⁹ Once a Victorian teacher in the government school system achieves a higher level of teaching, this status is retained. For example, if a Teacher Class employee transfers to another government school, they retain the salary level from their previous position, unless transferring to a higher-salaried position.¹⁶⁰

The Committee notes that this system provides some incentive for teachers to develop their expertise. However, it is currently offered at a teacher employer level. The Committee believes the establishment of the Victorian Institute of Teaching has created an opportunity for such a career structure to be recognised by a cross-sectoral statutory authority representing the entire teaching profession. In New South Wales, a similar teaching career structure has recently been incorporated into the profession-wide system of teacher accreditation (registration). In 2008, the NSW Institute of Teachers assumed responsibility for the accreditation of teachers at two levels beyond the equivalent of Victorian full teacher registration: Professional Accomplishment and Professional Leadership.¹⁶¹ Accreditation at

¹⁵⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Performance and Development Guide Teacher Class*, DEECD website, <http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/edulibrary/public/hr/perform/PerformDev_Guide_Teachers.pdf>, accessed 6 March 2008, p. 4.

¹⁵⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *Salaries for Teacher Class in Victorian Government Schools*, DEECD, Melbourne.

¹⁶⁰ *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2004*, s. 16(14).

¹⁶¹ NSW Institute of Teachers 2007, *Teacher Accreditation Manual policy statement*, NSW Institute of Teachers, Sydney, pp. 21–22.

these levels is undertaken on a voluntary basis, and follows a similar process to the NSW accreditation process for entry into the profession, whereby a report is prepared by the school and verified by an external assessor.¹⁶²

Considerable efforts have also been made in Scotland to provide an incentive and opportunity for teachers to attain a recognised level of higher expertise, through the Chartered Teacher Program. The Standard for Chartered Teacher was developed in 2002 as part of the national Scottish framework for teachers' continuing professional development, and represents 'a significant enhancement of professional skill and understanding' beyond the Standard for Full Registration.¹⁶³ The Standard was designed to recognise and reward teachers wishing to pursue a challenging career without leaving the classroom. It is available to all teachers who have reached the top of the classroom teaching salary range, including those working casually or part-time.¹⁶⁴

'If we are serious about improving the outcomes for our students, by improving the capability of our teachers, then we need to get serious about rewarding teachers for their knowledge, skill and expertise.'

Dr Gary Simpson,
Coordinator of
Curriculum Initiatives
(Independent Learning),
Woodleigh School

Scottish teachers can achieve accreditation as a Chartered Teacher through two different routes. The first, known as the 'program route', involves the completion of accredited university course modules leading to a master's degree. The alternative 'accreditation route' requires teachers to submit evidence demonstrating how they have achieved and maintained the Standard for Chartered Teacher. Successful progression through either route leads to a Professional Award of Chartered Teacher awarded by the General Teaching Council for Scotland, and eligibility for a higher salary range.¹⁶⁵

In Western Australia, the Department of Education and Training has implemented a similar initiative – the Senior Teacher Program – which takes a more specific approach to professional learning. To be eligible for Senior Teacher status, teachers must complete either 'recent and relevant studies' at a university or TAFE Institute, or a specific Senior Teacher Professional Learning Program offered through the Department's Professional Learning Institute. The program combines two compulsory study modules with two flexible modules that may be tailored to the individual teacher. Once a teacher has completed the requisite professional learning, they must apply to the Department for their Senior Teacher status to be endorsed.¹⁶⁶

The Committee believes that the development of higher categories of teacher registration would provide a valuable incentive and opportunity for Victorian teachers to develop their professional expertise to an advanced level. The Committee suggests this system should combine the standards for early career teaching set out by the Victorian Institute of Teaching with two further levels of advanced teaching standards. These may be based on the standards currently administered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, or may reflect current efforts to develop advanced teaching standards at a national level. Salary increments for each level of registration could remain at the discretion of employers.

The Scottish and Western Australian systems provide examples of how the attainment of higher levels of teacher registration may be linked to teachers' ongoing professional learning. For Victorian teachers, the Committee recommends that progression through the different categories of teaching could be linked to the improved system of certification and

¹⁶² *ibid.*, pp. 23–24.

¹⁶³ Scottish Executive 2002, *Standard for Chartered Teacher*, The Scottish Government, Edinburgh, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ *ibid.*, p. 1.

¹⁶⁵ General Teaching Council for Scotland, *Achieving the Standard for Chartered Teachers – Guidance for Teachers*, GTC Scotland website, <http://www.gtcs.org.uk/Publications/GuidanceforTeachers/Achieving_Standard_Chartered_Teacher_Guidance_for_Teachers.aspx>, accessed 16 October 2008.

¹⁶⁶ Department of Education and Training (Western Australia) 2005, *Senior Teacher – Information and Guidelines*, DE&T (Western Australia), East Perth, pp. 7–9.

credentialing for teacher professional learning proposed above. Eligibility for promotion to a higher teaching level may be conditional upon the completion of a certain number of credentialed professional learning programs, including either university degrees or Additional Qualifications as described in the previous section. However, the Committee believes progression should not reflect the attainment of credentials alone, but should also require teachers to demonstrate evidence of advanced teaching practice.

School leaders

School leadership is the last career stage to be addressed in the policy framework for the teaching profession. The Committee heard comments throughout the inquiry that the development of school leadership should be a priority for Victorian schools and education systems.¹⁶⁷ One participant noted that many school leaders are now approaching retirement, creating an imminent leadership shortage in Victorian schools.¹⁶⁸ A 2008 Australian Council for Educational Research report on school leadership confirmed that principal retirements pose a threat to the availability of school leaders across Australia.¹⁶⁹ This suggests a significant need to equip potential school leaders with the skills they require to assume leadership positions.

Other participants indicated that supporting and developing existing school leaders is equally important. Ms Cathy Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, noted the 'huge expectation' currently placed on principals and other leaders to drive innovation and school improvement.¹⁷⁰ Mr Terry Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, also argued that many current school leaders require assistance to develop the interpersonal and managerial skills necessary to lead schools and resolve challenging situations.¹⁷¹

However, some participants expressed concern that putting pressure on school leaders to develop their expertise may place them in a position of having to prioritise their own learning over learning opportunities for their staff. The Victorian Education Union noted that the increasing attention being paid to the development of school leaders has placed significant strain on school professional learning budgets.¹⁷² The Committee also heard that expectations for principals of government schools to attend various departmental professional learning or networking events can compromise the time and resources available to other staff.¹⁷³

At the same time, the Committee heard that leadership development may also have flow-on benefits for professional learning for other teachers in the school. One participant described principals as 'the key variable' in the success of teacher professional learning,¹⁷⁴ and many others emphasised the importance of effective school leadership in opening up schools to

¹⁶⁷ Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 18; Mr P. Rose, Principal, Ballarat Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 8; Mr P. Brown, Executive Officer, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 15.

¹⁶⁸ Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 37.

¹⁶⁹ B. Mulford 2008, *The Leadership Challenge: Improving learning in schools*, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, 2008, p. 8.

¹⁷⁰ Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 18.

¹⁷¹ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 15.

¹⁷² Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

¹⁷³ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 44.

new knowledge and practices.¹⁷⁵ Another participant suggested that education systems should prioritise leading and driving the professional learning of others in professional learning programs for school administrators.¹⁷⁶ The Committee agrees that the expertise of Victorian principals is likely to have a significant impact on the planning, evaluation and efficient resourcing of teacher professional learning in their schools.

Flow-on effects may also occur through 'leading by example', as school leaders who prioritise professional learning for themselves can demonstrate its importance to their colleagues.¹⁷⁷ Two professional learning consultants remarked that it is important for principals to attend professional learning programs alongside their staff.¹⁷⁸ One Victorian principal supported this view, and told the Committee that he attends most of the professional learning activities that occur at his school.¹⁷⁹

The Committee supports the view that leadership development is a priority area for professional learning in Victorian schools. Leaders must not only work continually to develop their own skills, but must know how to best support the learning and development of their staff. At the same time, the Committee heard that effective school improvement strategies also depend upon a degree of leadership being devolved to other school staff.¹⁸⁰ This means that the need for professional learning in school leadership may also extend beyond the formal leadership team. The Committee recommends that Victorian schools consider making leadership development opportunities available to staff at all levels as needs arise, and not regard them as restricted to current school administrators.

Current policy framework for school leaders

Professional learning for school leaders has been recognised as a current priority for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The Department has committed to deliver a range of professional learning programs in 2009 for school leaders and teachers in leadership roles through its Learning to Lead Effective Schools Program. The program is supplemented by the Department's *Developmental Learning Framework for School Leaders*, a tool used to assess skills across five leadership domains. Professional learning opportunities to be offered under the program in 2009 are listed in Table 2.5.

Table 2.5: *Learning to Lead Effective Schools* professional learning programs in 2009

All Individuals
Master in School Leadership
Leading Professional Learning
Building the Capacity of Professional Learning Leaders (AGOTP)
Literacy Leader Professional Learning
Teacher Professional Leave

¹⁷⁵ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 13; Curriculum Corporation, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 11; Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 29; Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 37; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3.

¹⁷⁶ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Education Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 16.

¹⁷⁸ Mr D. Hornsby and Ms K. Murdoch, Consultants, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 6.

¹⁷⁹ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 9.

¹⁸⁰ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 13; Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 4.

Teams
Building the Capacity of School Leadership Teams (AGQTP)
Leading across Effective Small Schools
Leading in Effective Schools
Aspirant Leaders
Preparing for Leadership
Leading for Student Learning (AGQTP)
Aspirant Leaders, Assistant Principals and PR1s (early career principals)
Human Leadership: Developing People
Educational Leadership: Shaping Pedagogy
Technical Leadership: Thinking and Planning Strategically
Eleanor Davis School Leadership Program
Stepping up to the Principalship
Networks
Leaders in the Making
Principals
Mentoring for First-time Principals
Building the Capacity of Principals of Small Schools (AGQTP)
Development Program for High Performing Principals
Coaching to Enhance the Capabilities of Experienced Principals

Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Learning to Lead Effective Schools: Professional learning for current and aspirant leaders 2009*, Office for Government School Education, Melbourne, 2006.

The Committee found that other school sectors in Victoria are also actively supporting the development of school leadership capacity. For example, the Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Melbourne, offers a suite of twelve leadership development initiatives, including grants for action research projects and up to 10 weeks of 'enrichment leave' for experienced principals.¹⁸¹ All other jurisdictions across Australia also identify school leadership as a strategic priority for professional learning and school improvement.¹⁸²

At a national level, the Australian Government offers the Leading Australia's Schools Program through Teaching Australia, in partnership with the Hay Group.¹⁸³ Now in its third year, the program brings together two cohorts of 40 high-performing primary and secondary principals each year for a five-day residential workshop, a 'Challenge Project' undertaken back in the school and a further two-day residential program to follow up on the project's implementation.¹⁸⁴ Ms Fran Hinton, Chief Executive, Teaching Australia, told the Committee that while the program is 'quite small' in the wider context of the Australian education profession, its evaluation to date has been 'extraordinarily positive'.¹⁸⁵

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey suggests that Victorian principals and school leaders are generally positive about their professional learning opportunities. The

¹⁸¹ Catholic Education Office, Archdiocese of Melbourne, *CEOM Initiatives and Professional Learning*, CEOM website, <<http://web.ceo.melb.catholic.edu.au/index.php?sectionid=358>>, accessed 3 October 2008.

¹⁸² Based on analysis of Australian state and territory education websites, 5 October 2008.

¹⁸³ Meeting with representatives of Teaching Australia, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

¹⁸⁴ Atelier Learning Solutions Pty Ltd 2007, *Evaluation of the Leading Australia's Schools Program*, Teaching Australia, Acton, p. 5.

¹⁸⁵ Meeting with representatives of Teaching Australia, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

survey found that principals and teachers in leadership roles tended to rate overall measures of quality, relevance and support for their professional learning much more highly than those in classroom-based roles.¹⁸⁶ The Committee acknowledges that school leaders are likely to be educators with especially high levels of expertise, awareness and motivation, who may therefore be expected to perceive learning opportunities most positively. It also notes that these differences may result from the wide range of leadership programs currently available.

However, while the Committee commends the range of school leadership programs currently available to Victorian school leaders, it notes that such a vast array of opportunities may be difficult to navigate effectively. A 2007 Australian Council for Educational Research paper commented that fragmentation has historically been a characteristic of professional learning for school leaders across Australia, with the field characterised by 'brief courses, often unrelated to each other and rarely sequential over time'. Future school leaders have therefore 'caught what they could on the run', and have often gained principalship positions with little formal training in school leadership.¹⁸⁷ This suggests the need for a more structured approach.

An improved system for school leadership development

During international investigations, the Committee heard examples of how a more rigorous approach may be adopted at the point of entry into a school leadership role. In the Canadian province of Ontario, principals in publicly funded schools must have completed an undergraduate degree, be certified to teach at a variety of levels, and have at least five years' teaching experience. They must also have completed two Specialist or Honour Specialist qualifications through the Ontario Additional Qualifications framework, or a master's degree.¹⁸⁸ In addition, aspiring Ontario school leaders must complete a compulsory Principal's Qualification Program.

The Principal's Qualification Program comprises two coursework phases of 125 hours each. The first covers six modules: what it means to be a principal; interpersonal skills and decision making; supervision of staff; legal issues related to school operations; students with exceptionalities; and other legal issues. The second phase covers: human resources; school planning; school program; leadership; community; and management of resources. The program also includes a practicum experience of not less than 60 hours.¹⁸⁹

Compulsory standards and qualifications for school leaders have also been adopted in the United Kingdom. Since 2005, aspiring Scottish headteachers (principals) have been required to attain a national Standard for Headship to be eligible for a principalship role. The Standard covers professional values, professional abilities and various advanced management functions: managing teaching and learning; managing people; managing policy and planning; and managing resources and finance.¹⁹⁰

Standards for school leadership in the United Kingdom have been supported by the development of associated professional learning programs. The Scottish Qualification for Headship has been designed specifically to lead to the achievement of the national Standard for Headship. The qualification normally takes between two and three years to complete, and is delivered through a partnership between local education authorities and

¹⁸⁶ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 25.

¹⁸⁷ L. Ingvarson and M. Anderson 2007, *Standards for school leadership: Gateway to a stronger profession?*, paper presented to The Leadership Challenge – Improving Learning in Schools: Research Conference 2007, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 45.

¹⁸⁸ Ministry of Education (Ontario), *I Want to Be a Principal*, Ministry of Education website, <<http://www.edu.gov.on.ca/eng/teacher/directobe.html>>, accessed 14 October 2008.

¹⁸⁹ Meeting with representatives of the Ontario College of Teachers, Toronto, 5 September 2008.

¹⁹⁰ Scottish Executive 2002, *Standard for Headship in Scotland*, The Scottish Government, Edinburgh.

approved higher education institutions. It comprises attendance at courses and workshops, as well as a significant component of work-based learning.¹⁹¹

A 2002 Scottish Government evaluation of the Scottish Qualification for Headship found that it has had a significant positive impact on both participants and their schools.¹⁹² A 2005 review of the program undertaken on behalf of the NSW Department of Education and Training also endorsed the value of a formal leadership preparation program in raising confidence and expertise among Scottish school leaders.¹⁹³ However, both reports commented that the success of the program was highly dependent on the support participants received from their employers, and the opportunities they were offered to undertake genuine practical leadership experiences. The Committee notes similarities to the tensions between course-based learning and practical experience that arise in pre-service teacher preparation programs. Like beginning teachers, new principals need opportunities to apply their learning in authentic school contexts as an essential component of their training.

In England, the introduction of a mandatory school leadership qualification has been further supported by a national centre responsible for leadership development. The National College for School Leadership, established in 2000, is charged with developing leadership in UK government schools through professional development programs, strategic initiatives, networking opportunities and other forms of support.¹⁹⁴ A key role of the College is developing the National Qualification for Headship professional learning program (mandatory for entry into a principalship position) and coordinating the delivery of this program across nine regional centres.

The Committee notes that Victoria is currently pursuing a similar strategy to establish a centralised college for educational leadership development. In September 2008, the Victorian Government announced plans to establish a \$10 million Institute of Educational Leadership to develop current and aspiring school leaders.¹⁹⁵ The Committee believes that the Victorian Government, through the Institute of Educational Leadership, should continue to offer a range of leadership development opportunities to enable school leaders to develop their skills. However, the Committee also believes that the establishment of the Institute represents an ideal opportunity to introduce an improved policy framework of standards, training and certification for new principals in Victorian schools.

The Committee recommends that the Victorian Institute of Educational Leadership be charged with developing a mandatory Victorian school leadership standard, qualification and associated professional learning program. This would reflect international best practice in ensuring that all new Victorian principals enter their roles well-prepared, with advanced levels of expertise in all aspects of educational leadership and management. It would also build upon the establishment of higher levels of teacher registration as recommended elsewhere in this report, to create a seamless and clearly defined pathway through all levels of the Victorian teaching profession. The Committee believes there is considerable scope for collaboration between the Institute of Educational Leadership and the Victorian Institute of Teaching in developing and implementing such a pathway.

¹⁹¹ Scottish Executive Education Department 2002, *Scottish Qualification for Headship: Programme Outline*, SEED, Edinburgh, p. 5.

¹⁹² Scottish Executive Education Department 2002, *Scottish Qualification for Headship: Key Issues from the Evaluation*, SEED, Edinburgh, p. 8.

¹⁹³ M. McEntyre 2005, Leadership Fellowship 2004 Report, *Attaining the Standards for Headship – The Preparation for School Leadership in Scotland*, Department of Education and Training (New South Wales), Sydney.

¹⁹⁴ National College of School Leadership, *About us*, NCSL website, <<http://www.ncsl.org.uk/aboutus-index/about-role-index.htm>>, accessed 17 October 2008.

¹⁹⁵ Office of the Premier (Victoria), 'New Leaders for Local School Networks', *Media Release*, 11 September 2008.

Summary and recommendations

The above discussion demonstrates the many strengths of the current policy framework for the Victorian teaching profession. In particular, it highlights the extensive work undertaken to develop a comprehensive framework for Victorian teachers early in their careers, which includes an exemplary program for school-based professional learning in the first year of practice. It also describes recent efforts to encourage and support professional learning more broadly across the Victorian teaching workforce, by introducing a mandatory quantity of professional learning as a condition of ongoing teacher registration.

However, the Committee has also identified a number of areas in which this policy framework may be strengthened. In particular, the Committee believes that the Victorian Government could do more to ensure that the professional learning undertaken by Victorian teachers is of the highest possible quality. To this end, the Committee supports the development of a formal system of accreditation for professional learning providers.

In addition, the Committee believes that the expertise gained through teacher professional learning should be better certified, through a system of 'Additional Qualifications' developed specifically for the teaching profession. This system may also provide the basis for an improved system for recognising the attainment of advanced levels of teaching expertise, which would enable teachers to progress to advanced categories of teacher registration. International best practice suggests that such systems have been effective in other jurisdictions in raising levels of teacher aspirations and expertise.

Table 2.6 summarises the recommended changes to teacher professional learning policy in Victoria, in a revised version of the policy framework outlined at the beginning of this chapter. Proposed changes to the framework appear in bold text.

Table 2.6: Proposed policy framework to support professional learning for Victorian teachers

	STANDARDS <i>What expertise do teachers need to have?</i>	PROFESSIONAL LEARNING <i>How do they acquire this expertise?</i>	CERTIFICATION <i>How is this expertise certified?</i>	RECOGNITION <i>How is this expertise recognised or rewarded?</i>
PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS	VIT Standards for Graduating Teachers	VIT-accredited pre-service teacher education course	Teaching degree conferred by course provider and provisional registration conferred by VIT	Eligibility for employment as a provisionally registered teacher
PROVISIONALLY REGISTERED TEACHERS	VIT Standards of Professional Practice for Full Registration	VIT Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program	Full registration conferred by VIT	Eligibility for employment as a registered teacher

REGISTERED TEACHERS	VIT general standards for professional practice	VIT requirement for 100 hours of professional learning every five years, at least 50 of which must be delivered by an accredited provider.	Renewal of registration conferred by VIT, based on records of professional learning maintained at school/teacher level Australian Qualifications Framework degrees and credentials Opportunity to gain further credentials through Additional Qualifications model	Ongoing eligibility for employment
EXPERT TEACHERS	Standards for Accomplished and Expert levels of teacher registration	Completion of designated number of professional learning programs delivered by accredited providers	Designated number of additional qualifications attained (degree and/or non-degree) Demonstration of advanced teaching practice	Eligibility for higher salary
SCHOOL LEADERS	Mandatory Standards for School Leadership	Professional learning program for aspiring school leaders	School leadership qualification	Eligibility for employment as principal or deputy principal

Source: Compiled by the Education and Training Committee, October 2008.

The Committee believes that addressing the gaps in the current policy framework would add considerable strength to the Victorian teaching profession. Most importantly, it would strengthen the formal structures that underpin the development of professionalism and expertise in the Victorian teaching workforce. It may also help to improve teacher attraction and retention, by demonstrating that teaching is a profession that offers ample opportunities to grow, learn and reinvigorate over the course of a career.

As the cross-sectoral authority charged with the regulation of the Victorian teaching profession, the Committee envisages a substantial role for the Victorian Institute of Teaching in the implementation of this framework. The Committee also notes that the current development of a national curriculum may present opportunities for national collaboration in the development and implementation of a policy framework for the Australian teaching profession. Some national efforts are already underway to develop standards for higher levels of teaching and school leadership, supported by a national charter for the teaching profession.¹⁹⁶ The Committee believes that the Victorian Government should continue to cooperate with efforts to strengthen the policy framework for teachers at a national level, while drawing on international best practice in developing policies to support teacher professional learning within Victoria.

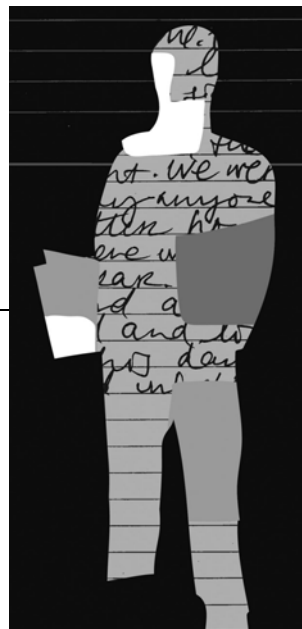
¹⁹⁶ Teaching Australia, *Standards*, Teaching Australia website, <<http://www.teachingaustralia.edu.au/ta/go/home/projects/standards>>, accessed 2 June 2008.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. That the Victorian Government develop a strengthened policy framework for all levels of the teaching profession, linking teacher professional learning to standards, certification and recognition for teaching expertise.
- 2.2. That the Victorian Government further support the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program, by:
 - enhancing opportunities for beginning teachers and their mentors to work together; and
 - strengthening assessment processes for provisionally registered teachers, including the possible involvement of an external assessor.
- 2.3. That the Victorian Government strengthen the requirements for registered teachers to undertake 100 hours of professional learning in every five-year registration period, by:
 - developing a system of accreditation for providers of teacher professional learning;
 - modifying the requirement for at least 50 hours to be sourced from outside the school environment, to require that no less than 50 hours be delivered by an accredited professional learning provider; and
 - developing a system of credentialing for teacher professional learning programs not recognised under the Australian Qualifications Framework, and listing any credentials gained by teachers in records of teacher registration.
- 2.4. That the Victorian Government develop advanced categories of teacher registration, incorporating:
 - standards for higher levels of teaching practice beyond full registration; and
 - opportunities for teachers to demonstrate the attainment of these standards through completion of credentialed professional learning programs and/or evidence of advanced teaching practice.
- 2.5. That the Victorian Government develop a mandatory standard for entry into a school leadership role, linked to a credentialed school leadership preparation program, to reflect international best practice.

Chapter 3

Types of content and delivery



A key message to emerge throughout the inquiry was that variety is a vital characteristic of teacher professional learning. Like their students, Victorian teachers are incredibly diverse, and differ widely in terms of the knowledge they need to develop and in their individual learning styles. However, also as for student learning, the Committee heard that all professional learning for teachers should rest on a strong base of relevant content and effective pedagogy.

This chapter explores the range of professional learning activities available to Victorian teachers. First, it discusses the evidence received regarding the various types of content that teachers should address in their professional learning. It then describes the various modes of delivery for teacher professional learning raised in the course of the inquiry, with reference to current trends in professional learning pedagogy.

Types of content

The Committee received a very diverse body of evidence regarding the specific content of teacher professional learning. Many participants identified particular topics or areas in which they felt that teacher expertise is especially in need of development. At the same time, one participant cautioned against adopting a 'one size fits all' approach for determining the content of teacher professional learning.¹⁹⁷ The Committee agrees that it would be extremely difficult to devise a set of priorities for professional learning that meets the needs of all teachers across the state. Instead, the Committee believes that it is preferable for professional learning opportunities to be made available to teachers across a broad range of content areas, as discussed below.

Regardless of the content area that it addresses, participants agreed that the content of teacher professional learning must be rigorous. The Committee heard that participants expect the content of teacher professional learning to be based on sound educational research,¹⁹⁸ international best practice,¹⁹⁹ and scientifically proven teaching methods.²⁰⁰ It is

¹⁹⁷ Ms S. Goodbourn, Acting Head, TAFE Development Unit, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 34.

¹⁹⁸ Curriculum Corporation, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 8; Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 1; Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

¹⁹⁹ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 1.

²⁰⁰ Learning Difficulties Australia, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 2.

also important that it is delivered by credible presenters, with strong background knowledge in their areas of specialisation.²⁰¹

Curriculum and pedagogy

As might be expected, evidence to the inquiry placed a high priority on curriculum and pedagogy as content areas for teacher professional learning. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that Victorian teachers rate curriculum knowledge and planning highest among topics for their future professional learning, with 77 per cent rating it as a 'high' or 'very high' priority.²⁰² The Committee heard that significant developments in knowledge about teaching and learning have also increased expectations on teachers to adopt 'cutting-edge' pedagogical skills.²⁰³ Several participants commented that professional learning works best when it addresses curriculum and pedagogy simultaneously, introducing new curriculum content alongside practical strategies for teaching that content to students.²⁰⁴

'Concepts and skills related to teaching and learning have undergone significant changes in the last decade, with expectations that teachers will adopt new teaching and learning strategies and expand their base of knowledge in traditional and non-traditional domains.'

Victorian Association for Environmental Education

The Committee heard, however, that not all Victorian teachers are focusing on curriculum and pedagogy in their professional learning. Two participants involved in the provision of professional learning expressed concern that not enough of teachers' professional learning currently relates directly to curriculum and pedagogy.²⁰⁵ One suggested a role for stronger leadership to manage the proportion of time teachers spend on administrative or compliance-related professional learning activities.²⁰⁶ The Committee agrees that teachers, systems and school leaders should ensure that curriculum and pedagogy constitute a substantial proportion of professional learning that teachers undertake.

Others observed that teachers will be most likely to access professional learning on cutting-edge pedagogy if it is presented in a practical and accessible manner. One participant commented that only 'the committed' among teachers tend to access professional learning that delves deeply into theories of how students think and learn.²⁰⁷ The Committee heard that teachers instead often prefer practical strategies in their professional learning that can translate immediately into actions in the classroom. A comment from one teacher suggested that this does not mean that theoretical professional learning is undesirable, but that theoretical ideas should be translated into practical activities as part of the professional learning program.²⁰⁸

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has reflected the importance of cutting-edge pedagogy in its recently-released strategies for teacher

²⁰¹ Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider, Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

²⁰² Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 123.

²⁰³ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 2.

²⁰⁴ Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; School of Education, RMIT University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Dr J. Anderson, Representative, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 11; Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 22.

²⁰⁵ Ms V. Fenelon, Acting Director, Professional Organisational Learning, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 35; Mr P. Hoban, Education Officer, Sovereign Hill Museums Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 26.

²⁰⁶ Ms V. Fenelon, Acting Director, Professional Organisational Learning, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 35.

²⁰⁷ Dr G. Williams, Vice President (Development), Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 13.

²⁰⁸ Supplementary information provided by Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, March 2008.

professional learning. The Department has committed to the development and dissemination of an instructional model for teachers, to support effective teaching practice in classrooms.²⁰⁹ The Committee agrees that identifying and promoting best practice in teaching will provide a strong basis for professional learning and school improvement. However, it believes that the development of this model will be most effective if it is accompanied by a state-wide, practically-oriented professional learning program to support its uptake in schools.

In addition, the Committee heard that it is especially important to provide professional learning in curriculum content and associated pedagogies to those teaching in unfamiliar subject areas, or seeking to move into a new area of teaching to meet demand for skills.²¹⁰ The Committee notes that teachers may also require professional learning if they are returning to teach a subject they have not taught for a substantial period of time. One participant expressed concern that the availability of programs to train or retrain teachers in unfamiliar subject areas is currently insufficient, noting a decline in discipline-specific postgraduate teaching diplomas.²¹¹ A representative of the Science Teachers Association of Victoria also reported that retraining teachers in science is a challenge for the Association, which it has sought to address through partnerships with tertiary institutions and departmental initiatives such as Science in Schools.²¹²

The Committee notes that teachers may also need to refresh their skills in curriculum or pedagogy when returning after an absence from the teaching workforce. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria suggested that this may be especially important for women returning to the workforce after an extended period of maternity leave.²¹³ The Victorian Institute of Teaching and Department of Education and Early Childhood Development currently offer 'refresher courses' for those returning to teaching after a period of absence, whether for maternity or other purposes. The Institute commented that the value of such courses for women returning to the workforce after maternity leave 'cannot be underestimated'.²¹⁴ The Committee endorses such opportunities as valuable to all returning teachers.

'You are not going to address a deficiency in knowledge of a content area by focusing on the content area alone. That is not to say that you do not offer teachers the opportunity to go to courses specifically to improve their content [but] the thing that matters to a teacher, the thing that their heart is about, is the learning of their kids...'

Mr Douglas Williams,
Black Douglas Professional
Education Services

Student engagement and behaviour

The Committee heard that student engagement and the management of difficult behaviour are also among the most popular topics for teacher professional learning. One participant told the Committee that the demand for professional learning in managing student relationships far outstrips demand for 'cutting-edge' pedagogies.²¹⁵ The Committee heard that behaviour management is a particular priority in specialist schools, with one specialist school principal commenting that behaviour management constitutes 80 to 90 per cent of the professional learning undertaken by his staff.²¹⁶

²⁰⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 35.

²¹⁰ Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 7; Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 22.

²¹¹ Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3.

²¹² Ms S. Bennett, Vice President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 29.

²¹³ Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 6.

²¹⁴ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

²¹⁵ Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 44.

²¹⁶ Mr J. Burt, Principal, Ballarat Specialist School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 3.

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that professional learning in behaviour management is most likely to be highly valued by those in their first years of teaching (81%, as opposed to 64% for all Victorian teachers).²¹⁷ This trend was supported in evidence to the inquiry. Doxa Youth Foundation, which delivers a professional learning program for teaching students at risk of disengagement, suggested that many inexperienced teachers leave the profession because they are unable to manage the disengaged students in their classes.²¹⁸ Another professional learning provider, Behaviour Management in Education, supported the view that beginning teachers are often 'constantly struggling and highly stressed' because they do not have adequate skills in student management.²¹⁹

Other participants suggested that changing student demographics are increasing demand, even among experienced teachers, for professional learning relating to student engagement for specific groups. For example, the Committee heard about one professional learning project designed specifically to help teachers in the local area engage the growing number of refugee students in their school community.²²⁰ Mr Brian Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, spoke more generally about a potential 'cultural' gap between teachers who come from different socioeconomic backgrounds to their students. Mr Burgess suggested that professional learning may be one way to bridge this divide, as part of a broader 'community response' to improving educational outcomes for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.²²¹

The Committee found that responding to diverse student populations is a key element of educational success. During international investigations, the Committee heard that Finnish teachers are increasingly turning towards professional learning that will enable them to engage students from a broad range of cultural and socioeconomic backgrounds, to ensure that high academic standards can be maintained alongside increasing immigration and diversification of the student body.²²² As the Victorian population also grows more and more diverse, the Committee agrees that teachers must have the skills to engage students from an increasingly wide range of backgrounds.

Supporting students with special learning needs

Another priority area for teacher professional learning identified in the inquiry is catering to students with special learning needs. This may include providing specialised support to students with physical or intellectual disabilities, either in mainstream or specialist school settings. It may also include assisting students with other learning difficulties not classified as disabilities, but still requiring additional support.

The Committee heard that teachers' skills in responding to these students' needs can make a profound difference to their educational outcomes, as well as their general experience of schooling.²²³ If students' special learning needs are undiagnosed or unaddressed, this may result in disengagement, behavioural problems, and low self-esteem,²²⁴ or reliance on government services later in life.²²⁵ Another participant pointed to a legal obligation on schools and education authorities to cater to students with special learning needs.²²⁶ For

²¹⁷ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 122.

²¹⁸ Doxa Youth Foundation, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 2.

²¹⁹ Ms J. Mackay, Director, Behaviour Management in Education, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 5.

²²⁰ Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 7.

²²¹ Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 7.

²²² Meeting with representatives of the Finnish National Board of Education, Helsinki, 25 August 2008.

²²³ Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 3.

²²⁴ Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²²⁵ Australian Association of Special Education Inc, Victorian Chapter, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

²²⁶ Ms G. Thomas, Irlen Regional Director, Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

students with disabilities, the Disability Standards for Education 2005 provide certain rights that have implications for teacher professional learning. These include providing access to trained support staff, and ensuring that all staff have information about services available to the students with disabilities in their classes.²²⁷

However, evidence to the inquiry raised concerns that the Victorian teaching workforce is not currently sufficiently skilled to fully support the many Victorian students with special learning needs.²²⁸ The Australian Association of Special Education (Victorian Chapter) commented that few teachers in mainstream schools have the necessary training to 'properly' teach students with disabilities.²²⁹ The Principals' Association of Specialist Schools noted that certain initiatives were undertaken 'in the early years of integration' to help teachers in mainstream schools cater to students with disabilities, but that these have now been largely discontinued.²³⁰ Another participant suggested that teachers in mainstream schools are also typically too 'over worked and ill equipped' to provide students with other learning difficulties with specialised support.²³¹

For teachers in mainstream schools, participants identified two general areas for developing skills to support students with special learning needs. One is building knowledge of teaching strategies that have been proven to assist students with learning difficulties, such as direct instruction in early literacy education.²³² SPELD Victoria argued that teaching methods that have proven effective for students with learning difficulties will also be of general benefit to all students in mainstream classes.²³³ The second area for improvement is building the skills and confidence of mainstream teachers in identifying students with special learning needs, and referring them to appropriate services for specialised assistance.²³⁴

Participants varied in their opinions as to the extent of professional learning required to ensure that teachers in mainstream schools can cater to students with special learning needs. A representative of the Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne suggested that all Victorian school principals should receive formal professional learning in the identification of Irlen Syndrome, and that all teachers should undertake annual personal training in this area.²³⁵ However, another participant suggested training key people within the school, such as Reading Recovery tutors, to identify students at risk and assist with access to specialist assessment.²³⁶

Evidence also showed mixed views from teachers themselves about the priority they place on undertaking professional learning to assist students with special learning needs. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that training for teaching students with special needs was 'highly valued' by over half the Victorian teachers surveyed (56%), but was the second-least valued out of the ten areas for professional learning identified in the survey.²³⁷ This suggests that there is substantial interest in this area among Victorian teachers, but that it may be eclipsed by greater priority placed on more general teaching skills.

²²⁷ Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training and Attorney-General's Department 2006, *Disability Standards for Education 2005*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, pp. 29–30.

²²⁸ For example, Australian Association of Special Education Inc, Victorian Chapter, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Principals' Association of Specialist Schools Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 2; Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²²⁹ Australian Association of Special Education Inc, Victorian Chapter, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

²³⁰ Principals' Association of Specialist Schools Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

²³¹ Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²³² Learning Difficulties Australia, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 1–2.

²³³ Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 2.

²³⁴ Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²³⁵ Ms G. Thomas, Irlen Regional Director, Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne, Written Submission, June 2008, pp. 3–4.

²³⁶ Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²³⁷ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 123.

The Committee heard a number of examples of professional learning programs for teachers who want to develop skills in supporting students with learning difficulties in mainstream schools. SPELD Victoria currently delivers the Answer Series Professional Development Program, which comprises a variety of seminars, courses and instructional sessions, based on teacher-identified needs in working with students with specific learning difficulties.²³⁸ The Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne provides one to two-hour sessions to school staff meetings, or two-and-a-half day training courses for Irlen Screeners, who then typically help to educate other teachers in their schools.²³⁹ The Reading Recovery Program also provides an exemplary model of professional learning that has enabled many teachers to better support the students with learning difficulties in their schools.²⁴⁰

The Committee believes that its proposed system of 'Additional Qualifications' (discussed in Chapter 2) may support the development and uptake of professional learning programs for supporting students with special learning needs. Teachers may find a short course in identifying or responding to a learning difficulty or disability to be a valuable addition to their professional portfolio, which they may then add to over time as needs emerge in their classes. The proposed system would also help schools to identify staff who have been trained in responding to students with a particular learning difficulty or disability, and create opportunities for them to share their expertise with colleagues.

Concerns about teacher skill levels also arose in the inquiry with regard to the special education sector. The Principals' Association of Specialist Schools noted that many specialist schools are still relying on teaching skills developed in the 1970s, when significant investment in teacher training for special education was made. However, this expertise is rapidly diminishing. In 2006, an Association survey revealed that 69 per cent of teachers in specialist schools had special education qualifications, with a further eight per cent undertaking qualifications at the time. Skills shortages were particularly apparent in non-metropolitan schools.²⁴¹

The Victorian Institute of Teaching currently endorses eight professional learning programs for qualified teachers wishing to gain a further qualification as a special education teacher. Most are one-year full-time (or equivalent part-time) master's degrees offered through university faculties of education. The Institute also endorses one non-university program delivered through the Western Autistic School, for teachers wishing to gain a Graduate Diploma in Teaching Students with Autism Spectrum Disorder.²⁴² The Principals' Association of Specialist Schools suggested that efforts be made to improve the number of courses available for teachers to develop a specialisation in special education, and that additional support be provided to teachers to undertake them.²⁴³

The Committee is pleased to note that recent policy developments in Victoria indicate future opportunities to improve support for students with special learning needs. The Victorian Government has committed to the development of a whole-of-government strategy to address the needs of children and young people aged 0–18 with a disability or developmental delay.²⁴⁴ The Committee found that Victoria's focus on children and young people with special learning needs is not an isolated trend, with all four jurisdictions visited during international investigations having also identified special education as a particular priority. The Committee believes that this global policy environment provides an impetus for

²³⁸ Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

²³⁹ Ms G. Thomas, Irlen Regional Director, Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

²⁴⁰ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Reading Recovery*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/english/readingrecovery/>>, accessed 24 July 2008.

²⁴¹ Principals' Association of Specialist Schools Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

²⁴² Victorian Institute of Teaching, *Teacher Education*, VIT website, <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=523>, accessed 31 October 2008.

²⁴³ Principals' Association of Specialist Schools Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

²⁴⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 22.

teachers to address support for students with special learning needs in their professional learning, in collaboration with families and other service providers.

Supporting student transitions

Over recent decades, a range of initiatives have been introduced to increase the range of study options available to Victorian students planning to make the transition from school to employment, or to vocational education and training. Key programs include:

- VET (Vocational Education and Training) in Schools;²⁴⁵
- School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships;²⁴⁶ and
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL).²⁴⁷

These initiatives have required secondary school teachers to work more closely with training institutions and industry partners.

The Committee heard that professional learning is essential to broaden teachers' understanding of the industry and training sectors, and ensure that these partnerships are successful. An organisation involved in one such partnership commented that schools and non-school partners often have 'outdated perceptions' about each others' practices, and do not readily comprehend different sector-specific languages and policy environments.²⁴⁸ The organisation advocated the strengthening of professional learning networks so that the level of understanding between different sectors may be improved.²⁴⁹

However, evidence to the inquiry revealed mixed views regarding the value of improving vocational and industry knowledge among Victorian teachers. Ms Anne-Marie Ryan, Executive Officer, Smart Geelong Local Learning and Employment Network, argued that 'schools have accepted the fact that their job is to help prepare kids for that school-to-work transition'.²⁵⁰ On the other hand, another participant suggested that some educators are wary that education and curriculum is at risk of being captured by industry needs.²⁵¹ The Group Training Association of Victoria acknowledged that school curriculum has a 'broader purpose' than meeting the needs of the job market, but still argued that a 'nexus' should be achieved between 'general education and the world of work'.²⁵² Another participant suggested that a quality education should be equally relevant to industry needs or more general purposes.²⁵³

The Committee heard that many schools expect knowledge about industry or training pathways to be the sole domain of careers teachers or VET in Schools coordinators.²⁵⁴

'I do think we need to support industry but we need to think deeper than that.'

Ms Elizabeth Burns,
President,
The Mathematical
Association of Victoria

²⁴⁵ VET in Schools was introduced in 1994 to enable students to pursue nationally recognised VET certificates as part of their Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). VET in Schools programs usually involve partnerships between schools, industry and training providers, often including opportunities for students to undertake learning in the workplace.

²⁴⁶ School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships were introduced in 1998 as a distinct pathway within VET in Schools. A School Based Apprenticeship or Traineeship enables students to combine part-time employment, school attendance and vocational training.

²⁴⁷ VCAL was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2002, as an alternative to VCE for students intending to pursue vocationally-oriented pathways. The program combines core literacy and numeracy with work-related, industry-specific and personal development skills. Students undertaking VCAL may complete whole or partial VET certificates, School Based Apprenticeships or other structured work placements during the program. The personal development component of the program may also include involvement in community-based activities outside the school.

²⁴⁸ Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE (GippsTAFE), Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

²⁴⁹ *ibid.*

²⁵⁰ Ms A. Ryan, Executive Officer, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 15.

²⁵¹ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 8.

²⁵² Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

²⁵³ Ms E. Burns, President, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 38.

²⁵⁴ Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

While noting that these teachers are likely to have a particularly strong interest in this area, the Committee heard the view that all teachers may influence the post-school choices of their students, and should therefore have knowledge of relevant industries.²⁵⁵ A representative of one industry group supported this view, commenting that the industry has involved itself extensively in professional learning to ensure that all teachers are 'familiar with the requirements of the industry' and can 'advocate to some degree on [its] behalf'.²⁵⁶

Furthermore, representatives of both the university and training sectors argued in favour of teacher professional learning relating to vocational post-school pathways, to counteract the current bias in schools towards preparing students for higher education.²⁵⁷ The Committee found that this perceived bias is not confined to Victorian schools. In 2007, an Australian Senate Committee report revealed that teachers throughout Australia often exhibit a bias towards academic post-school pathways, rather than encouraging their students towards trades and employment.²⁵⁸

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has encouraged teachers to take a broad view of the in-school and post-school pathways open to their students through the Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) Program. The program encourages a coordinated whole-school approach to planning an individualised pathway for students aged 15 and over, involving teachers from all curriculum areas, as well as VCAL, VET and VCE coordinators. The Department has recently reiterated this commitment, in announcing plans to place greater accountability on Victorian schools to support their students' transitions to meaningful post-school pathways.²⁵⁹ The Committee believes that these policies demonstrate the need for all teachers to develop an appropriate level of vocationally-oriented knowledge, to facilitate the delivery of a broad and rigorous curriculum.

The Committee heard that Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) also have a role to play in improving teacher knowledge about post-school destinations. A representative of the Smart Geelong Region LLEN described the LLEN's Post-Compulsory Change Project, which involves seven self-selecting schools in addressing the skills shortages in the region.²⁶⁰ The project used On Track data²⁶¹ about student destinations to encourage teachers to think more closely about the various post-school pathways available to their students. This has helped teachers to identify needs in curriculum planning and resourcing, and has provided the starting point for discussions around their professional learning.²⁶² The Committee supports an ongoing role for LLENs in teacher professional learning, to help provide a bridge between school education and a wide range of post-school pathways.

Information and communications technology

In 2007, an Australian Government survey of 13 000 teachers identified 'making more effective use of computers in student learning' as the highest priority area in professional

²⁵⁵ *ibid.*

²⁵⁶ Ms R. Waghorne, Assistant Director, Vocational Training Policy, Minerals Council of Australia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, pp. 24–25.

²⁵⁷ Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 28.

²⁵⁸ Australian Senate Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education 2007, *Quality of School Education*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 1.

²⁵⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 29.

²⁶⁰ Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1.

²⁶¹ On Track is an annual Victorian Government survey to track post-school pathways for Victorian school leavers.

²⁶² Ms A. Ryan, Executive Officer, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 14.

learning for Australian teachers overall.²⁶³ The use of information and communications technology (ICT) was also frequently identified as a priority area for teacher professional learning in the course of the inquiry. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that ICT was rated second-highest among priority areas for future professional learning by Victorian teachers (73%, compared to 71% in the total sample).²⁶⁴ While one participant argued that Victorian teachers have ‘strong’ ICT skills compared to teachers in other states,²⁶⁵ the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria noted that many are still ‘working toward achieving the VELS ICT standards that would be expected of a child graduating from primary school’.²⁶⁶

The need for teachers to build skills in ICT is compounded by the widespread use of emerging technologies by their students. Many students in classrooms today are confident users of a wide range of technologies, including the internet, mobile phones or video games. At the same time, the Committee heard the view that students’ habitual use of ICT for purposes outside of school does not necessarily give them the skills to use ICT effectively in education.²⁶⁷ Teachers need the skills not only to keep pace with their students’ knowledge of ICT, but to help their students to apply this knowledge to enhance their learning.

The Victorian Government has recognised the importance of ICT in schools through investment in upgrades to ICT infrastructure. However, some participants suggested that more teacher professional learning is necessary to ensure that this investment is successful. One teacher described the waste that can occur when new technologies are introduced to schools before teachers know how to use them:

In metropolitan schools where interactive whiteboards were just put into classrooms and the government provided them and the schools did not apply for them, as sad as it was, we visited schools where it had been in there for six months and the software was still taped to the back of the board because there was no professional learning for it.²⁶⁸

Another participant expressed the view that the investment in laptop computers for Victorian teachers has not achieved its full potential because many teachers do not know how to use them to best effect.²⁶⁹

The Faculty of Education, Deakin University, recommended that a minimum standard be developed for teacher knowledge in ICT. The Faculty suggested that this standard may be based on the European Computer Driving Licence, a basic ICT qualification recognised throughout Europe.²⁷⁰ The Committee agrees that teachers should not be expected to be expert in all facets of the rapidly-changing world of ICT. However, they should be aware of the opportunities ICT offers to support quality teaching and learning, and should have sufficient general skills to explore emerging technologies confidently, alongside their students.

Industry partnerships in information and communications technology

The Committee heard that ICT may be one area of teacher professional learning where industry partnerships may be especially advantageous. The Victorian Curriculum and

²⁶³ P. McKenzie et al. 2008, *Staff in Australia's Schools 2007*, Australian Council for Educational Research, for the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, p. 56.

²⁶⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 123.

²⁶⁵ Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 3.

²⁶⁶ Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 2.

²⁶⁷ Ms L. O'Grady, Head of Innovation in Middle Years and ICTEV Teacher of the Year 2007, Caroline Springs College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 33.

²⁶⁸ *ibid.*, p. 29.

²⁶⁹ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

²⁷⁰ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 12.

Assessment Authority and the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships were two organisations that reported successful collaboration with ICT companies in helping teachers use new technologies.²⁷¹ The Committee observes that teacher professional learning offered by industry partners in connection with specific hardware or software has potential mutual benefits for both the vendor and purchaser of the new technology.

The CeLL (Creating eLearning Leaders) Program is a significant example of a successful partnership between a major ICT company, Microsoft, and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. CeLL was implemented in Victoria over three years (from June 2004 to July 2007) as part of Microsoft's global Partners in Learning Program. The CeLL Program established a group of 28 schools to act as change agents for ICT in education within their school clusters and regions. CeLL schools were asked to design and implement a whole-school professional learning plan, as well as to support other schools through the delivery of workshops, school visits or other programs negotiated at a local level.²⁷² Evaluation of the program in March 2007 revealed consistently positive findings regarding its impact on teacher professional learning.²⁷³

The Committee notes that Microsoft is not the only ICT company to work with schools in the provision of teacher professional learning. The Intel® Teach Program provides professional learning free of charge to teachers, with schools covering the cost of teacher release.²⁷⁴ The program has trained more than five million teachers in more than 40 countries (over 14 000 in Australia) and has made a commitment to reach 13 million teachers by 2011.²⁷⁵ Apple Computer is also among the ICT companies that have invested in teacher professional learning, through its Schools of Excellence and Distinguished Educator programs.²⁷⁶

Student wellbeing

The Committee heard that student welfare or wellbeing is a priority area for teacher professional learning in some Victorian schools.²⁷⁷ The Committee notes that student welfare and wellbeing may have many different aspects, each creating a different imperative for teacher professional learning. This is reflected in the diversity of professional learning programs relating to student welfare that have been implemented in Victorian schools to date, from training in anaphylaxis management to mental health support.

Evidence to the inquiry in this area especially emphasised the importance of supporting students' mental and emotional wellbeing. The School of Education, Flinders University, noted that there is currently a high incidence of mental health disorders among Australian children and adolescents, which points to a need for teacher support.²⁷⁸ Another participant provided a personal account of the long-term effects of bullying in schools, arguing strongly that all teachers should be trained in the implementation of anti-bullying policies and victim support.²⁷⁹ The coordinator of the University of Melbourne Student Welfare Course agreed

²⁷¹ Mr J. Firth, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 21; Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 6.

²⁷² Microsoft Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

²⁷³ *ibid.*, pp. 1–2.

²⁷⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Intel Teach Professional Learning Program*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/teachingresources/ict/intel.htm>>, accessed 14 May 2008.

²⁷⁵ Intel®, *Intel® Teach Program*, Intel® website, <<http://www.intel.com/cd/corporate/education/apac/eng/au/teach/383843.htm>>, accessed 11 September 2008.

²⁷⁶ Apple Pty Ltd, *The Apple School of Excellence Program*, Apple website, <<http://www.apple.com/au/education/ads/>>, accessed 10 September 2008.

²⁷⁷ Mr R. Sawyer, Assistant Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 18; Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

²⁷⁸ School of Education, Flinders University, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ Ms M. Cranston, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 3–4.

that teachers, as caring professionals, must be given the skills to respond if they 'see things going on' in their students' lives.²⁸⁰

On the other hand, Ms Meredith Peace, Vice President (Secondary), Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), was cautious about providing teachers with professional learning relating to student welfare. In Ms Peace's view, schools should not be expected to assume full responsibility for student welfare issues:

I would be loath to suggest that we should move in that direction completely because I think it then shifts the focus directly on to schools being responsible for all those things... We are trained as teachers, not health experts. Whilst it is good to have a basic level of knowledge, I do not think it is appropriate to have to have those qualifications to deal with those sorts of issues.²⁸¹

Ms Peace went on to say that student welfare issues should be addressed by teachers in tandem with professionals from relevant support services. The University of Melbourne representative agreed that teachers should not be expected to address student welfare issues alone. She commented that the focus of the Student Welfare Course is to give teachers confidence to seek help from other support agencies when challenging situations arise. In her view, the knowledge that they 'do not have to solve every problem' can help to liberate teachers to concentrate on the academic aspects of their role.²⁸²

Ms Peace also noted that schools have welcomed government initiatives to provide dedicated staff to assume responsibility for student welfare.²⁸³ All Victorian government secondary schools receive funding to employ student welfare coordinators.²⁸⁴ In 2008, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development also provided funding for welfare officers to 583 'high-needs' government primary schools under the Primary Welfare Officer Initiative.²⁸⁵ The Committee heard that the Catholic system has also adopted a similar model, and requires teachers aspiring to the newly-created primary welfare coordinator positions to complete the Student Welfare Course at the University of Melbourne.²⁸⁶

The Committee agrees that student welfare and wellbeing is an important precursor for student learning. Professional learning in supporting student wellbeing may therefore be valuable to Victorian teachers, especially those in schools where student welfare issues are most likely to arise. However, the Committee endorses the view that teachers should not be expected to develop the skills to resolve complex student welfare issues themselves. Instead, they should seek to develop skills and confidence in recognising when and how to refer a student experiencing difficulties to an appropriate source of specialised support.

'One of the things I know a number of schools are grappling with is student welfare and making sure kids are happy and safe in their schools for a start... it is one of the things that we have to get right before we can get into some of the academic areas.'

Mr Ron Sawyer,
Assistant Principal,
Mount Clear Primary School

²⁸⁰ Ms E. Freeman, Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Unit, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 23.

²⁸¹ Ms M. Peace, Vice President (Secondary), Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 21.

²⁸² Ms E. Freeman, Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Unit, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 23.

²⁸³ Ms M. Peace, Vice President (Secondary), Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 21.

²⁸⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Support in Schools: Student Welfare Coordinator*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/support/studentwelfare.htm>>, accessed 6 September 2008.

²⁸⁵ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Support in Schools: Primary Welfare Officer Initiative*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/healthwellbeing/support/primarywelfare/default.htm>>, accessed 6 September 2008.

²⁸⁶ Ms E. Freeman, Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Unit, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 23.

Teacher wellbeing

The World Health Organisation's international Health Promoting Schools campaign has recognised the importance of health promotion for both students and staff.²⁸⁷ The Committee is aware that teaching is a demanding profession physically, mentally and emotionally, and that developing skills to maintain personal wellbeing may therefore be an important element of teacher professional learning. One submission noted that helping teachers develop skills to protect their health can reduce teacher absenteeism, as well as improving job satisfaction and performance.²⁸⁸ Healthy teachers may also serve as role models to support student health.

Another participant commented on the importance of teachers having skills to maintain their mental and emotional health. She commented that teachers must be 'emotionally well-balanced' as they are often called on in their work to 'support those who are not as well-balanced'.²⁸⁹ In addition, teachers need to know how to take care of their own physical and emotional needs in the face of a job that 'can seem overwhelming'.²⁹⁰ In a profession in which relationship-building is paramount, the Committee agrees that emotional intelligence and resilience are valuable skills for teachers to develop continually throughout their careers. Strategies for managing stress and building resilience may be especially beneficial for teachers early in their careers, to address the high rate of attrition from the profession.

In the course of the inquiry, the Committee found that a variety of professional learning programs are currently available to support teacher wellbeing, including:

- *Staff Matters*: an extension of the Australian Government MindMatters Program, which promotes student mental health and wellbeing. The student program has recently been expanded to include a Staff Matters online resource, with information and professional learning ideas for staff mental health.²⁹¹
- *Healthy Teachers – Healthy Schools*: a one-day course offered by the Teacher Learning Network. Teachers choose from six workshops on topics including emotional and mental health, conflict resolution, men's health and voice care.²⁹²
- *Voice Care for Teachers*: a series of professional learning modules to help teachers maintain and enhance their vocal performance, initiated in 2000 by the then Department of Education, Employment and Training.²⁹³
- The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development also offers a range of published resources for schools and teachers, such as *Staff Health and Wellbeing for Effective Schools*.²⁹⁴

While these programs indicate recognition of the importance of teacher wellbeing, the Committee heard that it may not be an area that is currently widely addressed in teacher professional learning. A facilitator for the Voice Care for Teachers Program reported that

²⁸⁷ World Health Organisation, *What is a health promoting school?*, World Health Organisation website, <http://www.who.int/school_youth_health/gshi/hps/en/index.html>, accessed 30 September 2008.

²⁸⁸ Ms C. Pemberton, Speech Pathologist and Director, Voice Care Australia; Associate Professor J. Oates, La Trobe University; and Dr A. Russell, Children Youth and Women's Health Service, Written Submission, November 2008, pp. 1–2.

²⁸⁹ Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P–9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

²⁹⁰ *ibid.*

²⁹¹ Curriculum Corporation, *Staff Matters*, Curriculum Corporation website, <<http://cms.curriculum.edu.au/mindmatters/staff/index.htm>>, accessed 16 September 2008.

²⁹² Teacher Learning Network, *Online Catalogue*, TLN website, <<http://www.tln.org.au/store.php?parent=1&item=126>>, accessed 30 September 2008.

²⁹³ Department of Education, Employment and Training (Victoria) 2000, *Voice Care Program: Introducing the Voice Care for Teachers Program*, DEET, Melbourne.

²⁹⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Wellbeing*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/hrweb/ohs/health/wellbei.htm>>, accessed 30 September 2008.

teachers coming to the program are often addressing their wellbeing through professional learning for the first time:

The one issue that is raised again and again during this PD program is that teachers have never before had the opportunity to examine the connection between their own wellbeing and the quality of their teaching.²⁹⁵

The Committee believes that teachers should reflect on their personal wellbeing when considering their professional learning needs, and should be encouraged to seek opportunities for skills development in any areas of concern.

Engaging with parents and communities

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recently endorsed the importance of engaging with parents and communities, as partners in children's learning. One of the Department's key initiatives for 2008–2009 is to develop and disseminate guidelines for schools and early childhood services, addressing effective strategies for parent engagement.²⁹⁶ The Committee believes that there may therefore also be scope for teachers to consider parent engagement as part of their professional learning. This may include building skills in specific engagement processes, such as conducting parent surveys or face-to-face meetings. It may also include more general skills for building community engagement, such as developing knowledge of local cultures. The Committee notes that this type of learning may be especially valuable for teachers new to a school community.

Another way in which teacher professional learning may be used to build parent and community relationships is for teachers and parents to learn side-by-side. The Committee notes that this may be especially relevant in supporting students with special learning needs, to support a consistent approach between the classroom and the home. Another option for parent engagement is for teachers to deliver programs to parents, to give them skills to support their children's learning. One primary school described a highly successful program, through which it provides parents with training to support student learning both in classrooms and at home.²⁹⁷ The Committee believes that such programs not only strengthen parent learning and engagement, but also provide an opportunity for teachers to reflect on their teaching strategies in the context of their students' home and family environments.

Overcoming gender imbalances in the teaching workforce

Some participants argued that professional learning may be used to encourage teachers of either gender into non-traditional roles, to address gender imbalances in the teaching workforce. The School of Education, University of South Australia, gave the examples that more female teachers are needed in technology and design, whereas more males are needed in literacy. It suggested that professional learning in these areas is often delivered in ways that reinforce existing stereotypes, and argued that 'the next generation of professional developers' should seek to overcome these constraints.²⁹⁸

Other participants commented on the under-representation of women in leadership roles within the teaching profession.²⁹⁹ Workforce data confirms that women are under-represented in school leadership positions in proportion to their representation across

²⁹⁵ Ms A. Boulic, *Communiq'Arte*, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

²⁹⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 29.

²⁹⁷ Waverley Meadows Primary School, Performance and Development Culture Open Session, 12 March 2008.

²⁹⁸ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

²⁹⁹ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 10; South Gippsland Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

the education profession as a whole, especially in primary schools.³⁰⁰ One participant suggested that 'home and family commitments deter many women from seeking promotion above middle management positions in schools'.³⁰¹ However, the Committee notes that the under-representation of females in senior management positions is a complex issue affecting many industries, and has a wide range of contributing causes.

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development currently provides targeted professional learning for aspiring female school leaders through the Eleanor Davis School Leadership Program. Commenced as a two-week pilot project in 1992, the program now involves five months of professional learning, including mentoring, seminars, school placement and a school-based project, as well as time for reflection and self-evaluation. The program is offered on application to female leading teachers and assistant principals aspiring to principalship. Eight release days are provided to program participants, along with all other program expenses except travel costs.³⁰²

At the same time, the Committee notes that any strategies for providing teacher professional learning on the basis of gender are limited by anti-discrimination legislation. The Australian *Sex Discrimination Act 1984* has recently been subject to particular scrutiny with regard to the teaching profession. In 2004, a Bill was unsuccessfully proposed to amend the Act to allow a general permanent exemption for male teacher training scholarships to address gender imbalance within the teaching profession.³⁰³ The Committee notes that the Eleanor Davis School Leadership Program has been granted a specific exemption from the Act,³⁰⁴ and believes such exemptions should continue to be considered on a case-by-case basis, to enable programs to be developed to address gender imbalances as appropriate.

Government initiatives

Another priority identified for teacher professional learning is the development of expertise associated with the implementation of specific government reforms. One participant commented that research shows teacher professional learning is a critical factor in determining the impact a government initiative will have on student learning.³⁰⁵ The Committee heard that professional learning around government priorities can be especially effective when it takes full advantage of the departmental resource base to provide high-quality, comprehensive programs. The Early Years Literacy Initiative³⁰⁶ and the School Innovation in Teaching Project (formerly Science in Schools)³⁰⁷ were government initiatives mentioned in the inquiry as having had a widespread and successful impact in Victoria.

Other participants took a more critical approach to teacher professional learning attached to government priorities. Some raised concerns that teachers often do not see the relevance of

³⁰⁰ Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2004, *Submission to the Inquiry into the Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill 2004*, Senate Legal and Constitutional Legislation Committee, Canberra, p. 2.

³⁰¹ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 10.

³⁰² Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Eleanor Davis School Leadership Program*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/eleanorDavis.htm>>, accessed 6 October 2008.

³⁰³ M. Kirsty 2004, 'Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill 2004', *Bills Digest no. 110 2003-04*, Information and Research Services, Parliamentary Library (Australia).

³⁰⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Eleanor Davis School Leadership Program*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/eleanorDavis.htm>>, accessed 6 October 2008.

³⁰⁵ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

³⁰⁶ Ms L. Devlin, Principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11; Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11.

³⁰⁷ Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 1; Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 1-2; Ms S. Bennett, Vice President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 29.

professional learning programs imposed by agencies external to the school.³⁰⁸ Two participants even remarked that the 'raft' of externally-imposed programs in Victorian schools seems to relegate the core business of teaching and learning to the peripheries of teachers' work.³⁰⁹ The Committee also heard that professional learning delivered by school governing bodies can be especially susceptible to criticisms of a 'top down' approach,³¹⁰ while other participants raised concerns about its quality.³¹¹

Furthermore, concerns were raised about the timing of government professional learning initiatives, especially the recent concurrent introduction of two major reforms – the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) and new reporting requirements.³¹² Representatives of the Victorian Independent Education Union remarked that many schools were implementing the new reporting before they had fully grasped the VELS pedagogy, compromising the effectiveness of both initiatives.³¹³ The Australian College of Educators also argued that government-delivered professional learning often comes too late, if it is implemented after systemic change has already been introduced.³¹⁴ Others described incidents where government professional learning programs associated with new infrastructure were provided too early or too late to meet the needs of the teachers who were using it.³¹⁵

A spokesperson for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development responded to criticisms of professional learning programs associated with government reforms. She observed that 'the Department would like to think that we do not take up the time of teachers on things that are not important', and that government initiatives aim to 'actually improve the quality of what is happening in the classrooms'.³¹⁶ The spokesperson acknowledged that schools may perceive the relevance of government initiatives differently depending on their circumstances, and encouraged school leaders to interpret reforms in the context of their own needs and priorities. She also noted that departmental professional learning initiatives include a 'robust' framework for quality assurance, incorporating participant feedback and independent evaluation.³¹⁷

The Committee acknowledges that government reforms will necessarily create new priorities for the development of teacher expertise. The Committee therefore encourages systems to accompany reforms with high-quality, rigorous teacher professional learning programs to develop the expertise necessary to implement them effectively. It also encourages schools and teachers to reflect government reforms when identifying topics for their own professional learning programs, aligning them wherever possible with local priorities and learning needs.

³⁰⁸ Mr B. Maher, Principal, Emmaus Catholic Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 4; School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

³⁰⁹ Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 20; Mr B. Davern, Principal, Mount Clear Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 4.

³¹⁰ Mr P. Martin, President, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 35.

³¹¹ Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 4.

³¹² Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 19; Ms S. Deans, Acting Principal, Buninyong Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

³¹³ Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 18; Ms J. O'Shannessy, Representative, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 19.

³¹⁴ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

³¹⁵ Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 21–22; School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

³¹⁶ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 18.

³¹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 15.

Modes of delivery

The Committee heard that modes of delivery for teacher professional learning activities must be based on sound principles of teaching and learning.³¹⁸ Some participants emphasised the importance of delivery style, pointing to the need for presenters to be 'engaging'³¹⁹ or to demonstrate 'passionate, enthusiastic delivery'.³²⁰ On the other hand, others cautioned that 'nice feel-good activities' or a 'great day' may fall short of the pedagogical rigour required to bring about quality results.³²¹

Some participants expressed particular frustration at professional learning activities that do not demonstrate the pedagogy they espouse.³²² The Committee heard the view that teacher professional learning is currently 'out of step' with developments in classroom pedagogy,³²³ and that some providers would be 'eaten alive' if they delivered their presentation to a class of students.³²⁴ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that lecture-style professional learning is among the least favoured modes of delivery. Only 42 per cent of Victorian teachers rated it positively, and only 36 per cent of teachers did so in the total sample.³²⁵ Four participants in the inquiry also identified the recitation of PowerPoint presentations as symptomatic of an especially poor method of delivery.³²⁶

The Committee found that pedagogies for teachers as adult learners will involve many of the same good teaching practices also used in classrooms.³²⁷ A high number of participants identified inquiry-based, or learner-directed pedagogy as effective for teacher professional learning activities.³²⁸ In contrast to 'top down' teaching methods, inquiry learning positions teachers as generators of knowledge and active participants in their own learning.³²⁹ Perhaps most importantly, inquiry learning may foster engagement in and commitment to professional learning by enabling teachers to follow their passions and interests,³³⁰ and build on their existing expertise.

Participants also placed a high value on professional learning that provides teachers with an opportunity to respond actively to new information.³³¹ Evidence to the inquiry strongly supported active teacher involvement in professional learning, defined in a variety of ways

³¹⁸ AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)/Eduire, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

³¹⁹ Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

³²⁰ Mr G. Born, Physical Education Specialist and Level 3 Teacher, Ocean Road Primary School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 1.

³²¹ Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 18; Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 8.

³²² Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27.

³²³ Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, pp. 4–5.

³²⁴ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

³²⁵ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 133.

³²⁶ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 10; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27; Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

³²⁷ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27.

³²⁸ Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 3–4; Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 5; Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 3; Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³²⁹ Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

³³⁰ Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

³³¹ Ms E. Freeman, Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Unit, Faculty of Education, University of Melbourne, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 24; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27.

including 'learning by doing'³³² or a 'hands-on'³³³ approach. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that almost nine out of ten (89%) Victorian teachers placed a 'high' or 'very high' value on action-oriented, practical professional learning experiences.³³⁴

In addressing gender issues in teacher professional learning, some participants suggested that male and female teachers will have different learning styles that may be better addressed through different modes of delivery. One professional learning provider told the Committee that in her experience, females tend to be less confident with ICT and virtual learning environments.³³⁵ The Faculty of Education, Deakin University, suggested that current models of professional learning based on 'communities, teams and professional cultures' may appeal more to female teachers.³³⁶ At the same time, the Committee also heard concerns that the predominance of females in the teaching profession may mean that the specific learning needs of male teachers are at risk of being neglected.³³⁷

The Committee is aware that substantial attention has been paid to gendered learning styles for Australian students over recent years,³³⁸ and notes that similar approaches may also have relevance to teacher professional learning. However, it also heard the view that gender issues in the delivery of teacher professional learning are less significant than the need to cater to other aspects of diversity in the Victorian teaching workforce.³³⁹ Like their students, Victorian teachers encompass a vast spectrum of backgrounds, learning needs and learning styles, which must be reflected in their professional learning opportunities.

'Like students, teachers have different learning needs and styles and a "one size fits all model" is as inappropriate for teacher professional learning as it is for student learning.'

Teacher Learning Network

Learning environments

The Committee found that trends in pedagogy have profound implications for the learning environments believed to be most effective for teacher professional learning. Throughout the inquiry, a high number of participants argued that teacher professional learning is most effective when it is conducted within the school itself.³⁴⁰ This view was often contrasted with prior conceptions of teacher professional learning as something which was typically undertaken away from the school environment, and separated from teachers' day-to-day work.

³³² Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 23–24.

³³³ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 10; Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

³³⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

³³⁵ Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 46.

³³⁶ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 10.

³³⁷ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2; Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 40; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 6.

³³⁸ Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Boys' education*, DEEWR website, <http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/policy_initiatives_reviews/key_issues/boys_education/default.htm>, accessed 5 October 2008.

³³⁹ Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5.

³⁴⁰ For example, Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Learning Difficulties Australia, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5; Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6; Glen Waverley Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 30; Mr K. Lewry, Principal, Yarragon Primary School, Written Submission, May 2008, p. 1.

'The reality with our professional development over the years has been that we have continually run a model whereby we drag people in, bring them into a central place, and watch the learning disappear as they travel down the highway.'

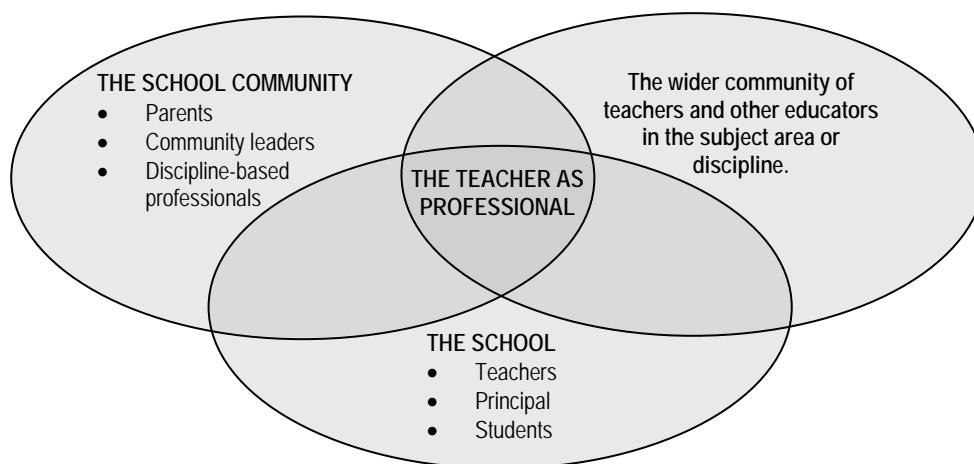
Mr Leigh Mitchell,
Head of Educational Services,
Catholic Education Office,
Diocese of Ballarat

Some participants argued that greater recognition should be given to the value of school-based professional learning activities for Victorian teachers.³⁴¹ However, the Committee heard that many schools are already embracing school-based professional learning rather than sending teachers to off-site workshops or programs.³⁴² The Committee heard that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has endorsed a variety of school-based activities among its teacher professional learning policies.³⁴³ Subject associations are also taking a school-based approach, such as the Mathematical Association of Victoria's Professional Learning Assistance Teams (PLAT) Program.³⁴⁴

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey confirmed that the vast majority of professional development activities for Victorian teachers currently take place in schools. The professional development activity most frequently undertaken by Victorian teachers in the survey was *Unstructured or informal meetings with colleagues to discuss teaching approaches* (34.2 times per year on average). *Professional reading* was the second most common activity (22 times per year on average).³⁴⁵ Programs, courses and conferences undertaken by teachers were also more likely to take place in the school setting than off-site, especially for Victorian teachers.³⁴⁶

At the same time, the Committee believes it is also important that teacher professional learning is not confined to the school alone. Professors Russell Tytler and David Symington, Deakin University, supplied a diagram showing that teachers are members of professional communities both within and beyond the school environment (refer Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1: Teacher professional learning discourse communities



Source: Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 4 (adapted).

³⁴¹ For example, Dr G. Calnin, Director of Policy and Research, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3; Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 29.

³⁴² Global Education Project Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Mr L. Mitchell, Head of Educational Services, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 25.

³⁴³ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 13.

³⁴⁴ The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 6.

³⁴⁵ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 4.

³⁴⁶ *ibid.*, p. 5.

The Committee believes that teachers must have opportunities to participate in all of these communities in their professional learning. Professional networks, universities, training institutions, industry and not-for-profit organisations all provide a variety of opportunities for Victorian teachers to source professional knowledge from outside the school environment. This may occur through a range of modes of delivery, including bringing outside expertise into the school, or sending teachers out to acquire knowledge that may then be used to support and enhance school-based professional learning activities.

Learning through practice

Arguably, the most important form of teacher professional learning occurs through actual teaching practice. Practising teachers learn constantly, by experimenting with new approaches, and developing their practice to meet emerging needs. The Committee heard that an important part of learning through practice is reflection, or thinking about practice, either individually or through discussion with colleagues.³⁴⁷

It may appear self-evident that teachers will use a variety of methods for professional reflection as a natural part of their work. However, the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships commented that teachers need encouragement and support to engage in ongoing reflection on their practice.³⁴⁸ One participant commented that teachers typically have few opportunities to reflect on their practice during the busy school day.³⁴⁹ Several others agreed that learning through practice may be enhanced when teachers are provided with opportunities for deliberate and structured reflection.³⁵⁰

Reflecting on their teaching practice enables teachers to identify areas of knowledge or practice they would like to improve or explore. The next stage in learning through practice is for teachers to find solutions to their questions, and test them in the classroom. As well as involving further reflection, the Committee heard that testing a new idea or practice should involve collecting both qualitative and quantitative evidence to help evaluate its effectiveness.³⁵¹ Teachers thus become researchers in their own classrooms, working through a process of 'action research' to construct a personalised body of knowledge about what works for their students, based on evidence from their own particular context.

The Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships provided the Committee with a list of the types of evidence teachers may collect as part of the action research process.

- *Professional journals*
The Centre suggested that keeping a journal over a four-week period is 'not too onerous and usually achievable'.
- *Observations and notes*
Taken as soon as possible after working with a class.
- *Interviews, focus groups or informal conversations*
Based on 'a few probing questions' planned in advance.
- *Surveys or questionnaires*
Designed to probe learner responses to changes in teaching practice.

³⁴⁷ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 1.

³⁴⁸ Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 3.

³⁴⁹ Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 5.

³⁵⁰ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr M. Spurr, Executive Director, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 40; Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

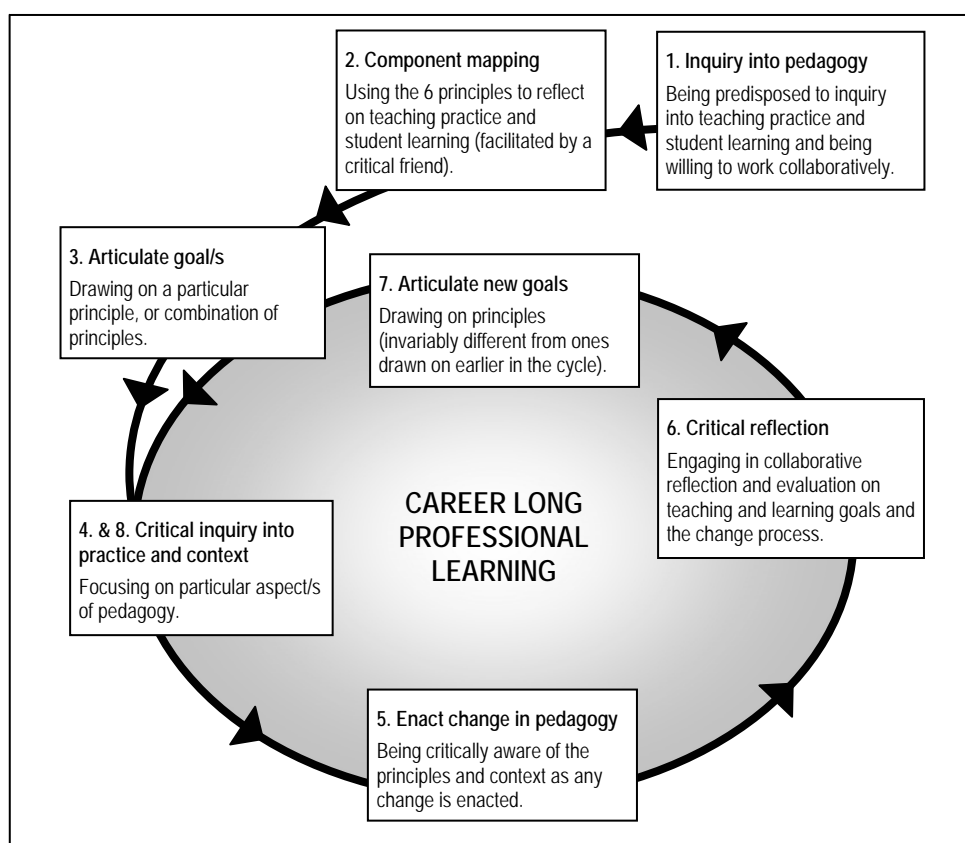
³⁵¹ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 15.

- *Artefacts or worksamples*
Includes a range of media, such as written material, photos and video or audio tapes.
- *Readings and commentaries or reflections*
Helps teachers reflect on what they observe in practice.³⁵²

The Committee notes that action research methods are already being used widely in schools both in Australia and overseas, as part of the trend towards school-based professional learning.³⁵³ These methods vary widely in scope, from large-scale university-supported research, to school-based, team-based or even individual teacher projects. Whatever their size and complexity, however, the Committee heard that the fundamental principle of action research is to enable professional learning to occur through a continuous cycle of questioning, evidence-gathering and reflection.³⁵⁴

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has undertaken extensive work to support teacher learning through practice in its Principles of Learning and Teaching Program. The program is built on a model of continuous professional learning that incorporates the principles of inquiry learning and action research (refer Figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2: Cycle of action research in the Principles of Learning and Teaching Program



Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *The Principles of Learning and Teaching P-12 Background Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 5 (adapted).

The Committee is pleased to observe the innovative methods used in Victorian schools to encourage reflection and enhance the professional learning that occurs naturally through teaching practice. The Committee believes that the action research model provides a valuable method for building on practice-based professional learning, by linking it to clear

³⁵² Supplementary information provided by the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, February 2008.

³⁵³ School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 11.

³⁵⁴ Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6.

learning goals and evidence from the classroom. While the scale of action research projects may vary, the Committee believes that schools should encourage teachers to undertake such projects as part of their ongoing professional learning.

Learning from each other

In addition to learning through practice, evidence to the inquiry suggests that there is also an ‘enormous amount’ that teachers can learn from each other.³⁵⁵ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that formal sharing of knowledge among peers was one of the most highly-valued methods for professional learning for Victorian teachers (87%), second only to practical experience (89%).³⁵⁶ Throughout the inquiry, the Committee heard about a wide range of methods for teachers to enhance their professional learning by drawing on each other’s expertise.

The Committee nevertheless heard that there may be certain cultural barriers to teachers learning effectively from each other. Teaching is traditionally an isolated profession, with teachers typically operating in separate classrooms with little opportunity for their practice to be shared.³⁵⁷ Two participants commented that a high level of collegial trust must therefore exist between teachers to enable effective professional dialogue to occur.³⁵⁸ Others argued that financial or other incentives should be offered to encourage teachers to share their practice.³⁵⁹ Nevertheless, representatives of several peak bodies for the Victorian teaching profession reported that there is now a growing recognition of the need to reduce the professional isolation teachers have previously experienced in their work, and open up practice to colleagues.³⁶⁰

‘Invariably when I say to principals, “Tell me how much you are getting for your PD dollar. Do you think you are really getting a big change in your school?”, they say, “No”. I say, “Stop sending folks out. Change the culture internally. Get folks learning from each other.”’

Mr Peter Cole, Associate,
Resources for Courses

Peer observation

One way in which Victorian teachers are sharing their practice is through peer observation. The Committee heard that this enables teachers to watch effective practice modelled in a classroom setting, to ‘see good teaching in action’.³⁶¹ Demonstration and observation was highly valued as a form of professional learning by many participants in the inquiry,³⁶² with two experienced educators identifying it as the most significant professional learning experience of their careers.³⁶³ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that

³⁵⁵ Ms M. Peace, Vice President (Secondary), Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 23; Mr W. Morgan, Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 14.

³⁵⁶ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers’ Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

³⁵⁷ Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 37.

³⁵⁸ Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 6; School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

³⁵⁹ Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 8; Ms C. Leonard, Reading Recovery Tutor, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³⁶⁰ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 13; Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 5; Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 37.

³⁶¹ Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 4.

³⁶² Mr G. Born, Physical Education Specialist and Level 3 Teacher, Ocean Road Primary School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 1; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Ms T. Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1; Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P–9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

³⁶³ Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers’ Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3.

observation ranked third amongst the modes of delivery for professional learning valued by Victorian teachers.³⁶⁴

As well as enabling the observer to witness good teaching, observation may equally be used as professional learning for the teacher being observed. In Performance and Development Culture Open Sessions, the Committee witnessed methods of peer observation and assessment, whereby teachers invite a colleague to observe their practice and to gather data and observations relevant to their professional learning goals. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey indicated that Victorian teachers value having their practice assessed by peers, with over half (51%) rating *participation in peer review processes* as a desirable professional development activity.³⁶⁵ The Committee also notes that a 2007 Australian Government report on teacher performance found that 'fair and accurate informal feedback on performance from a knowledgeable source' is the single most effective lever an organisation can use for lifting staff performance.³⁶⁶

Japan provides an example of international best practice in professional learning through peer observation. The Committee heard that all schools in Japan implement an observation-based Lesson Study (*jogyokenkyu*) Program, either in learning teams, across the whole school, or even across different schools. The Lesson Study Program has received widespread acclaim, and has been adopted in various forms in other countries, including Australia, Malaysia and the United States of America.³⁶⁷

Lesson Study follows a simple three-step model, described in material provided to the Committee by the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships (refer Table 3.1).

Table 3.1: Elements of the Japanese Lesson Study model

1. Identifying a research theme
Teams of teachers work together to identify a research theme, based on the differences between actual student learning and teachers' aspirations for their students. A Japanese school typically works on the same research theme for three to four years, divided into a series of sub-goals.
2. Conducting 'research lessons'
A 'lesson-planning group' of four to six teachers draws up a detailed written lesson plan. Developing the plan also forms part of the professional learning process. One teacher from the group delivers the lesson while the others observe. After the lesson, team members debrief and agree on improvements, which are then implemented in another classroom.
3. Reflecting and recording
The school compiles records of the 'research lesson' plans, as well as observation data and notes, student work samples and further reflections on the lesson study process, into a final report. This becomes a valuable resource for future teacher professional learning in the school.

Source: Supplementary information provided by the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, August 2007 (adapted).

The Committee notes that the international Reading Recovery Program provides another example of how a 'lesson study' model may be incorporated into a rigorous teacher professional learning program. Reading Recovery tutors are required to attend three full days of initial training, followed by 18 fortnightly half-day sessions throughout their training year. At each session, two tutors bring a child they have been working with, and

³⁶⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

³⁶⁵ *ibid.*, p. 130.

³⁶⁶ Surveys and Workforce Analysis Section, Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training 2007, *DEST Research Paper: Performance-based rewards for teachers*, DEST, Canberra, p. 12.

³⁶⁷ A. L. White, C. S. Lim and C. M. Chiew 2005, *An Examination of a Japanese Model of Teacher Professional Learning Through Australian and Malaysian Lenses*, paper presented to the 2005 Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, AARE, Parramatta, p. 1.

demonstrate a lesson, watched by their colleagues through a one-way screen. After their training year, Reading Recovery tutors are required to attend six further sessions in each year that they practise as a tutor. Victorian Reading Recovery tutors are supported by a state-wide Reading Recovery Tutor, who monitors the quality of training, assesses achievement data and disseminates current research.³⁶⁸

The Committee believes that the 'lesson study' model is consistent with the current trend towards school-based professional development, and reflective, collaborative learning in Victorian schools. However, while evident in discrete programs such as Reading Recovery, this type of professional learning in Victorian schools has not yet attained the coverage and coordination evident in Japan. The Committee notes that Lesson Study in Japan is part of a comprehensive plan for school-based professional learning that is developed by a dedicated committee in every school.³⁶⁹ Establishment of similar committees may be a potential future expansion of the role of professional learning coordinators in Victoria, as school-based professional learning strategies continue to develop.

Mentoring

While peer observation typically places teachers on an equal footing, mentoring may be an appropriate mode of delivery where there is a clear difference between two teachers' levels of expertise. In particular, the Committee heard that mentoring from a more experienced colleague is a valuable form of professional learning for early career teachers. Mentoring is therefore a key element of the Supporting Provisionally Registered Teachers Program, which supports new Victorian teachers in making the transition from provisional to full registration.

The Committee heard that more experienced teachers may also find being mentored a valuable form of professional learning.³⁷⁰ The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria suggested that the mentoring model for beginning teachers could be applied to the profession more generally.³⁷¹ The Committee agrees that support from a mentor may benefit teachers at all stages of their careers, especially if they are seeking to develop skills in an area in which a colleague has specialist expertise.

In the course of the inquiry, the Committee heard from several participants who endorsed the value of teacher professional learning through mentoring programs.³⁷² The Committee also heard that the mentoring role itself provides a valuable opportunity for experienced teachers to reflect on their practice and learn new approaches.³⁷³ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey supported this view, revealing that both mentoring and being mentored were valued as future professional development activities by around half the

'...once you achieve mastery, be willing to revisit or explore new paths with younger teachers. Sometimes it is our job to teach them where to tread and what direction to take, but often it is just to see if there is a different direction previously unexplored, a new path worth exploring that we perhaps did not notice with old eyes.'

Mr Cameron Smith,
President,
Science Teachers' Association of Victoria

³⁶⁸ Ms C. Leonard, Reading Recovery Tutor, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 3–4.

³⁶⁹ M. R. Sarkar Arani, Y. Shibata and M. Matoba 2007, 'Delivering Jugyuu Kenkyuu for Reframing Schools as Learning Organizations: An examination of the process of Japanese school change', *Nagoya Journal of Education and Human Development*, vol. 3, p. 28.

³⁷⁰ Supplementary information provided by the Australian Association of Special Education Inc, Victorian Chapter, June 2007; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

³⁷¹ Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

³⁷² For example, Microsoft Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Mr G. Porter, Assistant Principal, Sebastopol College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 7; Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 45; Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³⁷³ E. Kleinhenz and L. Ingvarson 2004, *Evaluation of the Standards and Professional Learning Project 2003*, commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 14; Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 27.

Victorian teachers surveyed. Interestingly, providing mentoring was valued by a greater proportion of teachers (57%) than receiving it (51%).³⁷⁴

In 2003, an Australian Council for Educational Research report commented on the general applicability of mentoring and classroom observation programs for Victorian teachers. The review suggested that a collegial mentoring program is well suited to the character of the Victorian teaching workforce:

The 'shoulder to shoulder' classroom observation and mentoring model appears to sit well with the values and culture of teachers in Victorian schools. Teachers seem comfortable with this model and it is a powerful means of building collaboration.³⁷⁵

At the same time, the report noted that Victorian teachers were 'quick to point out there is no room in the Victorian education system for a rigid, hierarchical, "check list" approach to classroom observation'.³⁷⁶

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey further supported the idea that mentoring and peer observation are well suited to the Victorian context. Victorian teachers were significantly more likely to value being mentored by another teacher than teachers across the total sample (51% versus 43%).³⁷⁷ The difference was even more pronounced for *participation in peer review processes* (51% versus 39%).³⁷⁸ In light of these findings and the strong support received in the inquiry, the Committee believes that mentoring and peer

observation are both models worth prioritising in the professional learning of Victorian teachers.

'One that our staff are doing themselves is different staff members are presenting to their colleagues how they are using their interactive whiteboards. Once a week a different staff member presents and the whole staff are part of a team who are learning.'

Dr Heather Schnagl,
Board Member,
Association of Independent
Schools of Victoria

Working in teams

As well as sharing their expertise, the Committee heard that teachers can support each others' professional learning simply by learning together. A strong theme to emerge in the inquiry is that professional learning is most effective when it is undertaken collaboratively rather than individually. The Victorian Applied Learning Association emphasised the importance of collegial dialogue in helping teachers to clarify their ideas and develop their 'language of understanding about their professional learning'.³⁷⁹ The Association commented that this reflects the socio-cultural dimensions of learning which have also been recognised in classroom pedagogical trends.³⁸⁰

Other participants also supported the importance of professional conversations, whether to aid general reflection³⁸¹ or to analyse a specific incident or example of student work.³⁸² Two participants made the observation that talking is a stock skill of the teaching trade, and that effective professional learning must therefore give teachers the opportunity to employ it.³⁸³ However, another told the Committee that research has found only approximately three per cent of

³⁷⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 131.

³⁷⁵ E. Kleinhenz and L. Ingvarson 2004, *Evaluation of Standards and Professional Learning Project 2003*, commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Council for Educational Research, Camberwell, p. 23.

³⁷⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷⁷ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 132.

³⁷⁸ *ibid.*, p. 130.

³⁷⁹ Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6.

³⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 3.

³⁸¹ Associate Professor J. Henry, Committee Member, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 13.

³⁸² School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Ms M. Meiers, Senior Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 9.

³⁸³ Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 19; Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

unstructured conversations between teachers are typically around actual teaching practice.³⁸⁴ Like individual reflection, the Committee notes that collegial conversations are likely to be most effective for teacher professional learning when they are structured around a specific purpose.

The Committee received a significant body of evidence to indicate that team-based professional learning is an effective way for teachers to develop their knowledge through a structured, collaborative approach.³⁸⁵ In 2003, the then Department of Education and Training published a paper by Dr Neville Johnson on team-based approaches to professional learning. The paper strongly supported professional learning teams as a means of supporting continuous teacher learning and improvement and reducing ‘between classroom’ differences in student achievement.³⁸⁶

However, in a public hearing for the inquiry, Dr Johnson cautioned that some schools simply re-name curriculum or administrative teams as professional learning teams ‘because it is trendy’.³⁸⁷ The Committee found that an important aspect of professional learning teams is that they differentiate clearly between administration and professional learning. One participant explained this distinction:

...a professional learning team... does not focus on how the school sports are going to be running, because it is not a general staff meeting, where I think a lot of our teachers waste a lot of time. It actually focuses on the theory, the understanding and the critical knowledge that teachers need to understand about what was modelled, the coaching that was taking place and the mentoring that was taking place.³⁸⁸

Other hazards identified for professional learning teams included ‘contrived collegiality’,³⁸⁹ or collaboration that simply reaffirms habitual practices.³⁹⁰ To avoid these pitfalls, professional learning teams should be formed around a shared purpose directly linked to the improvement of student learning.

The Committee heard of various ways in which a team-based approach to professional learning may be successfully applied. The principal of a South Australian primary school, Ms Mary Asikas, reported that all teachers at her school are involved in self-managing ‘Communities of Practice’ (CoPs). Activities of the CoPs include: surveys of staff, students and the community; shared professional reading, research and discussion; and auditing and improving school programs.³⁹¹ Ms Asikas commented that establishing the CoPs involved significant preparation, to clarify concepts and help teachers understand how the new processes would be useful to their daily work.³⁹²

‘For someone like me, coming into a school and working with a group of people, I may have a few tricks and some knowledge and all the rest of it, but what is most important is the group of people attending the professional development, working with each other, bringing their own ideas and bringing any ideas that I and they share in their own context and building on them. That is the kind of thing that can be sustainable.’

Professor Lawrie Angus,
Head, School of Education,
University of Ballarat

³⁸⁴ Dr G. Calnin, Director of Policy and Research, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 5.

³⁸⁵ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 1; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 5; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3; Doxa Youth Foundation, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 3; Mr K. Lewry, Principal, Yarragon Primary School, Written Submission, May 2008, p. 1.

³⁸⁶ N. J. Johnson 2003, *Perspectives on Education: Working in Teams*, Department of Education and Training (Victoria), Melbourne, pp. 5 & 12.

³⁸⁷ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Education Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 16.

³⁸⁸ Mr L. Mitchell, Head of Educational Services, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 35.

³⁸⁹ N. J. Johnson 2003, *Perspectives on Education: Working in Teams*, Department of Education and Training (Victoria), Melbourne, p. 15.

³⁹⁰ Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3.

³⁹¹ Ms M. Asikas, Principal Seaford 6–12 School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 2.

³⁹² *ibid.*

Conversely, Ms Jo Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, noted that not all the staff in a school have to be involved for team-based professional learning to be successful. Ms Parry suggested a model whereby small teams of teachers volunteer for a program, and then celebrate and promote their successes to their colleagues.³⁹³ Another participant offered a more *ad hoc* approach to team-building, suggesting that teachers simply publicise what they are working on in their own professional learning, and allow collaboration to occur naturally around common interests and goals.³⁹⁴

Innovative models of school organisation in Victoria are also opening up possibilities for teachers to work more collaboratively, by reducing traditional boundaries between classrooms. Many Victorian schools are now embracing team teaching where groups of teachers are responsible for a whole student cohort, supported by innovative school infrastructure design.³⁹⁵ The 2008 review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching commented on the growth of team teaching, going as far as to suggest that traditional structures of one teacher per class are soon likely to be 'consigned to history'.³⁹⁶ The Committee supports innovative models of school organisation in gradually changing the nature of teaching to a more collaborative profession. Teamwork in the classroom can provide a powerful base for the growth of team-based approaches to teacher professional learning.

Networking beyond the school

Dialogue between teachers can also be an effective form of professional learning when it continues beyond the boundaries of individual schools. A very high number of participants in the inquiry supported the value of networking with colleagues from other schools as a professional learning activity.³⁹⁷ However, one participant lamented that networking is currently 'seen by the school system as a peripheral matter of little consequence'.³⁹⁸ At the same time, others pointed to initiatives such as the establishment of subject-specific VCE teacher networks as examples of how teacher networking may be supported at a system level.³⁹⁹

Several participants also identified visiting other schools as a highly effective professional learning activity.⁴⁰⁰ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that 41 per cent of Victorian teachers had participated in a school visit or exchange in the previous 12 months.⁴⁰¹ One subject association representative reported that bus tours of 'good practice schools' have become more popular among association members than short professional

³⁹³ Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 38.

³⁹⁴ Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 30.

³⁹⁵ Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2006, *Building Futures*, School Resources Division, DE&T, Melbourne.

³⁹⁶ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 13.

³⁹⁷ For example, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, pp. 23–24; Mr P. Martin, President, Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, pp. 34–35; Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 31; Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³⁹⁸ Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

³⁹⁹ Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Supplementary Submission, June 2008, p. 2; Supplementary information provided by Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, June 2008.

⁴⁰⁰ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 9; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 5; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 5; Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P–9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2; Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1.

⁴⁰¹ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 62.

learning courses. The association is now considering international ‘good practice’ study tours, involving observation of and discussion with expert teachers overseas.⁴⁰²

Several successful professional learning programs over the last decade have supported knowledge-sharing between schools by adopting a school cluster approach.⁴⁰³ Like collegial professional learning between teachers, knowledge-sharing between different schools may occur ‘on equal footing’, or through more hierarchical mentoring relationships. An example of a mentoring relationship between schools can be found in the Victorian Leading Schools Fund Project, which includes the establishment of ‘centres of excellence’ charged with supporting other schools to improve their practice.⁴⁰⁴ One participant endorsed a similar model from the United Kingdom, where high-performing schools are paired directly with lower-performing schools to provide mentoring and support.⁴⁰⁵

On the other hand, some participants reported that competition between schools may inhibit the sharing of knowledge.⁴⁰⁶ The Committee heard that this may be especially true in non-metropolitan areas, where competition for dwindling student numbers has reportedly caused a ‘cutthroat’ culture to emerge.⁴⁰⁷ One Victorian principal suggested that this difficulty may be overcome by providing incentives to high-performing schools to share their ‘recipes for success’.⁴⁰⁸ The Committee notes that some knowledge-sharing programs, such as the Leading Schools Fund or Performance and Development Culture Program, have provided leading schools with additional funding on the understanding that they will share their expertise.

Schools may also choose to share their knowledge on a ‘fee-for-service’ basis. The Committee is aware of some schools that have established professional learning institutes for their own staff, which may be accessed by staff from other schools for a course fee.⁴⁰⁹ Another school told the Committee that it has sold published documents to other schools, as part of its efforts in disseminating best practice.⁴¹⁰ The Committee acknowledges that a ‘user pays’ model of knowledge-sharing provides an opportunity for high-performing schools to be compensated for their efforts in sharing resources and expertise. However, the Committee is also aware of the risk of putting a price on educational expertise that may be beyond the reach of schools most in need. The Committee therefore believes that ‘user

‘Staff tell me that this is the best kind of PD. It is important for them to be able to share ideas with teachers on the same level. They also get reassurance that they are on track. They like the collegiality that they have developed with teachers from our cluster schools especially working with the secondaries. They appreciate the others’ difficulties so they can support one another.’

Principal,
Doncaster Innovation and
Excellence Cluster

⁴⁰² Mr T. Brandenburg, President, ICT in Education Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 28.

⁴⁰³ Examples of Victorian school cluster projects include Principles of Teaching and Learning (PoLT), Schools for Innovation and Excellence and Leaders in the Making. Cluster models have also been adopted in a number of Australian Government professional learning initiatives, including Success for Boys, Values Education Good Practice Schools (VEGPS) and the Australian School Innovation for Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM) Project.

⁴⁰⁴ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 14.

⁴⁰⁵ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 14.

⁴⁰⁶ Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School and Ms K. Simpkin, Assistant Deputy Principal and PD Coordinator, Damascus College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 17.

⁴⁰⁷ Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 17.

⁴⁰⁸ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

⁴⁰⁹ For example, *Lauriston Institute*, Lauriston Girls’ School website, <http://www.lauriston.vic.edu.au/section_6/introduction147.asp>, accessed 10 September 2008; *Ivanhoe Grammar School, Ivanhoe Professional Learning*, Ivanhoe Grammar School website, <<http://www.ivanhoepl.net>>, accessed 10 September 2008; supplementary information provided by Balwyn High School at the Performance and Development Culture Open Session, 13 March 2008.

⁴¹⁰ Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 39.

pays' approaches should continue to be supplemented by collegial sharing of knowledge through networks or clusters.

Another teacher suggested 'job swaps' as an effective method of teacher professional learning that costs 'virtually nothing'.⁴¹¹ During interstate investigations, the Committee heard that the ACT Department of Education and Training has placed particular priority on developing teacher knowledge by changing their work environment. ACT teachers may not remain at the same school for more than eight years, and no more than five years for teachers on their first school placement.⁴¹² Some participants commented that this creates valuable opportunities for knowledge to be shared between schools.⁴¹³ The Committee is not advocating the introduction of the ACT model in Victoria. However, it notes that increasing cooperation between Victorian schools, especially through clustering models, may create opportunities for teacher relocation or exchange to be offered as a possible professional learning experience.

Electronic collaboration and Web 2.0

New technologies are constantly increasing opportunities for collaborative teacher professional learning. Web 2.0 refers to the emerging use of internet technology not simply as a means of transmitting information in a one-way process, but as a means of sharing knowledge among internet users in an online community. Examples of common Web 2.0 tools include blogs (web logs), podcasts, virtual learning environments (such as Moodle), online forums, or social networking software (such as MySpace, FaceBook or Nings). Web 2.0 also offers possibilities for videoconferencing, which has been identified as an effective method for teacher collaboration in rural and regional schools.⁴¹⁴

The Committee heard that Web 2.0 technologies can be highly effective in supporting teacher professional learning. A significant example is the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's 'Knowledge Bank' website, which brings together best practice and teacher-developed resources from around Victoria.⁴¹⁵ The School Library Association of Victoria commented that Web 2.0 technologies allow for the development of online creative communities, and can facilitate informal follow-up and discussion after formal professional development programs.⁴¹⁶ One rural principal proposed that online forums of principals and teachers in small rural schools should be enhanced to overcome the limitations on learning arising from professional isolation.⁴¹⁷

The use of blogging (electronic journaling) as a professional learning tool was described in detail in a 2006 publication by the Australian Association for the Teaching of English. In the article, one early career teacher described how her blogging evolved from an individual self-reflection tool, to a forum for shared professional reflection with colleagues elsewhere:

At first, I was writing just for me, but as I became more entrenched in the blog world, my blog began being read by others and I was reading other blogs. Other teachers could relate to what I was saying. My narrative was aligned with theirs and theirs with mine. I was reading many

⁴¹¹ Supplementary information provided by Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, March 2008.

⁴¹² Department of Education and Training (Australian Capital Territory), *Teaching in Canberra*, DET website, <http://www.det.act.gov.au/employment/teach_in_canberra/teaching_in_canberra>, accessed 10 September 2008.

⁴¹³ Meeting with representatives of Arawang Primary School, Waramanga, 16 June 2008.

⁴¹⁴ Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 7; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5.

⁴¹⁵ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *About Knowledge Bank*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/knowledgebank/about.asp>>, accessed 18 July 2008.

⁴¹⁶ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁴¹⁷ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6.

other blogs and so the process of reflective writing became reflective reading, collegiate support, professional interaction and both personal and professional development.⁴¹⁸

Another teacher in the article noted that although blogging might 'possibly be dismissed as a fad', it had constituted 'some of the best professional learning of [her] short career'.⁴¹⁹

A representative of Curriculum Corporation told the Committee that Web 2.0 technologies have been applied in a number of the Corporation's teacher professional learning projects. However, the success of these tools depends on effective facilitation and moderation and a clear structure and focus:

We have had some experience with online forums, blogs, discussion groups and other methods of facilitated teacher discussion and find that these work particularly well when the focus of those online discussions is very specific, when they are located in the project activity that is happening and when they are well supported by a managing agency which is able to provide some sort of moderation and maintain and steer the flow of content so it is actually quite focused.⁴²⁰

The representative added that teachers do not typically make use of these facilities unless they have a clearly articulated reason to do so.⁴²¹ As with one-way online delivery of professional learning programs, the Committee also heard criticism that collaborative online professional learning lacks 'the human touch'.⁴²²

The Committee believes that Web 2.0 technologies provide exciting possibilities in collaborative teacher professional learning. However, at this stage, it believes that their use should be dictated according to teacher preferences. Also, like face-to-face collaboration in teacher professional learning, teacher collaboration online is likely to work best when it is underpinned by a clear learning purpose, and not pursued simply for its own sake.

Learning from other sources

One participant commented that collaborative, school-based professional learning does not mean that teachers are expected to simply 'puddle around in their own ignorance'.⁴²³ Evidence to the inquiry indicated that some external input is still necessary for effective teacher professional learning, as teachers may be 'too close' to the issues in their school to identify strategies for improvement, or may not 'know what they don't know'.⁴²⁴ Many schools therefore adopt strategies to tap into other sources of expertise in delivering or supporting school-based professional learning.

Consultancy and coaching

A popular method for combining school-based, collegial professional learning with external expertise is to bring in a consultant or coach from outside the school to work with teachers in the school environment. A consultant may have a number of different roles, including delivering presentations to staff, leading or managing a change project, or working directly with teachers in classrooms. The Committee heard that this model is most effective when it occurs over time, with one consultant commenting that five or six consultant-supported

⁴¹⁸ M. Cleine and C. Darcy 2006, 'Blogging and Professional Learning', in B. Doecke, M. Howie and W. Sawyer 2006, *Only Connect: English Teaching, Schooling and Community*, Wakefield Press and the Australian Association for the Teaching of English, Kent Town, p. 167.

⁴¹⁹ *ibid.*, p. 175.

⁴²⁰ Ms G. England, Senior Projects Manager, Curriculum Projects, Curriculum Corporation, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 4.

⁴²¹ *ibid.*

⁴²² Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5.

⁴²³ Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 3.

⁴²⁴ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 5.

learning experiences are usually necessary to embed changes in teaching practice.⁴²⁵ However, consultant involvement should not be expected to continue in perpetuity. Another consultant commented that her goal is to 'make herself redundant' in the schools in which she works, and enable teams of teachers to assume responsibility for sustaining effective professional learning processes independently.⁴²⁶

'It has to be regular and ongoing. It is better to have someone to come in and work with the teachers for even a couple of hours every week than a two-day extravaganza at the beginning and then again at the end of the year.'

Ms Kath Murdoch,
Consultant

Many participants in the inquiry indicated their support for a model of professional learning in which an external 'expert' comes to work with teachers in the school.⁴²⁷ Mr Brian Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, even stated that working with a consultant within his school is the most effective method for changing teaching practice that he has experienced.⁴²⁸ A representative of the Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, told the Committee that the region is currently trialling sustained programs for bringing experts into schools, similar to the consultant model.⁴²⁹ The Committee also heard that a number of Catholic schools have established professional learning teams and brought in visiting experts to support and stimulate collegial discussion.⁴³⁰

The Committee nevertheless notes that the trend towards using consultants and coaches to deliver school-based professional learning places pressure on an already limited supply of professional learning providers. Two subject associations reported that the availability of high-quality professional learning consultants in Victoria is stretched, with many now approaching retirement age.⁴³¹ Professional learning providers involved in the inquiry also indicated that demand for their services often exceeds what they are able to supply.⁴³² One consultant told the Committee that he can only service 'about one-third' of the approximately 700 requests he receives each year, and is currently training additional personnel to use his methodologies to meet the demand.⁴³³

One participant suggested that industry-based consultants may also have valuable expertise to offer schools, and suggested that 'key consultants' should be shared across industry and education.⁴³⁴ While supporting this idea in principle, the Committee notes that several participants indicated that recent classroom experience is an important element of credibility for providers of teacher professional learning.⁴³⁵ Two professional learning

⁴²⁵ Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 23.

⁴²⁶ Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 9.

⁴²⁷ For example, AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)/Editure, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 9; Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6; Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁴²⁸ Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 3.

⁴²⁹ Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 28.

⁴³⁰ Ms J. O'Shannessy, Representative, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 22.

⁴³¹ The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4; Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 44.

⁴³² Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 7; Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 46.

⁴³³ Mr J. Joseph, Director, Focus Education Australia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁴³⁴ AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)/Editure, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 13.

⁴³⁵ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6; Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

consultants told the Committee that they rely on ongoing classroom practice to give them the expertise and credibility necessary for school-based consultancy work.⁴³⁶ Another suggested that there should be an expectation that any presenter talking about teaching methods or curriculum will have current teacher registration.⁴³⁷

The Committee heard that the demand for external experts to support school-based teacher professional learning may instead be met by creating career paths for experienced teachers to move into coaching or consultancy roles. The Committee notes that this may help to ensure that the expertise of experienced teachers is not lost to attrition or retirements, and is passed on to the next generation. Furthermore, it may encourage experienced teachers to remain in the profession, as leading or providing professional learning may also be a valuable learning and reinvigoration experience for the leaders themselves.

The Committee notes that regional offices of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development already employ dedicated staff to deliver school-based professional learning and coaching services. Coaches are deployed to work with schools for designated periods on a needs basis. The Department has also recently identified teaching and learning coaches as one of its key strategies for improving literacy and numeracy in government schools, with further details of this strategy to be available in 2009.⁴³⁸ The Committee supports the further development of coaching positions within the Department, to provide schools with access to experts who can work directly with teachers in their classrooms to address identified areas of need. It also believes that such roles may help to ensure that existing expertise within the system is retained, rather than lost to private consultancy.

At the same time, the Committee heard that the role of a professional learning consultant or coach is 'not as easy as it may look on paper'.⁴³⁹ One school-based professional learning coordinator commented that leading professional learning requires skills beyond teaching expertise and experience:

Obviously not all teachers will be suitable for this role. They will have to have qualities outside their expertise in teaching. They will need to have people skills and be emotionally intelligent and supportive. Consultants will need to be mentors, coaches and leaders and all that it entails.⁴⁴⁰

The Committee notes that even expert teachers will not necessarily feel confident in applying the teaching skills they use in their classes to interactions with colleagues, or may be afraid to imply superiority by instructing their peers.⁴⁴¹ Participants in the inquiry agreed that experienced teachers should be provided with training to develop their skills in sharing their knowledge with others.⁴⁴² The Committee therefore believes that further development of coaching roles should be accompanied by a professional learning program for the coaches themselves, to ensure the highest standards of program delivery.

Joint research

The Committee heard that joint research between schools and universities is another successful model for bringing outside expertise to school-based teacher professional

⁴³⁶ Ms K. Murdoch, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 8; Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 36.

⁴³⁷ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁴³⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 35.

⁴³⁹ Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P-9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁴⁴⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁴⁴¹ P. Cole 2004, *Professional Development: A great way to avoid change*, Seminar Series no. 140, Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 9.

⁴⁴² Professor L. Angus, Head, School of Education, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 30; Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 5; Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

learning.⁴⁴³ The first major government investment in joint research in Australia occurred in 1994, through the national Innovative Links Between Universities and Schools for Teacher Professional Development Project.⁴⁴⁴ Although the Innovative Links Project ceased over a decade ago, several participants in the inquiry reported successful participation in recent professional learning programs that involved teachers in joint research with university partners.⁴⁴⁵

A detailed discussion of joint research was provided to the Committee by Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University. The Faculty is currently working with a cohort of teachers in south-east Melbourne government schools, to research strategies for engaging the growing number of students from ethnically diverse communities in the area.⁴⁴⁶ A significant proportion of teachers in participating schools will be awarded master's degrees as a result of their participation in the program.⁴⁴⁷

The Faculty explained that joint research breaks down many of the 'binaries' that have traditionally characterised education research: between theory and practice; between professional and academic knowledge; and between the conventions and characteristics of research and practice environments.⁴⁴⁸ It also enables dialogue between teachers and academics 'on equal footing', challenging traditional 'transmission' models of post-graduate course delivery.⁴⁴⁹ Furthermore, university research partnerships serve to furnish teachers with the skills to become practitioner researchers in their own right.⁴⁵⁰

Partnerships between schools and universities in school-based professional learning may also sometimes take the form of a facilitation, advisory or 'critical friendship' role. The Committee heard that academic partners have frequently participated on steering groups for school clusters in the Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program, as well as in national professional learning projects such as the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program or Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics Project.⁴⁵¹ Another participant reported that some schools independently engage university academics, often at considerable cost, to work for a period of time in a critical friend or mentoring role.⁴⁵² The Committee heard that the role of academic partners in school-based professional learning should be clearly defined at the outset of the project, to ensure there is not confusion between a management, research partner and expert advisory role.⁴⁵³

⁴⁴³ School of Education, RMIT University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁴⁴⁴ J. Peters, R. Dobbins and B. Johnson 1996, *Collaborative Learning Through School-University Partnerships*, paper presented to the Joint Excellence in Research Australia – Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, ERA and AARE, Singapore.

⁴⁴⁵ School of Education, Victoria University, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 15–16; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 2; Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 12.

⁴⁴⁶ Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 6–7.

⁴⁴⁷ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁴⁸ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁴⁹ *ibid.*

⁴⁵⁰ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 24; Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3; Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 7.

⁴⁵¹ Dr J. Anderson, Representative, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, pp. 10–11.

⁴⁵² Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 4.

⁴⁵³ Ms G. England, Senior Projects Manager, Curriculum Projects, Curriculum Corporation, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 4.

Professionals in residence

Another way of adding external expertise to school-based professional learning is to bring in professionals or community members from outside the education sector. This may occur through short-term workshops and presentations, or through sustained programs such as artist/scientist/writer or other professionals ‘in residence’. Ms Kaye Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, told the Committee that bringing people in from outside the school should be ‘just good practice’, and part of the core business of every school.⁴⁵⁴ The Committee agrees that short- or long-term visits from members of the wider community, including parents and carers in their professional capacity, can be an effective way of both inspiring students and enhancing opportunities for teacher professional learning.

The Committee was provided with an example of a highly successful artist-in-residence program in evidence to the inquiry. The Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program is coordinated by Western Edge Youth Arts (WEYA), a not-for-profit organisation that creates original performing arts work with students from culturally diverse and disadvantaged communities in Melbourne’s western suburbs. A ‘unique’ model of professional learning is used in the program, where teachers work alongside experienced arts educators to develop ‘cutting edge, innovative practice’.⁴⁵⁵ The SCRAYP Program has received funding through the Victorian Government Strategic Partnerships Program for over ten years, and has worked with 19 schools in the Western Metropolitan Region.⁴⁵⁶

A written submission from the artistic director of the SCRAYP Program related the experiences of two participating teachers. The teachers agreed that the professional learning in the program worked because it was ‘classroom based’, and involved teachers and WEYA representatives working together in ‘real-life’ learning situations. This enabled teachers to observe their students responding to new people and situations, and to ‘see students’ abilities with fresh eyes’. It also gave teachers an opportunity for collegial discussion and reflection with the experienced arts educators, to build their confidence with and understanding of new practices.⁴⁵⁷

‘Teachers have identified benefits to working with people from outside the school sector. These opportunities result in challenging assumptions and accepted practices and introducing new perspectives to issues around learning in schools. It works best if this can be a partnership approach – working on thinking around issues together.’

Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships

Professional reading

Professional reading is arguably the simplest way to bring outside expertise into school-based professional learning. While the Committee notes that professional reading is a valuable professional learning activity that teachers can undertake individually, some participants also suggested that it may provide a valuable springboard for collegial discussion.⁴⁵⁸ One participant suggested that reading about a topic of interest and discussing it with a colleague should be the first step teachers take in seeking to improve a specific aspect of their practice.⁴⁵⁹ In the course of the inquiry, the Committee visited a primary school where weekly professional readings, provided to all teachers in the school

⁴⁵⁴ Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 6.

⁴⁵⁵ Mr D. Kelman, Artistic Director, Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program, Western Edge Youth Arts Inc, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁴⁵⁶ Our Community Pty Ltd, *SCRAYP Youth Arts with an Edge*, Our Community website, <http://www.ourcommunity.com.au/member/directory_details.do?orgId=21103>, accessed 27 August 2008.

⁴⁵⁷ Mr D. Kelman, Artistic Director, Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program, Western Edge Youth Arts Inc, Written Submission, June 2008, pp. 2–3.

⁴⁵⁸ The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Mr P. Rose, Principal, Ballarat Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 7.

⁴⁵⁹ Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 30.

'I think there has to be an upgrading of one's philosophical base if change is to occur. Professional reading, research papers can provide this.'

Teacher,
(Supplementary Material)

for informal discussion, form a key part of the school's ongoing professional learning program.⁴⁶⁰

The Committee heard that maintaining a 'well stocked and up to date' professional reading and viewing library is a simple strategy schools can employ to improve teaching practice.⁴⁶¹ The School Library Association of Victoria also argued that teachers should be provided with access to the latest research through websites and journals.⁴⁶² Another participant sought to expand teachers' reading opportunities further, suggesting that the government should negotiate borrowing rights for all teachers and educational institutions from university libraries.⁴⁶³ While the Committee does not envisage a role for the government in this regard, it notes that such arrangements may be established as part of school-university partnership projects.

The growth of the World Wide Web has greatly expanded the possibilities for all Victorian teachers to access the latest information and research. At the same time, the proliferation of freely available information has created a new challenge. Few teachers have the time to sift through the incredible array of educational publications now available, both online and in print, to locate relevant material and assess its quality. One participant also mentioned research that suggests that many teachers have not received adequate training to enable them to seek out and evaluate research.⁴⁶⁴

A variety of services are currently available to help Victorian teachers navigate the vast array of information available to them. Four examples of such services are provided below:

- **edna Online**
www.edna.edu.au
An online network designed to enable educators to locate and share news and information. A joint initiative of all Australian governments.⁴⁶⁵
- **Knowledge Bank**
www.education.vic.gov.au/knowledgebank/
A website dedicated to the sharing of 'next practice' between Victorian educators, provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.⁴⁶⁶
- **EdResearch Online**
<http://cunningham.acer.edu.au/dbtw-wpd/sample/edresearch.htm>
A searchable database of education research, compiled from over 200 Australian journals by the Australian Council for Educational Research.⁴⁶⁷
- **Curriculum Leadership**
www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/
An online journal of news and summarised educational research published weekly during the school year. Delivered by Curriculum Corporation on behalf of all Australian ministers for education.⁴⁶⁸

⁴⁶⁰ Waverley Meadows Primary School, Performance and Development Culture Open Session, 12 March 2008.

⁴⁶¹ Mr P. Cole, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 5.

⁴⁶² School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁴⁶³ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁴⁶⁴ Associate Professor K. Hempenstall, Division of Psychology, School of Health Sciences, RMIT University, Appendix to Written Submission, June 2008, p. 6.

⁴⁶⁵ Education.au Limited, *About edna*, edna website, <<http://www.edna.edu.au/edna/go/about>>, accessed 10 July 2008.

⁴⁶⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Knowledge Bank*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/knowledgebank/default.asp>>, accessed 10 July 2008.

⁴⁶⁷ Australian Council for Educational Research, *EdResearch Online*, ACER website, <<http://cunningham.acer.edu.au/dbtw-wpd/sample/edresearch.htm>>, accessed 30 July 2008.

⁴⁶⁸ Curriculum Leadership, *About the journal*, Curriculum Leadership website, <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/leader/about_this_site,63.html>, accessed 10 July 2008.

The School Library Association of Victoria also noted that the shift towards digitised resources has increased the importance of teacher-librarians, placing them at the interface between their teaching colleagues and the digital world.⁴⁶⁹ The Committee agrees that teacher-librarians can make a valuable contribution to professional learning by helping teachers access resources relevant to their needs.

Learning from students

The Committee heard that students may also add valuable expertise to teacher professional learning within the school environment. Ms Lauren O'Grady, Head of Innovation in Middle Years, Caroline Springs College, told the Committee that her school has introduced a new initiative to train students as mentors for their teachers, known as the Students Educating Teachers Program. The program sets up partnerships between students and teachers to explore issues such as giving appropriate feedback, and the use of ICT. Ms O'Grady noted that while teachers may understand the reasoning behind the use of ICT in education, or 'the why', it is often the students who best understand the 'how'. Such partnerships therefore provide reciprocal opportunities to simultaneously enhance both student and teacher learning.⁴⁷⁰

Learning away from the school environment

The support for school-based professional learning in evidence to the inquiry was matched by a degree of scepticism regarding the value of 'traditional' approaches, where teachers are sent to courses or programs away from their schools. Many participants argued that activities undertaken away from the school typically do little to effect genuine professional learning, especially when evaluated in relation to their cost.⁴⁷¹ However, one participant cautioned that school-based professional learning should not become 'an end in itself'.⁴⁷² The Committee agrees that greater recognition of the value of school-based activities should not come at the expense of devaluing professional learning programs offered outside of schools.

The Committee heard that professional development activities that take teachers away from their schools have certain advantages. In practical terms, off-site programs can bring a large number of teachers together in a single space. This opens up access to leading presenters or international experts who may not be available to work with individual schools, and enables new ideas to be introduced efficiently to a wide audience.⁴⁷³ Off-site professional learning events also provide a valuable opportunity for teachers to network with like-minded colleagues from other schools.⁴⁷⁴

The Committee heard that there may be additional advantages to simply situating teacher learning in an unfamiliar physical environment. Some participants noted that the physical environment for professional learning serves an important function in making teachers feel valued and respected as professionals.⁴⁷⁵ Such environments may be easiest to create

⁴⁶⁹ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁴⁷⁰ Ms L. O'Grady, Head of Innovation in Middle Years and ICTEV Teacher of the Year 2007, Caroline Springs College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 29.

⁴⁷¹ For example, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 7; Glen Waverley Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr L. Mitchell, Head of Educational Services, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 25.

⁴⁷² Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 28.

⁴⁷³ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 3–4; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁷⁵ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

'I run a lot of professional development, and I have no doubt that one of the reasons that many teachers come along to the professional development sessions is as much for the social interaction and that chewing of the fat as it is to listen to the presentation...It is extremely rich.'

Ms Karen
Howden-Clarnette,
School Improvement Officer,
Grampians Regional Office,
Department of Education
and Early Childhood
Development

away from the distractions of the familiar school setting.⁴⁷⁶ Furthermore, new physical environments open up possibilities for teachers to work with specialised resources. For example, professional learning offered in centres such as the Peter McCallum Cancer Research Institute or Australian Synchrotron bring teachers into contact with cutting-edge resources and equipment that is not available in schools.⁴⁷⁷

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey suggested that off-site activities continue to play a significant role in professional learning for Victorian teachers. A high proportion (83%) of Victorian teachers reported having undertaken at least one program, course or conference away from their school in the 12 months prior to the survey.⁴⁷⁸ Most had undertaken more than one, with an average of 3.7 off-site programs, courses or conferences per teacher over the 12-month period.⁴⁷⁹ Almost as many teachers (79%) also indicated that they valued activities away from the school as a future professional learning activity.⁴⁸⁰ The figures for off-site activities undertaken by Victorian teachers were similar to those for all teachers across the six states and territories involved in the research.

Various opportunities for Victorian teachers to undertake professional learning away from their schools were discussed in evidence to the inquiry. The Committee agrees that such opportunities should continue to form part of the professional learning activities available to Victorian teachers. However, these should not be undertaken in isolation, but should be used to support and enhance ongoing school-based professional learning programs.

Subject association and network events

Subject associations play a significant role in professional learning for Victorian teachers, and provide a wide range of professional learning opportunities that remove teachers from the school environment. Representatives from some subject associations commented that subject association conferences in particular are highly valued events on the Victorian teacher professional learning calendar.⁴⁸¹ The Mathematical Association of Victoria, for example, commented that its annual conference has been running for over 40 years without the need for systemic support, and is recognised as a key professional learning event for mathematics teachers.⁴⁸²

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey supported the value of the professional learning offered by subject associations. It found that almost half the Victorian teachers surveyed (45%) had attended a subject association professional development event in the previous 12 months. Almost two-thirds (65%) of Victorian teachers gave a 'high' or 'very high' value rating to professional teaching association events as a desirable part of a professional development program.⁴⁸³ Furthermore, almost half (42%) placed a 'high' or 'very high' value on active ongoing involvement in a professional teaching association as a

⁴⁷⁶ Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁴⁷⁷ Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁸ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 59.

⁴⁷⁹ *ibid.*, p. 60.

⁴⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 130.

⁴⁸¹ Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 37; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, pp. 26–27.

⁴⁸² The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 6.

⁴⁸³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 130.

future professional development activity.⁴⁸⁴ The Committee notes that the above data includes both primary and secondary teachers. Given secondary teachers are more likely than primary teachers to participate in subject associations, disaggregated data may reveal even greater levels of support among secondary teachers for professional learning delivered by subject associations.

Victoria's two major teaching unions also deliver a variety of professional learning programs. The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) offers professional learning programs through AEU Education Services, as well as the Victorian Educational Leadership Consortium. In addition, it delivers a range of programs in partnership with universities and the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.⁴⁸⁵ The Victorian Independent Education Union also offers many professional learning opportunities, including conferences and seminars.⁴⁸⁶

As well as programs delivered by each union, the two major teaching unions in Victoria have collaborated to offer a range of professional learning opportunities through the Teacher Learning Network. Established in 1994, the Network is a not-for-profit company jointly owned by both the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) and the Victorian Independent Education Union. It also has formal financial partnerships with the Department through the Strategic Partnerships Program and individual partnerships with regional offices, as well as with the Catholic Education Office, Melbourne.⁴⁸⁷ The Network provides a range of professional learning opportunities to classroom teachers, school leaders, early childhood professionals and school support staff.⁴⁸⁸ It also publishes a well-regarded professional journal three times per year.⁴⁸⁹

Union teacher professional learning events returned lower participation rates in the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey. Only 13 per cent of Victorian teachers had undertaken a union professional learning activity in the 12 months prior to the survey,⁴⁹⁰ probably reflecting the smaller range of activities that teaching unions offer compared to subject associations. The Committee also notes that teachers undertaking programs through the Teacher Learning Network may not classify them as union events, as the Network itself is a separate incorporated company.

The Committee believes that subject association and teaching union programs make a vital contribution to teacher professional learning. Owned and operated by members of the teaching profession, these organisations are uniquely positioned to assess professional learning needs, as well as to capitalise on the skills and knowledge of their members in developing and delivering teacher professional learning programs. In addition, teacher association professional learning events provide teachers with an ideal opportunity to network with like-minded colleagues, as well as with other professionals in their discipline or area of specialisation.

University courses

Universities also offer a range of opportunities for Victorian teachers to undertake professional learning outside the school environment. The Committee notes that all eight Victorian universities with faculties of education currently offer a Graduate Certificate in Education or equivalent, which qualified teachers may undertake to further their professional learning. As well as traditional higher degree programs, the Committee heard that some

⁴⁸⁴ *ibid.*, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁵ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, pp. 1–2.

⁴⁸⁶ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁴⁸⁷ Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

⁴⁸⁸ *ibid.*

⁴⁸⁹ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁰ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 59.

Victorian universities also offer extensive weekend and holiday teacher professional learning programs.⁴⁹¹

Evidence to the inquiry revealed differing opinions regarding the value of university study as a form of teacher professional learning. Some comments arose in the inquiry to suggest that university study is sometimes regarded as too far removed from teaching practice.⁴⁹² On the other hand, the School of Education, University of South Australia, cautioned against a trend towards 'anti-intellectualism' present in some school and sector cultures, and argued that the best professional learning programs avoid such trends.⁴⁹³ Similarly, Professor Annette Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, argued that universities have an important role in teacher professional learning in bringing together theory and practice.⁴⁹⁴

The Committee agrees that university study provides teachers with the opportunity to explore deeper aspects of their practice and the associated theory than may be possible in practice-oriented professional learning programs. It also notes that university study does not necessarily take place entirely away from the school environment. The Committee heard that action research can be an effective component of post-graduate degree courses, combining the study of teaching practice within the school environment with an externally-delivered academic program.⁴⁹⁵

Industry placement

Teachers can further expand their professional learning beyond the school environment through secondment or placement in industry or community organisations. The Committee believes that industry experience may have a lot to offer teachers in their professional learning, whether in expanding or refreshing curriculum content, developing organisational skills, or supporting vocational education programs. One participant added that opportunities to work in industry are highly beneficial in enabling teachers to use specialised equipment and develop the industry-specific skills that their students will need to succeed.⁴⁹⁶

Another participant commented that it is especially important for teachers who have not previously worked outside of the education sector to be exposed to their disciplines in professional contexts.⁴⁹⁷ Nevertheless, the Committee notes that recent research challenges the myth that teachers typically have little first-hand knowledge of industries outside of the education sector, and simply go from school to university, then back into a school again. In 2007, the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) New Teachers Survey found that around half (50.6%) of the 1 185 new teachers surveyed had previously

⁴⁹¹ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 26.

⁴⁹² Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 28; Dottoressa V. Golding, Co.As.It. Italian Network Leader, Barwon South Western Region and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence in Teacher Leadership, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007), Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; T. Taylor 2000, 'Voices from the bush: Gippsland Gourmet PD and the culture and politics of teacher professional development in country Victoria', *Rural Society*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 41.

⁴⁹³ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁴ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 24.

⁴⁹⁵ Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, p. 3.

⁴⁹⁶ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁴⁹⁷ Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, p. 6.

been employed full-time in an industry other than teaching.⁴⁹⁸ This percentage has shown a gradual but steady increase since the Union's first New Teachers Survey in 2003.⁴⁹⁹

The Committee heard considerable support in the course of the inquiry for professional learning programs that have immersed teachers in industry environments. In particular, a high number of participants identified the Teacher Release to Industry Program (TRIP) as an exemplary model of industry-based teacher professional learning.⁵⁰⁰ TRIP offered primary and secondary teachers with at least five years experience the opportunity to spend 40 weeks in an industry placement. The placement was supported by a two-week induction and subsequent post-placement phase, and required teachers to develop workplace learning projects for use in schools. Participants also had access to support from university partners, and had the option to complete a Graduate Certificate in Education as part of the program.⁵⁰¹

One former participant in TRIP, now an assistant principal, acclaimed the program as 'probably one of the best things I've done'.⁵⁰² Professor Annette Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, also endorsed the program, noting that the opportunity for teachers to gain a credential through a partner university further supported its success.⁵⁰³ Three further participants advocated the reinstatement of TRIP among their recommendations.⁵⁰⁴

At the same time, the Committee heard that TRIP had the adverse effect of leading many teachers to leave education to take up positions in other industries. One participant commented that this led to modifications to the program to require teachers to return to their schools and demonstrate the educational value of the experience.⁵⁰⁵ However, it appears that this modification did not succeed in eliminating the risk of teacher loss. Although most teachers returned to education after participating in the program, the Committee heard that many were still attracted away to other careers.⁵⁰⁶

While recognising the value of providing teachers with first-hand insight into industry workplaces, the Committee suggests that it may be possible to achieve comparable results through smaller-scale programs than the TRIP model. Ms Anne-Marie Ryan, Executive Officer, Smart Geelong Local Learning and Employment Network, described how a smaller-scale program may also succeed in making teachers 'step out of their comfort zone':

Three years ago in Geelong we ran a mini teacher-release-to-industry program because we wanted to get teachers out into industry to understand what goes on, even just for a short while...When those people got out into industry and actually saw what was going on it completely shifted their entire way of thinking.⁵⁰⁷

⁴⁹⁸ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) 2007, *New Teachers Survey: For teachers who have been teaching for five years or less*, AEU (Victorian Branch), Abbotsford.

⁴⁹⁹ See Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), *Research*, AEU (Victorian Branch) website, <<http://www.aeuvic.asn.au/professional/research.html>>, accessed 1 September 2008.

⁵⁰⁰ For example, Mr G. Palmer, Assistant Principal, Ballarat High School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 19; Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 25; South Gippsland Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁵⁰¹ C. Perry and I. Ball 1995, *Teachers' Knowledge of the World of Work: Teacher placement in industry and links to the development of key competencies by students*, paper presented to the Australian Association for Research in Education Conference, AARE, Hobart.

⁵⁰² Mr G. Palmer, Assistant Principal, Ballarat High School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 19.

⁵⁰³ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 25.

⁵⁰⁴ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16; School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; School of Education, RMIT University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁵⁰⁵ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁶ V. Pertou, Member for Doncaster, *Victorian Parliamentary Debates*, Legislative Assembly, 12 October 2004, p. 919.

⁵⁰⁷ Ms A. Ryan, Executive Officer, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 17.

The Committee agrees that industry placement programs of shorter duration may be sufficient to provide teachers with an 'out of school' perspective, and enable them to draw on industry expertise to reinvigorate their knowledge and practice. Short-term industry placements also allow new learning to be applied more immediately to the school context, which may help create interest in deeper, more sustained industry partnerships over time, involving a variety of in-school and out-of-school activities. Furthermore, shorter programs reduce the disruption to schools that may be caused by long teacher absences.

The Committee heard that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recently implemented a smaller-scale version of TRIP for careers coordinators in government schools, known as the Industry Placement Program.⁵⁰⁸ The program offered twenty places in 2007, and again in 2008, for careers coordinators to undertake a three-week placement with employers in a range of industries, or in a group training company. During their placement, participating teachers were expected to develop a project to better inform young people of industry pathways.⁵⁰⁹ The Committee supports this project as an appropriate response to the potential strengths and risks of an industry placement program identified through the TRIP experience.

The Committee also notes that teachers may be exposed to industry perspectives through workshops or other 'one-off' industry professional learning events. Many professional learning programs offered through private training providers address industry skills that may be readily transferable to an education context, such as leadership, management or administration. These programs may provide teachers and school leaders both with access to new knowledge and opportunities to network with professionals from other industries. The Committee also heard that teachers may gain access to industry knowledge through closer partnerships with TAFE institutions, especially in light of their growing collaboration in the delivery of VET programs.⁵¹⁰

Integrating off-site and school-based professional learning

The Committee heard that the effectiveness of professional learning activities undertaken away from the school will depend on how well they are integrated with school-based professional learning and teaching practice. A strong theme to emerge throughout the inquiry is that it is important to provide teachers who attend off-site professional learning with time and support to apply their new learning once they are back in the classroom.⁵¹¹ Balwyn High School provided a model developed by noted American educationalists Dr Bruce Joyce and Dr Beverley Showers, which illustrates how off-site professional learning may be incorporated into teaching practice. This model describes professional learning as a five-step process:

- 1. Presentation of theory or description of new skill or behaviour**
Typically thirty minutes to one or two hours in length, provided in a one-way delivery mode to a passive audience.
- 2. Demonstration or modelling of the new strategy or skill**
Also one-way, with no audience action required.

⁵⁰⁸ Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁵⁰⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Industry Placement Program*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/sensecyouth/careertrans/industryplacement.htm>>, accessed 14 May 2008.

⁵¹⁰ Victorian TAFE Association, Written Submission, November 2007, p. 4.

⁵¹¹ Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 45; Mr K. Lewry, Principal, Yarragon Primary School, Written Submission, May 2008, p. 1; Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 8; Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)/Editure, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr W. Morgan, Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 12.

3. Initial practice in a protected or simulated setting

Audience tries out the new skill, most often in the workshop session.

4. Feedback about performance of the practice

Prompt, structured and open-ended.

5. Coaching

*Follow-up provided as the new idea or skill is being applied in classrooms.*⁵¹²

The Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, also argued that effective professional learning programs will move through a multi-stage model, beginning with the explanation and demonstration of a new skill, followed by practice and follow-up in a school context.⁵¹³ The Committee believes that this process should also include reflection by the teacher on the impact the activity has had on their practice, as part of the cycle of action and reflection that underpins teachers' ongoing professional learning throughout their careers.

As well as feeding into individual teacher professional learning processes, the Committee heard that off-site activities can be used to support collaborative professional learning within schools. One participant described off-site activities as an essential 'starting point' for teacher professional learning that can then be developed and enhanced by professional learning teams within the school.⁵¹⁴ Another suggested that off-site and school-based professional learning may be integrated through a 'commissioning' approach, where a learning need is identified in the school and teams of teachers are charged with undertaking research to address it. The teams may choose to include off-site activities as part of their investigations, but are then required to feed their learning back into a school-based committee.⁵¹⁵

The Committee heard that attendance at off-site programs is most likely to be successfully integrated with school-based professional learning when teachers are sent to external professional learning events in teams, not as individuals.⁵¹⁶ One professional learning provider told the Committee that her organisation involves at least two teachers from each participating school in their professional learning programs, wherever possible.⁵¹⁷ One participant commented that school budgets often do not allow for professional learning to be undertaken in pairs.⁵¹⁸ However, the Committee notes that it may be more worthwhile for schools to invest in one joint off-site activity than two individual events.

Other participants suggested that professional learning providers may also have a role in ensuring that the off-site programs they deliver are effective when teachers return to their schools. Some providers told the Committee that follow-up with schools is built into their programs, either through ongoing phone or email support,⁵¹⁹ or even school visits in the case of one consultant.⁵²⁰ One teacher supported this approach, commenting that attending a program and 'not receiving follow-up once back in the school from the person who inspired you' can make it especially difficult to translate the new learning into practice.⁵²¹

⁵¹² Adapted from Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁵¹³ Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁵¹⁴ Supplementary information provided by Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, March 2008.

⁵¹⁵ Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 29.

⁵¹⁶ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 3; School of Education, RMIT University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; P. Cole 2004, *Professional Development: A great way to avoid change*, Seminar Series no. 140, Incorporated Association of Registered Teachers of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 12.

⁵¹⁷ Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 46.

⁵¹⁸ Supplementary information provided by Mr D. Williams, Black Douglas Professional Education Services, March 2008.

⁵¹⁹ Ms E. Kinns, Project Manager, Gould Group, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 44; Ms A. Boulic, Communiq'Arte, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

⁵²⁰ Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 40.

⁵²¹ Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

The Committee agrees that follow-up within the school environment is essential to ensure that professional learning activities undertaken away from the school are effective. The Committee believes that this is most likely to occur if off-site activities are integrated with an effective school-based professional learning program, enabling teachers to discuss and reflect on off-site experiences with their colleagues. In this way, professional learning activities undertaken outside the school can be used to support and enrich the ongoing learning that occurs within the school environment.

Summary and recommendations

The above discussion reflects the wide range of professional learning that teachers may undertake, both in terms of its content and modes of delivery. In addition to general priorities relating to curriculum and pedagogy, evidence to the inquiry revealed several further content areas in which teachers may seek to develop their expertise. The Committee acknowledges the potential importance of all of these areas, and encourages schools and systems to ensure that Victorian teachers have access to a variety of professional learning to enable them to pursue relevant interests and respond to emerging needs.

With respect to modes of delivery for teacher professional learning, the Committee strongly supports the current emphasis on school-based professional learning programs. The Committee believes that such programs reflect what is known about effective pedagogies for teacher professional learning, allowing new knowledge to be constructed by teachers in the context of their actual teaching practice. They also enable teachers to draw on their colleagues, recognised as one of the most valuable sources of teacher expertise. Approaches involving professional learning teams are likely to be especially effective in enabling teachers to work collaboratively to extend and consolidate their learning through collegial discussion.

At the same time, the Committee believes that school-based programs will be most effective when they are supplemented by knowledge from beyond the school. In addition to school-based professional learning activities, teachers should be provided with ample opportunities to tap into the wealth of expertise beyond the school environment. Evidence revealed that schools may adopt a variety of strategies to integrate knowledge from external sources into school-based programs, either through attendance at off-site events, or by bringing outside expertise into the school.

RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1. That the Victorian Government and individual schools promote and facilitate access to teacher professional learning that addresses a variety of content, including:

- high quality curriculum and pedagogy, including the development of subject area specialisations;
- student engagement and behaviour;
- supporting students with special learning needs;
- supporting student transitions;
- use of information and communications technology;
- student wellbeing;
- teacher wellbeing;
- parent and community engagement; and
- ongoing and emerging government initiatives.

3.2. That the Victorian Government and individual schools prioritise school-based modes of delivery for teacher professional learning, including:

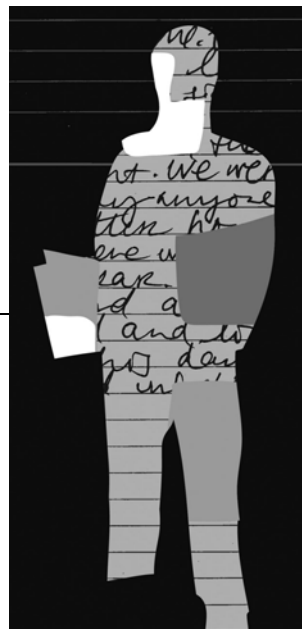
- action research;
- peer observation;
- mentoring; and
- professional learning teams.

3.3. That the Victorian Government and individual schools ensure that school-based professional learning is supplemented with input from external sources, by:

- bringing sources of external expertise into schools, including the development of professional learning coaching and consultancy roles; and
- providing opportunities for teams or individual teachers to attend off-site professional learning activities, which then inform school-based programs.

Chapter 4

Implementing the policy framework in schools



Responsibility for planning, resourcing and monitoring teacher professional learning in Victorian schools lies largely at the school level, as part of the Victorian Government policy of self-managing schools. A recurring theme in evidence to the inquiry was therefore that a supportive school environment is an essential element of effective strategies for teacher professional learning. The effectiveness of the policy framework and various teacher professional learning activities described in the previous chapters will depend on how well they are implemented and supported at the school level.

Supporting teacher professional learning within the school relies on a number of key factors. Schools must have effective organisational structures in place for making the best use of available resources for teacher professional learning, and must take a strategic approach to planning and evaluating professional learning programs. Most importantly, however, the Committee found that schools must create an organisational climate in which both teacher and student learning occurs continually in a learning community. This involves integrating teacher professional learning into the very culture of the school.

Making the most of professional learning resources

An ongoing theme throughout the inquiry was that time is one of the most important resources for effective teacher professional learning.⁵²² However, evidence suggests that this essential resource may be in short supply in some Victorian schools. Lack of time was the factor most likely to be perceived as a barrier to professional learning by Victorian teachers in the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey. Just over half (52%) the Victorian teachers surveyed identified time to attend professional development activities as a barrier to participation, while slightly fewer (45%) identified the timing of the activities themselves as problematic.⁵²³ The Victorian Independent Education Union also reported

⁵²² For example, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 8; Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 9; Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; South Gippsland Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 7; Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11.

⁵²³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 6.

that its members ranked 'workload' and 'inadequate time' the highest among the factors inhibiting teacher professional learning in a recent survey.⁵²⁴

Another recurring comment throughout the inquiry was that the financial resources available for teacher professional learning are also limited. In the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey, insufficient funding was identified by 44 per cent of Victorian teachers as a barrier to professional learning.⁵²⁵ Further criticism of the resources available for teacher professional learning came from the two major Victorian teaching unions, which claimed that the funding available for professional learning is not sufficient for effective programs to be implemented.⁵²⁶ Another participant commented on an 'uncomfortable disparity' between expectations that teachers will undertake professional learning, and the capacity of schools to provide funding to support it.⁵²⁷

Pressure on both time and financial resources for teacher professional learning is compounded by the need to employ casual relief teachers (CRTs) to replace teachers attending professional learning during school hours. Several participants identified funding for the employment of CRTs as a critical factor in implementing effective teacher professional learning.⁵²⁸ At a daily rate of \$277.10,⁵²⁹ the Committee recognises that the cost of employing a CRT may often be more than the cost of the professional learning program itself.⁵³⁰

Even if schools are able to meet the cost of employing CRTs, they may experience further difficulties in locating them. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that the availability of CRTs posed a barrier to professional learning for a third of Victorian teachers,⁵³¹ and evidence to the inquiry revealed that this may be especially problematic in non-metropolitan regions.⁵³² Furthermore, some participants commented that the preparation and follow-up required for teacher absences, even when covered by a CRT, is a further barrier to teacher professional learning.⁵³³

Allocation of both time and financial resources for teacher professional learning is primarily undertaken in Victoria at the school level. Aside from the new requirement that teachers must undertake 100 hours of professional learning every five years, the amount of time teachers spend on professional learning is largely at the discretion of the school or individual teacher. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development enables government schools to determine their own level of professional learning expenditure from global funding received through the Student Resource Package. The Victorian Independent Education Union reported that expenditure on teacher professional learning also varies

⁵²⁴ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 11.

⁵²⁵ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 6.

⁵²⁶ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 8; Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁵²⁷ Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁵²⁸ Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Ms C. Leonard, Reading Recovery Tutor, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3; Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 11; Meeting with Ms C. O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Australian College of Educators, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

⁵²⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Ministerial Orders*, EduWeb website, <<http://www.eduweb.vic.gov.au/hrweb/employcond/res/tso.htm>>, accessed 18 September 2008.

⁵³⁰ Based on analysis of one-day professional learning programs in the VIT Pdi Online database, 29 October 2008.

⁵³¹ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 103.

⁵³² For example, Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4; Mr G. Palmer, Assistant Principal, Ballarat High School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 7; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16; Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 9.

⁵³³ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 8; Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

within the independent sector, from well-resourced schools to those that rely on funding from central programs.⁵³⁴

The Committee analysed 60 Annual Reports for 2007 from a random sample of Victorian government, Catholic and independent schools, to compare their expenditure and activities related to teacher professional learning. The Committee found that expenditure on professional learning varied enormously across the schools in the sample. Reported expenditure ranged from \$77.00 per teacher in an Eastern Metropolitan independent secondary school, to \$3 328.75 per teacher in a Northern Metropolitan government secondary school that placed an especially high priority on teacher professional learning. Given that this sample represents only a very small proportion of Victorian schools, the Committee expects that the actual variation in professional learning expenditure across Victoria is likely to be even wider.

However, the Committee believes that the level of expenditure should not necessarily be taken as an indication of the extent of the professional learning that is occurring in a school. Schools with comparatively low expenditure on professional learning may in fact be undertaking extensive school-based professional learning programs which do not incur significant course fees or other expenses. Similarly, schools with high levels of professional learning expenditure may prioritise high-cost individual programs such as university study or external workshops.

As noted in the previous chapter, evidence to the inquiry showed a shift away from off-site teacher professional learning activities that place high demands on time and financial resources through course fees, travel and teacher replacement. Instead, Victorian teachers are embracing school-based models of professional learning, which better utilise the time and resources available within the school. At the same time, the Committee heard that school-based programs should not be motivated by a desire to decrease professional learning costs, and also need to be adequately resourced to be effective.⁵³⁵ The following discussion explores how schools may make the best use of resources available to them to develop and deliver effective teacher professional learning programs.

Using time effectively

The Committee heard that teachers generally prefer for professional learning to take place during the school day. In the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey, *during school hours* received the highest level of support (88%) from Victorian teachers out of all the possible times in which professional learning may occur.⁵³⁶ The two major Victorian teaching unions endorsed this view. The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) argued that time during the school day is necessary for effective professional learning to occur.⁵³⁷ The Victorian Independent Education Union recommended that schools should provide flexible opportunities for professional learning during the school year, to communicate that it is 'a significant and integral part of the school yearly plan'.⁵³⁸

The Committee agrees that allowing time for professional learning within the school day is a way of communicating to teachers that it is an essential part of their work. In addition, the Committee believes that many effective teacher professional learning opportunities arise during teachers' day-to-day tasks. As shown in the previous chapter, school-based professional learning activities such as mentoring, peer observation and action research are being increasingly recognised as highly effective. All these activities must necessarily take

⁵³⁴ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁵³⁵ Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁵³⁶ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 136.

⁵³⁷ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16.

⁵³⁸ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 7.

place during hours of normal school operation. The Committee notes that current industrial agreements for Victorian teachers allow scope for professional learning to occur during school hours, by providing for a certain number of weekly non-teaching working hours.⁵³⁹

'The role of a teacher is complicated...It is important that professional learning is part of the teaching role and not something that is pursued after every other aspect of teaching has been completed.'

Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria

However, the Committee heard the view that it is often hard to find time for teacher professional learning during normal school hours. Many participants in the inquiry agreed that teachers have extremely busy working lives that leave little time for professional learning.⁵⁴⁰ The Victorian Independent Education Union expressed concern at the 'enormous increase' in expectations on teachers to undertake school-based professional learning activities such as mentoring, without additional time being made available.⁵⁴¹ Another participant commented that many teachers feel that growing administrative requirements have resulted in huge increases to their day-to-day workloads.⁵⁴² This view was supported in a written submission from a year 3 teacher, which focused on the impact of new reporting requirements on overall teacher workload and wellbeing.⁵⁴³

The Committee notes that Victorian schools and systems are taking steps to better manage teacher workloads, including the employment of dedicated staff to assume responsibility for non-teaching issues such as administration or student welfare.⁵⁴⁴ In addition, continual improvement to the efficiency of administrative processes, especially through the use of new technologies, may serve to reduce the time needed for administration. The Committee supports recent initiatives to provide Victorian teachers with assistance, both human and technological, to reduce the time they need to spend on non-teaching tasks.

In addition, evidence suggests that the schools that are most successful in supporting teacher professional learning do so by finding ways to 'use existing time differently', and to integrate professional learning with teachers' day-to-day work.⁵⁴⁵ A number of participants suggested that it is important for schools to designate specific opportunities in the working day in which teacher professional learning can be prioritised.⁵⁴⁶ While this does not mean that professional learning is regarded as separate from other aspects of a teachers' work, it remains a conscious and deliberate process linked to well-defined improvement strategies and learning goals.

The principal of one leading school in the Performance and Development Culture Program explained how the school has integrated professional learning into teachers' day-to-day work. Examples of professional learning opportunities offered in the school include: weekly professional learning team meetings; weekly professional readings to be discussed

⁵³⁹ *Teachers (Victorian Government Schools) Conditions of Employment Award 2001*, Award no. AW806227, Variation PR966060. Cited in *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2004*, p. 23.

⁵⁴⁰ For example, Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 5; Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 28; Mr J. Delaney, Primary Education Consultant, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 34.

⁵⁴¹ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁴² Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 25.

⁵⁴³ Mrs S. Elliott, Year 3 Teacher, Written Submission, May 2008, p. 1.

⁵⁴⁴ In 2008, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development introduced a new initiative to provide a teaching assistant to all Victorian secondary schools, to reduce the need for teachers to undertake administrative duties. Recent initiatives to provide schools with dedicated student welfare officers may also reduce the proportion of non-teaching tasks in a teacher's workload.

⁵⁴⁵ N. J. Johnson 2003, *Perspectives on Education: Working in Teams*, Department of Education and Training (Victoria), Melbourne, p. 2.

⁵⁴⁶ Dr J. Anderson, Representative, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 14; Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008, pp. 5–6; Dr G. Calnin, Director of Policy and Research, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, pp. 3–4.

informally among staff; and at least two 15-minute peer coaching and observation sessions per teacher per term. In addition, the school has implemented various school-based professional learning programs involving university partners or other sources of external support. Off-site professional learning activities are undertaken rarely, and always by teams rather than individuals so that they may feed back into the day-to-day professional learning program.

The principal emphasised that these activities do not require her to 'micro-manage' her staff to participate in professional learning at particular times. Instead, the school has successfully established a culture where participation in professional learning is expected and valued by all staff as part of their professional role. She also remarked that the emphasis on professional learning may occasionally be reduced when major events such as the annual school concert place unusual demands on teacher workloads. However, it is quickly reinstated when the normal routine returns, and is seen as one of the core ongoing activities of the school.⁵⁴⁷

Making time for collaborative professional learning

Another challenge identified in the evidence was finding time during normal school hours for teachers to work together on collaborative professional learning activities. One participant observed that 'traditional' school organisational structures usually preclude collaborative professional learning during the school day.⁵⁴⁸ Another commented that it is especially difficult to find time for collaborative professional learning in secondary school timetables.⁵⁴⁹

The Committee heard that some schools choose to make time for collaborative teacher professional learning by modifying hours of student attendance. One Victorian school leader told the Committee that his school finishes classes at 2.00pm on Mondays to allow three hours of collegial professional learning.⁵⁵⁰ A submission from the principal of an award-winning South Australian school also identified early school closure one day per week as critical to the success of her school's professional learning program.⁵⁵¹ Another Victorian principal reported having sometimes started the school day later in order to conduct a morning professional learning session.⁵⁵²

At the same time, the Committee heard that modifying hours of student attendance may contravene departmental policy for Victorian government schools.⁵⁵³ The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development states in its Schools Reference Guide that government schools should provide a minimum of 300 minutes (five hours) instruction daily. The Guide also states that in general, instruction is to be undertaken between 8.30am and 3.30pm.⁵⁵⁴ The Guide makes no specific reference to modifying hours of attendance for teacher professional learning, but allows early closure for staff meetings or conferences in 'exceptional circumstances'.⁵⁵⁵

'...one of the biggest challenges is to make that regular time within the school day that is precious and does not get chewed up by the administration or the principal suddenly wanting us to dash off to something else. It has to be time that there is sort of a boundary around.'

Dr Judy Anderson,
Representative,
Mathematics Education
Research Group Australasia

⁵⁴⁷ Waverley Meadows Primary School, Performance and Development Culture Open Session, 12 March 2008.

⁵⁴⁸ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁵⁴⁹ Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁵⁰ Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 42.

⁵⁵¹ Ms M. Asikas, Principal, Seaford 6–12 School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 1.

⁵⁵² Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁵³ *ibid.*

⁵⁵⁴ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., 'School Hours and Dates', s. 4.3, *Schools Reference Guide*, DEECD, Melbourne.

⁵⁵⁵ *ibid.*

Evidence to the inquiry also suggests that many Victorian schools choose to undertake collaborative professional learning in regular designated sessions at the end of the school day.⁵⁵⁶ In particular, the Committee heard that some schools have chosen to reassign time previously spent on after-school staff meetings to enable teachers to work together on team-based professional learning.⁵⁵⁷ The Committee heard that a professional learning team meeting must avoid the distractions of organisational issues and 'administrivia', and maintain its focus on working collaboratively towards identified learning goals.⁵⁵⁸ This may include input from external presenters where necessary to achieve the learning goals of the school or team.

The Committee notes that attendance at after-school professional learning sessions is accommodated within current working hours for Victorian teachers. The current industrial agreement states that Victorian teachers may be required to attend scheduled staff meetings of up to two hours per week adjacent to the normal school day.⁵⁵⁹ They may also be required to attend additional activities outside normal hours of attendance of up to one hour per week, subject to consultation.⁵⁶⁰

The most frequent objection to after-school professional learning voiced during the inquiry was that the quality of the learning experience may be compromised. A significant number of participants expressed concern that teachers are seldom in an optimal frame of mind for learning after a busy school day.⁵⁶¹ However, the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that after school hours during the school term was the second most preferred time for professional learning for Victorian teachers.⁵⁶² The Committee also heard that teachers can be motivated to overcome tiredness if they feel that a professional learning activity is worthwhile.⁵⁶³

Another leading Performance and Development Culture school demonstrated how after-school professional learning can create time for collaborative professional learning in a secondary school environment. In addition to classroom observation sessions during the school day, the school schedules regular after-school collegial professional learning activities, structured around the additional hours adjacent to the school day specified in the industrial agreement. Cross-faculty professional learning teams of five to six teachers meet once every three-week period, either after school or in breakfast meetings. Team meetings are governed by 'protocols' such as designated speaking times, to ensure that all teachers participate and to keep meetings to their allocated duration.⁵⁶⁴

The school also uses the optional one-hour after-school activity specified in the industrial agreement to organise professional learning workshops, either delivered by teachers within the school or by external presenters. The school reported a strong uptake of these

⁵⁵⁶ For example, Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 13; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 31; Ms M. Asikas, Principal, Seaford 6–12 School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 2.

⁵⁵⁷ Performance and Development Culture Open Sessions: Waverley Meadows Primary School, 12 March 2008; and Hampton Park Primary School, 16 April 2008.

⁵⁵⁸ Mr L. Mitchell, Head of Educational Services, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 35.

⁵⁵⁹ *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2004*, p. 27.

⁵⁶⁰ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁵⁶¹ Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 5; Ms W. Baker, Principal, Pleasant Street Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6; Dr G. Calnin, Director of Policy and Research, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁶² Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

⁵⁶³ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Education Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 13.

⁵⁶⁴ Performance and Development Culture Open Session, St Helena Secondary College, 6 March 2008.

additional sessions among its teachers, and a positive response to the professional learning program overall. The Committee commends the school on its approach as a means of maximising the opportunities that teachers have to benefit from collaborative professional learning within their normal working hours.

Pupil-free days

Pupil-free days provide further opportunities for teachers to undertake collaborative professional learning during the school year. When the inquiry commenced, Victorian government schools were allocated four pupil-free days annually. This included the first day of school, which some participants noted was of little value for teacher professional learning.⁵⁶⁵ Another added that the last day of school was often designated as a pupil-free day as well, although also seldom used for professional learning activities.⁵⁶⁶ The Committee heard that the amalgamation over time of pupil-free days for different purposes, including assessment and reporting, had effectively reduced the pupil-free days available to Victorian schools for teacher professional learning.⁵⁶⁷

In May 2008, a new industrial agreement changed the allocation of pupil-free days for teachers in Victorian government schools. The total number of pupil-free days remains at four, but three will occur consecutively at the beginning of the school year, with an additional day for assessment and reporting towards the end of the second term. School holiday time for teachers will not be reduced, as students will start the school year three days later.

The possibility of moving pupil-free days to the start of the year was discussed in evidence received early in the inquiry. One participant supported the idea of students returning to school later than their teachers, to give teachers time to plan together.⁵⁶⁸ Others expressed concern that having all schools take pupil-free days simultaneously may create undue demand for popular professional learning providers in a short space of time.⁵⁶⁹ The Committee notes that the new agreement enables schools to apply to move one pupil-free day to a more convenient time in the school year, to accommodate the need to engage preferred presenters.⁵⁷⁰

Other participants commented that the number of pupil-free days available to Victorian teachers is currently insufficient.⁵⁷¹ The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) recommended at least two additional pupil-free days for Victorian government schools. It also suggested that further pupil-free days should be allocated to schools when new government initiatives are introduced, such as the Victorian Essential Learning Standards (VELS) or the new reporting system.⁵⁷² Other participants argued that pupil-free days are

'I do not think teaching is any different to any other industry, and everyone is time poor... I suspect that we will find that everybody is clamouring for some way of making time that is not there.'

Ms Sue Goodbourn,
Acting Head,
TAFE Development Unit,
University of Ballarat

⁵⁶⁵ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 13; Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 15.

⁵⁶⁶ Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁶⁷ Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁵⁶⁸ Mr J. Burt, Principal, Ballarat Specialist School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 15.

⁵⁶⁹ Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 15; Ms L. Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁰ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), *Frequently Asked Questions – Schools Agreement 2008*, AEU (Victorian Branch) website, <http://www.aeuvic.asn.au/campaigns/schools_agreement_08/resources/1211261922_21528.html>, accessed 7 July 2008.

⁵⁷¹ Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 13; Mr W. Morgan, Principal, Mount Clear Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 9; Ms K. Simpkin, Assistant Deputy Principal and PD Coordinator, Damascus College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 5.

⁵⁷² Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16.

particularly important for small schools, especially those in rural and regional areas.⁵⁷³ One rural school principal recommended that pupil-free days should be increased to at least eight days for schools where there is only one teacher, or six in schools where the principal has a full-time teaching load.⁵⁷⁴

The Committee acknowledges that the existing pupil-free days in Victorian government schools provide a valuable opportunity for teachers to work together on collaborative planning and professional learning. The Committee believes that the revised structure of pupil-free days in Victoria will see improvements in the use of this time for collaborative professional learning, rather than for other tasks that may arise through the school year. These days may be complemented by the cultivation of other opportunities for collaborative professional learning during teachers' normal working hours, as described elsewhere in this chapter.

Professional learning leave

Paid study leave programs provide an additional opportunity for teachers to access time for professional learning during the school year. The Victorian Independent Education Union supported paid leave for individual teacher study in its recommendations. Consistent with its published professional learning policy for schools, the Union recommended that schools provide teachers completing university qualifications with at least five paid study leave days per year, plus paid leave for all assessments and examinations.⁵⁷⁵ Similarly, the Australian College of Educators promoted the provision of 'reasonable' periods of paid study leave for teachers as one of its core recommendations.⁵⁷⁶

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development gives teachers in Victorian government schools a significant opportunity to access leave for professional learning through the Teacher Professional Leave Program. Individuals or groups of teachers may apply to undertake between four and ten weeks paid leave per year, taken in a block or in segments.⁵⁷⁷ The leave may be used for a range of professional learning activities, including action research, leading a change project, mentoring, short-term placement in another school, or formal training or study.⁵⁷⁸ A representative of the Department told the Committee that around 2 000 Victorian teachers have participated in the program to date.⁵⁷⁹ To ensure equity, teachers should not expect to participate in the program more than once.⁵⁸⁰

The Committee heard evidence to suggest that the Teacher Professional Leave Program is supported by the education community. A representative of the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) described Teacher Professional Leave as a 'good first step' in giving teachers time to undertake quality professional learning.⁵⁸¹ One Victorian principal told the Committee that the Teacher Professional Leave Program is 'the single most effective PD that I have ever had a staff member involved in'. The principal commented that the program had been effective because it had provided a team of teachers with time to undertake

⁵⁷³ Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p1; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁴ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

⁵⁷⁵ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁵⁷⁶ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁵⁷⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Teacher Professional Leave*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/teacher/tpl.htm>>, accessed 8 July 2008.

⁵⁷⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Undertaking Teacher Professional Leave*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/teacher/tplprog.htm>>, accessed 8 July 2008.

⁵⁷⁹ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 13.

⁵⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁵⁸¹ Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 22.

significant research, and use it to develop ‘an absolutely brilliant’ year 9 program for the school.⁵⁸²

The Department has also provided funding for some teachers undertaking professional learning leave to attend a preparatory program, the Professional Leave and Teacher Outcomes (PLATO) Program. The PLATO Program is a four-day course providing general training and resources to help teachers complete their professional leave projects successfully, delivered by the Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships.⁵⁸³ Early evaluations suggest that the PLATO Program is highly valued by teachers commencing professional leave, with 378 applications received for the 200 places available in the program’s inaugural year in 2008.⁵⁸⁴ The Committee believes that the PLATO Program may be a valuable mechanism for ensuring that teachers get the best possible learning out of their professional leave experiences.

Teachers in Victorian government schools have an additional opportunity to engage in long-term study or professional renewal by accessing sabbatical leave. Like all Victorian public sector employees, teachers in government schools may work for four years at 80 per cent pay, and then take the fifth as a paid year off.⁵⁸⁵ However, one participant commented that teachers seldom access this opportunity due to financial reasons.⁵⁸⁶

Professional learning outside school hours

Another response to the difficulty of fitting professional learning within teachers’ busy working lives is to undertake professional learning outside of teachers’ normal working hours. The Committee heard that many teacher professional learning activities currently take place during weekends and school holidays periods.⁵⁸⁷ One consultant reported that his weekend workshops are often over-subscribed by teachers eager to take the opportunity to improve their practice.⁵⁸⁸ The Australian College of Educators commended the many teachers ‘who have regularly and consistently given generously of their own time’ to be involved in professional learning activities.⁵⁸⁹

On the other hand, the Committee heard arguments against professional learning outside school operating hours. The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) told the Committee that professional learning during school holidays, weekends or evenings receives ‘almost no support (and often vehement opposition)’ among Victorian teachers.⁵⁹⁰ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that fewer than one-third (29%) of Victorian teachers preferred professional learning to be offered during the first or last days of school holidays. This was a considerably lower percentage than for all

‘We are getting 150 to 200 teachers every Saturday who are prepared to give up their own time at weekends and to pay for being there...’

They do want this professional knowledge because they know it is going to make their job easier.’

Mr David Hornsby,
Consultant

⁵⁸² Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 15.

⁵⁸³ Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, *Teacher Professional Leave (PLATO)*, ACEP website, <<http://www.acep.net.au/programs/teacher-professional-leave-plato>>, accessed 22 October 2008.

⁵⁸⁴ SuccessWorks 2008, Progress Report, *Evaluation of Teacher Professional Leave (2006/7)*, report commissioned by the Department of Education (Victoria), DoE, Melbourne.

⁵⁸⁵ *Victorian Government Schools Agreement 2004*, p. 27.

⁵⁸⁶ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 12.

⁵⁸⁷ For example, Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, pp. 25–26; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 13; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁸ Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 7.

⁵⁸⁹ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, pp. 1–2.

⁵⁹⁰ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16.

teachers across the six states and territories surveyed (41%).⁵⁹¹

The Committee also heard that professional learning during school holidays may be unsuitable for teachers with family commitments. Some participants commented that family commitments may especially impact on the time that female teachers have available for professional learning outside their normal working hours.⁵⁹² Others noted that professional learning should consider family commitments for all teachers, irrespective of their gender.⁵⁹³ The Committee agrees that balance between work and family commitments is an important consideration for both male and female teachers, as for all professionals.

Nevertheless, the Committee heard that there is some complexity involved in defining exactly when teachers' working hours begin and end. This was especially demonstrated in conflicting perceptions about school holidays raised in evidence to the inquiry. Some participants viewed school holidays as time for teachers to recover from, or be recompensed for, the long working hours undertaken during the school term.⁵⁹⁴ On the other hand, Mr Andrew Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, suggested that school holidays may be regarded simply as times in which teachers continue working away from the classroom.⁵⁹⁵ During interstate investigations, the Committee heard that this view has been espoused in policy in the Australian Capital Territory. The Territory has adopted the term 'stand-down' instead of 'holiday' periods, to better distinguish schools holidays from teachers' annual recreational leave entitlements.⁵⁹⁶

The Committee also contrasts the prevailing expectations in Victoria with current regulations for teacher professional learning for Scottish teachers. The Scottish professional learning policy states that teachers must undertake their mandated 35 annual hours of professional learning activities *outside* their contracted working week. The policy comments that there will still be many professional learning opportunities offered to teachers during the school year, but that these will not count towards the 35-hour annual minimum.⁵⁹⁷ At the same time, the Scottish policy recognises that it will not be possible for some school-based professional learning activities to occur outside of school hours. It therefore encourages schools and teachers to take advantage of the flexibility of the contracted working week when planning professional learning programs.⁵⁹⁸

The industrial agreement for Victorian teachers does not set out explicit provisions for teacher work during school holiday periods, but entitles teachers to twenty days of recreation leave each calendar year, to be taken during school holidays.⁵⁹⁹ Therefore, teachers are likely to have some days available during school holiday periods besides their formal leave entitlement. The Committee expects that some teachers will choose to use this

⁵⁹¹ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

⁵⁹² Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 24; Associate Professor M. Cooper, Coordinator, Bachelor of Education Program, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 32; Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 7; Group Training Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 9.

⁵⁹³ Mr D. Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4; Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁵⁹⁴ Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 3; Dr G. Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4; Ms L. Devlin, Principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 15.

⁵⁹⁵ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 37.

⁵⁹⁶ Meeting with representatives of the ACT Department of Education and Training, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

⁵⁹⁷ Scottish Executive 2003, *Continuing Professional Development: Teaching in Scotland*, The Scottish Government, Edinburgh, p. 13.

⁵⁹⁸ *ibid.*

⁵⁹⁹ *Teachers (Victorian Government Schools) Conditions of Employment Award 2001*, Award no. AW806227, Variation PR966060.

time for professional learning that could not be undertaken during the school term. The Committee heard that teachers generally do engage in professional learning during their holidays for a range of reasons, either through individual preference or through negotiation with their school.⁶⁰⁰

The Australian Government Summer Schools for Teachers Program, implemented in January 2008, provided an interesting example of teacher responses to a school holiday professional learning program. The program offered high-performing teachers the opportunity to participate in a 10-day intensive residential professional learning program focused on their subject area or specialisation. The Australian College of Educators told the Committee that the program attracted an unexpected level of interest, despite requiring teachers to give up ten days of their Christmas break.⁶⁰¹

Although participating teachers received a \$5 000 (taxable) bonus, only 18 per cent indicated this had been important to them in applying for the program.⁶⁰² Instead, the Committee heard that most participants indicated that the opportunity itself, to participate in a high-quality professional learning experience with other high-performing educators, was sufficient to motivate them to apply.⁶⁰³ International investigations revealed that high-quality professional learning delivered over the summer break has also been highly successful for teachers in Scotland and the Canadian province of Ontario.

The Committee believes that school holiday periods offer an opportunity for teachers to access significant or sustained professional learning activities that might not be possible during the school term. At the same time, it does not believe that professional learning outside school hours should be mandatory, but should be negotiated between teachers and their schools. As noted above, many of the most effective forms of professional learning will necessarily occur during school hours, and these should be supported as the mainstays of an effective teacher professional learning program.

Local delivery

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey showed that another barrier to professional learning for some Victorian teachers is a lack of suitable activities in their area. This was demonstrated particularly strongly for teachers in rural and remote Victorian schools. While *suitability of available professional development activities* was seen as a barrier to professional learning for 34 per cent of Victorian teachers in the survey, this figure jumped to 58 per cent for Victorian teachers in rural and remote locations.⁶⁰⁴

A common complaint to emerge in the inquiry was that the lack of local activities means that professional learning for rural and regional teachers often involves extensive travel.⁶⁰⁵ This creates obvious pressures on professional learning resources in terms of time and cost. In addition, the Committee heard that lengthy travel at the beginning and end of a long day creates occupational health and safety issues which are 'a real concern' for rural and remote school communities.⁶⁰⁶ The Committee also notes that tiredness from travel may

⁶⁰⁰ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 37.

⁶⁰¹ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁶⁰² *ibid.*

⁶⁰³ *ibid.*

⁶⁰⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 102.

⁶⁰⁵ For example, Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 19; Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 19; Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; St John's Lutheran Primary School Council, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; St John's Lutheran Primary School Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁶ Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

affect teachers' engagement with the professional development activities they are undertaking.

One suggested response to this difficulty is to bring professional learning providers out into non-metropolitan areas. However, one rural Victorian primary school explained that the need to fund travel and accommodation for visiting presenters can also make this a 'very costly' exercise.⁶⁰⁷ The school added the qualifier, 'if they would come', suggesting that some rural and regional schools have difficulty even attracting suitable professional learning providers. The Committee notes that it is unlikely for travel to many rural and regional locations to be commercially advantageous for metropolitan-based teacher professional learning providers.

Participants in the inquiry who discussed the needs of rural and regional schools commonly recommended that such schools should be provided with additional resources to offset their additional costs.⁶⁰⁸ The Victorian Government currently provides some additional funding through the Rural School Size Adjustment Factor in the Student Resource Package, which increases funding per student for small schools in non-metropolitan and non-provincial locations.⁶⁰⁹ The Australian Government provides additional funding to regional and remote non-government schools as part of its general recurrent grants.⁶¹⁰

The Committee also heard that some providers are making efforts to deliver professional learning programs in rural and regional locations. Various rural and regional programs are made available by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, as part of state-wide professional learning initiatives.⁶¹¹ The Committee also heard that some subject associations are currently collaborating to offer professional learning opportunities in non-metropolitan areas.⁶¹² In addition, a representative of the Australian College of Educators told the Committee that it is the College's policy to deliver professional learning programs in country locations, even though this typically results in a net financial loss.⁶¹³

Furthermore, the growth of school-based professional learning programs is likely to improve the ability of teachers to access professional learning locally. One participant observed that teachers in rural and regional schools already draw heavily on each other as resources for professional learning through school-based or locally-delivered knowledge-sharing events.

⁶⁰⁷ St John's Lutheran Primary School Council, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; St John's Lutheran Primary School Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁰⁸ Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 1–2; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 16; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6; Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5; Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 3.

⁶⁰⁹ Non-metropolitan regions are defined as outside the Melbourne capital city boundary defined by the Accessibility/Remoteness Index of Australia. Non-provincial locations are outside Geelong, Ballarat, Bendigo, Shepparton-Mooroopna, Warrnambool, Albury-Wodonga, Mildura and Traralgon. The funding applies to primary schools with enrolments up to 200 students, and secondary schools with enrolments up to 500 students. Additional per-student funding is calculated on a sliding scale determined by the total number of enrolments in the school. See Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2007, *Guide to the Student Resource Package 2008*, School Financial Management and Support Unit, Office for Resources and Infrastructure, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 12.

⁶¹⁰ Non-government schools are classified according to three designated levels of remoteness, and receive an additional 5, 10 or 20 per cent of the funding entitlement associated with their socioeconomic status score. See Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Regional and remote funding loading for non-government schools*, DEEWR website, <http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/programmes_funding/general_funding/operating_grants/general_recurrent_grants/regional_remote_funding_non_gov_O_A.htm>, accessed 31 March 2008.

⁶¹¹ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 14.

⁶¹² Mr M. Spurr, Executive Director, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 43.

⁶¹³ Meeting with Ms C. O'Connor, Chief Executive Officer, Australian College of Educators, Canberra, 16 June 2008.

These are often instigated by teachers attending professional learning activities away from the local area, who then share the learning they have gained with local colleagues.⁶¹⁴

Some participants suggested that rural and regional tertiary institutes could also help to address the issue of professional learning provision in non-metropolitan locations. In investigations for its concurrent inquiry, a representative of one regional university campus told the Committee that the university takes the provision of professional learning opportunities to local teachers 'very seriously'.⁶¹⁵ However, one rural principal questioned whether rural and regional tertiary institutes currently do enough to provide teacher professional learning, especially to the schools that provide support for their pre-service teacher education courses.⁶¹⁶ The Australian College of Educators suggested that collaboration with regional university campuses should be further extended to improve local opportunities for teacher professional learning.⁶¹⁷

Opportunities for school leadership development also arose as a particular concern for rural and regional schools in Victoria.⁶¹⁸ The Committee therefore encourages the recently announced Institute for Educational Leadership to give careful consideration to the specific needs of rural and regional school leaders. This should not only involve strategies to ensure that Institute programs are available in non-metropolitan settings, but also recognising the particular qualities and expertise that rural and regional school leaders need to develop. The Country Education Project observed that school leadership in rural and remote settings often involves community leadership responsibilities beyond what may be expected in a metropolitan context.⁶¹⁹

The Committee recognises that rural and regional educators must continue to be provided with opportunities to access non-local professional learning, to gain access to specialised resources and expertise.⁶²⁰ Professional learning away from the local area also extends teachers' professional networks and overcomes 'professional isolation',⁶²¹ especially for those who may be the only local specialist in their subject area. At the same time, the Committee believes that the value of professional learning sourced away from the local area can be maximised by integrating it with locally-based approaches.

'I would hate to see a situation where our country teachers are isolated in learning [and] because of their geography not necessarily have contact with their city colleagues. I think that mix across the profession is also very, very important, and we should not lose that.'

Ms Meredith Peace,
Vice President,
Australian Education Union
(Victorian Branch)

Forming partnerships beyond the school sector

Forming partnerships with organisations from beyond the school sector can be a valuable way for schools to expand the resources available for professional learning for their staff. The Committee heard that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has entered into a variety of partnerships with universities, industry and the not-for-profit sector to support opportunities for teacher professional learning.⁶²² A range of partnerships in professional learning are also being forged at regional, network, cluster or individual

⁶¹⁴ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁶¹⁵ Dr L. Wheeler, Head, Learning Community Partnerships, RMIT University, Transcript of Evidence, Education and Training Committee, Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education, Public Hearing, Hamilton, 28 April 2008, p. 52.

⁶¹⁶ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6.

⁶¹⁷ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁶¹⁸ Mr P. Brown, Executive Officer, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 12.

⁶¹⁹ Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 10.

⁶²⁰ Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 28.

⁶²¹ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5.

⁶²² Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 14.

school levels. The previous chapter described a number of teacher professional learning activities that may be supported through a partnership approach. Most notably, these include joint research with university partners, professionals 'in residence', or industry placement programs.

'...a number of rural schools, or groups of schools, have drawn strength from linking with local community organisations to support teacher professional learning and school improvement. This generally occurs through jointly managed projects with monetary and in-kind support from local industries or organisations.'

Faculty of Education,
Deakin University

The Committee heard that partnerships between schools and non-school partners may be a particular strength in teacher professional learning for rural and regional communities. The Faculty of Education, Deakin University, observed that the limited availability of local professional learning resources provides a strong motivation for rural and regional schools to create links with non-school partners.⁶²³ One rural principal commented that the networks and community relationships in rural and regional areas have often been 'formed over decades of commitment and mutual support'.⁶²⁴

The Committee also heard that partnerships beyond the school sector may be particularly relevant in the development of school leadership.⁶²⁵ An example is provided in the Master in School Leadership Program. Itself a government–university partnership, the program also includes mentoring and work-shadowing experiences with successful leaders from government, industry and business sectors.⁶²⁶ The Country Education Project added that greater involvement of school and community leaders in joint professional learning may be a way in which the needs of rural school leaders may be better addressed.⁶²⁷ The Committee endorses this view, and believes that building partnerships with industry and community organisations should be a core activity of the recently announced Institute of Educational Leadership.

However, the Committee heard that partnerships are still often relegated to the 'periphery' of school activity.⁶²⁸ Several participants argued that more should be done to enhance the role of partnerships between schools and non-school organisations in current education practice.⁶²⁹ Despite their benefits, the Committee is aware that partnerships in teacher professional learning are not easy to establish. The Committee heard that it takes 'time, energy and resources' from both schools and their partner organisations to develop the level of trust and understanding necessary for effective collaboration to occur.⁶³⁰ Another participant commented that both schools and their partner organisations may be reluctant to breach the traditional boundaries between sectors, and suggested the need for a 'cultural shift' to embed a commitment to collaboration.⁶³¹

⁶²³ Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁶²⁴ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5.

⁶²⁵ Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

⁶²⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Master in School Leadership*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/masters.htm#H2N100AF>>, accessed 27 August 2008.

⁶²⁷ Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 10.

⁶²⁸ Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 6.

⁶²⁹ For example, Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2; Faculty of Education, Deakin University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Ms K. Fletcher, Executive Director, Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 6; Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 29.

⁶³⁰ Mr D. Kelman, Artistic Director, Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program, Western Edge Youth Arts Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁶³¹ Associate Professor J. Henry, Committee Member, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 15.

The Committee found that schools have a number of resources to draw on in developing and supporting partnership arrangements in teacher professional learning. One participant suggested that partnerships between schools and universities in teacher professional learning may grow out of relationships established in pre-service teacher education. In a previous inquiry, the Committee found that partnerships between schools and universities are increasingly being used in the delivery of pre-service teacher education throughout Victoria.⁶³² While acknowledging the challenges associated with these partnerships, the Committee believes that there may be considerable potential to develop the relationships formed in pre-service teacher education into ongoing partnerships for teacher professional learning.

The Committee also heard that subject associations may help to establish and support relationships between teachers and other professionals in related disciplines. The History Teachers' Association of Victoria commented that subject associations act as a 'conduit' between communities, government agencies, tertiary institutions and schools.⁶³³ The School Library Association of Victoria also supported the value of partnerships between subject associations and the industry sector.⁶³⁴ In the course of the inquiry, the Committee heard of several successful professional learning programs delivered by subject associations that involved collaboration with government, industry or university partners.⁶³⁵

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) provide an additional avenue of support for brokering and sustaining partnerships between local education providers, industry and the community. While the aim of the LLENs is to improve education, training and employment opportunities for students, especially those at risk, the Committee heard that they may also have a role in supporting partnerships in teacher professional learning.⁶³⁶ The Victorian Applied Learning Association described LLENs as 'a significant development' in broadening perceptions of schooling, and supporting the effective use of knowledge and resources from across whole school communities.⁶³⁷ The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recently made a further commitment to providing brokerage services between schools, industry and other organisations, to be detailed in an upcoming statement of priorities.⁶³⁸

Online professional learning

Online delivery offers another opportunity to optimise the use of both time and other resources for teacher professional learning. Emerging possibilities for electronic collaboration offered by Web 2.0 technologies are discussed in the previous chapter. In addition, many traditional course-based models of professional learning are also now being offered online, including many programs offered by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development.

'For companies and organisations that see public outreach as one of their key roles, [teacher professional learning] is an effective way of fulfilling that responsibility.'

Australian Institute of Physics,
Victorian Branch,
Education Committee

⁶³² Education and Training Committee, Parliament of Victoria 2005, *Step Up, Step In, Step Out: Report on the inquiry into the suitability of pre-service teacher training in Victoria*, Parliament of Victoria, Melbourne, p. 56.

⁶³³ History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁶³⁴ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁶³⁵ For example, Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association, Written Submission, June 2007, pp. 1–2; Victorian Association for the Teaching of English, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Ms S. Bennett, Vice President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 29.

⁶³⁶ Associate Professor J. Henry, Committee Member, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 13.

⁶³⁷ Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 7.

⁶³⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 18.

'I enjoy online PD because I can do it in my own time and I can take or leave what I want.'

Teacher,
(Supplementary Material)

The Committee received some evidence supporting online delivery in teacher professional learning.⁶³⁹ Several participants, including rural and regional educators, system representatives and professional learning providers, agreed that electronic provision is an effective way to improve access to professional learning for teachers in rural and regional schools.⁶⁴⁰ The Teacher Learning Network added that online delivery provides flexibility for all teachers in the times at which they may access professional learning.⁶⁴¹ Others argued that the use of online modes of delivery should be increased, suggesting that online professional learning is an area of considerable potential that has not yet been fully realised.⁶⁴²

Some participants were more guarded in their support for online professional learning. The Committee heard that the effectiveness of online provision may be confined to certain types of professional learning, such as short-term programs for specific skills or knowledge acquisition.⁶⁴³ A representative of the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) noted that the problem with online delivery is that 'it is not particularly valued by teachers, or they do not particularly like it'.⁶⁴⁴ The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey confirmed that electronic delivery is much less favoured by Victorian teachers than face-to-face modes.⁶⁴⁵

The Australian College of Educators suggested that online delivery may be more popular when it is integrated with face-to-face professional learning activities. The College reported that teachers are increasingly seeking professional learning courses that can be pursued online 'in part', or through 'flexible' delivery.⁶⁴⁶ One university-based participant cautioned that flexible provision should not be taken to mean inflexible reliance on electronic modes, but should mean choice for different learning styles or personal circumstances.⁶⁴⁷

Another university faculty advised that professional learning providers should not assume that teachers have adequate ICT facilities to access their professional learning online.⁶⁴⁸ Several participants discussed this issue in their submissions, observing that teachers need access not only to hardware, but also appropriate software, bandwidth and technical support. One rural principal argued that it is particularly important to provide 'world class ICT' to small rural schools, as they may especially benefit from the professional learning opportunities offered by emerging technologies.⁶⁴⁹

⁶³⁹ For example, Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 10; Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 10.

⁶⁴⁰ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 14; Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 9; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5; Mr J. Firth, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 23.

⁶⁴¹ Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 10.

⁶⁴² Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5; Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 19.

⁶⁴³ Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 10; Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 9; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 5; Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 10; Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁴ Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 22.

⁶⁴⁵ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 9.

⁶⁴⁶ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, pp. 2 & 4.

⁶⁴⁷ Ms V. Fenelon, Acting Director, Professional and Organisational Learning, University of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 39.

⁶⁴⁸ School of Education, University of South Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁶⁴⁹ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 6.

In Victoria, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has invested in improved ICT infrastructure in schools through a number of programs. The Notebooks for Teachers and Principals Program is an ICT initiative with particular relevance for professional learning. Under the program, teachers can access a notebook computer leased by the Department for a fee taken directly from their pre-tax salary.⁶⁵⁰ The Committee heard that this initiative has improved the uptake of online professional learning among Victorian teachers.⁶⁵¹

In principle, the Committee supports online delivery as a potentially cost-effective method of improving access to teacher professional learning. However, it notes that the savings in time and travel gained by online delivery may be offset by certain limitations. It therefore suggests that the merits of online delivery must be evaluated carefully with regard to the specific nature and purpose of each individual course or program. Before selecting online delivery, both providers and users of professional learning programs should ensure that it is appropriate to the content of the course, and the learning styles and preferences of the teachers involved.

Sharing resources between schools

Collaboration between schools can also help to maximise the resources that schools have available for teacher professional learning. One large government secondary school suggested that clustering may be a way for smaller or less well-resourced schools to pool resources and implement professional learning programs usually only achievable with large school budgets.⁶⁵² Other participants noted that clustering can support efficiencies in human resources for professional learning, by enabling specialists or even casual relief teachers to be shared across schools.⁶⁵³ Clustering can also support cross-school knowledge-sharing, offering a powerful model for 'rich shared experiences and effective planning' across cluster schools.⁶⁵⁴

A number of recent professional learning initiatives at both state and national level have adopted a school cluster model, notably the Victorian Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program. The Victorian Government allocated \$84.3 million over four years to the program, commencing in 2003,⁶⁵⁵ to establish clusters of primary and secondary schools to improve educational outcomes for students in the Middle Years. By 2005, all Victorian government schools were involved in a cluster, and a total of 247 clusters were operating.⁶⁵⁶ An evaluation of the project conducted in 2005 by the Australian Council for Educational Research found that teacher professional learning was a significant aspect of most school cluster projects.⁶⁵⁷ Schools for Innovation and Excellence was widely endorsed by participants in the inquiry as having made a significant contribution to high-quality professional learning for Victorian teachers.⁶⁵⁸

⁶⁵⁰ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Notebooks Program – Program Operation*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/ictsupportservices/notebooks/default.htm>>, accessed 21 July 2008.

⁶⁵¹ Professor A. Gough, Board Member, Australian Council of Deans of Education, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 26.

⁶⁵² Glen Waverley Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3.

⁶⁵³ Country Education Project Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 7; Mr G. Born, Physical Education Specialist and Level 3 Teacher, Ocean Road Primary School, Written Submission, May 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁵⁴ Professor R. Tyler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 7.

⁶⁵⁵ Victorian Government 2002, '\$84.3 Million for Schools for Innovation and Excellence Initiative in Crucial Years 5–9', *Victorian Budget 2002–03 Fact Sheet*, Victorian Government, Melbourne.

⁶⁵⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *Evaluation of Phase 1 of the Schools for Innovation and Excellence (SIE) Initiative*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 1.

⁶⁵⁷ *ibid.*, p. 5.

⁶⁵⁸ For example, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 3; Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Various Participants, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, pp. 7–8 & 16.

At the same time, the evaluation of the Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program found that the benefits of clustering were not direct, but were mediated through various aspects of the schools involved, especially the leadership.⁶⁵⁹ Evidence to the inquiry supported the view that effective cluster relationships do not occur automatically, but require a significant investment of effort and time. The Committee heard that clusters must mediate between the different needs and preferences of the schools involved, especially differences between primary and secondary school cultures and concerns.⁶⁶⁰ One principal told the Committee that it took approximately two years for her Innovation and Excellence cluster to establish effective working relationships.⁶⁶¹

Although the program was initially scheduled to finish in 2007, a further \$49 million over three years was allocated in the 2007–08 Budget to enable the clusters to continue.⁶⁶² Some participants in the inquiry expressed concern that the funding had not been continued at the previous level.⁶⁶³ At the same time, the Committee notes that the need for support for established clusters may reduce over time, now that effective relationships have been established. For example, one principal suggested that her cluster could continue the Innovation and Excellence model successfully if the coordinator role was now offered on a part-time basis.⁶⁶⁴

Another participant expressed disappointment that the project has been 'shanghaied' by an emphasis on mathematics and science. The participant suggested that a focus on these specific subject areas may not be seen as relevant by participating primary schools.⁶⁶⁵ The Committee recognises mathematics and science as current priorities in Victorian schooling, and therefore supports this focus in the Innovation and Excellence model. At the same time, the Committee believes that the focus of the Innovation and Excellence model should be shifted over time, to revitalise school clusters and maximise the benefits of the model over a broad range of subject areas.

In addition to cluster-based programs, the Committee heard that many Victorian schools are also pooling their resources through networks, to improve the professional learning they can offer their teachers. A representative of the Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, explained how the Region's Teacher Education Network creates efficiencies in the use of school professional learning resources. Schools may join the Network for a fee of \$2.30 per student, or a flat fee of \$99 for small schools in the region. Teachers from these schools can then access 'as much professional development as they possibly can', through network-delivered programs.⁶⁶⁶ The Network has also developed scaled-down versions of popular professional learning programs especially to meet the needs of small schools at an affordable cost.⁶⁶⁷

The Gippsland Gourmet PD Program was also cited as an exemplary teacher professional learning initiative that demonstrated the benefits of resource-sharing, especially for rural and

⁶⁵⁹ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *Evaluation of Phase 1 of the Schools for Innovation and Excellence (SIE) Initiative*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 5.

⁶⁶⁰ Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 7.

⁶⁶¹ Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 40.

⁶⁶² J. Lenders MLC, Minister for Education and J. Allan MP, Minister for Education Services, '\$210 Million for Teachers and Higher Standards', *Media Release*, 1 May 2007.

⁶⁶³ South Gippsland Secondary College, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr J. Joseph, Director Focus Education Australia Pty Ltd, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 8.

⁶⁶⁴ Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 41.

⁶⁶⁵ Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, pp. 8–9.

⁶⁶⁶ Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

⁶⁶⁷ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 4.

regional schools.⁶⁶⁸ Commenced in 1995, the program offered teachers a range of workshops reflecting ‘the very best PD providers that money could buy’ at a fraction of the usual cost. Program funding was initially derived from local departmental funds, together with a grant from the central departmental office. As the program continued in 1996–1998, partner schools were asked to contribute 25 per cent of their professional learning budgets towards the program.⁶⁶⁹ While the region has now returned to a user-pays model where schools pay for professional learning as they access it, the Committee heard that Gourmet PD played a valuable role in raising the profile of professional learning in the region.

Some participants suggested that there is scope for school networks to be further expanded.⁶⁷⁰ Representatives of the Catholic and independent sectors supported the idea of increased cross-sectoral collaboration between schools in teacher professional learning.⁶⁷¹ While the three sectors currently collaborate to some extent on setting priorities for the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program, one participant commented that this is a relatively small initiative in the context of professional learning in the state.⁶⁷²

The Committee heard that the benefits of cross-sectoral collaboration would be particularly relevant for teachers in rural and regional schools, where access to teacher professional learning activities may be especially limited.⁶⁷³ The Country Education Project submitted a detailed proposal for a Rural Educators Network, which would support cross-sectoral collaboration to ensure that a range of relevant professional learning opportunities are available in rural areas. Network activities would include engaging young potential leaders in innovative professional learning, providing a support network and mentoring for graduate teachers, and facilitating ‘teacher exchange’ programs with metropolitan schools.⁶⁷⁴ The Country Education Project suggested that the Network should initially be resourced through partnerships with education sector authorities, unions and universities, but would have the potential to operate on a fee-for-service basis in the longer term.⁶⁷⁵

The Committee notes that regional school networks have been given priority in the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development’s recently-released strategies for school improvement. A new ‘network strategic plan’ will provide strategies for schools to work collaboratively to improve performance across their networks, supported by newly-appointed Regional Network Leaders.⁶⁷⁶ The Committee believes that collaborative approaches to teacher professional learning should be addressed as a core component of school network activities. This should include both opportunities to share knowledge between schools within the network, and to pool resources to improve access to external expertise. The Department has also committed to building cross-sectoral partnerships to improve resource-sharing across government and non-government schools, especially in disadvantaged areas.⁶⁷⁷

⁶⁶⁸ Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 22.

⁶⁶⁹ T. Taylor 2000, ‘Voices from the bush: Gippsland Gourmet PD and the culture and politics of teacher professional development in country Victoria’, *Rural Society*, vol. 10, no. 1, p. 34.

⁶⁷⁰ Supplementary information provided by Country Education Project Inc, July 2007; Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

⁶⁷¹ Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5; Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 20.

⁶⁷² Ms C. Hickey, Education Officer, Victorian Independent Education Union, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 20.

⁶⁷³ Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5; St John’s Lutheran Primary School Council, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁷⁴ Supplementary information provided by the Country Education Project Inc, July 2007.

⁶⁷⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁷⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 26.

⁶⁷⁷ *ibid.*, p. 27.

Additional system resources

In addition to capitalising on school and other local resources, Victorian teachers have a range of opportunities to access additional system resources to support their professional learning programs. The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development offers government schools a variety of ways to supplement the teacher professional learning that they purchase through the Student Resource Package, either by accessing additional funds, or accessing professional learning programs provided directly by the government at no cost. Additional targeted system initiatives may be offered for individual teachers, schools, school clusters or regions. Processes for accessing these opportunities vary, from workshops delivered on a 'first-come, first-served' basis, to merit-based grants application processes.

'It is absolutely critical that there are always systemic initiatives focused on staff learning and on seeing it in tandem, so that even if they have got a major student learning initiative, it should always have a staff learning component built into it and built into the funding of it.'

Dr Neville Johnson,
Director,
Making Connections
Educational Consultancy

Victorian schools may also access additional funding opportunities for teacher professional learning provided by the Australian Government. The Australian Government Quality Teaching Program (AGQTP) funds various national professional learning programs, as well as cross-sectoral projects in each state and territory.⁶⁷⁸ The Australian Government has also provided various grants to schools or clusters for projects supporting student and teacher learning in designated priority areas. These include: the Success for Boys Project; Values Education Good Practice Schools; and the Australian School Innovation in Science, Technology and Mathematics (ASISTM) Project.⁶⁷⁹

The Committee heard that these programs can be effective ways to meet the needs of schools facing additional costs in teacher professional learning. A representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development told the Committee that targeted government programs can effectively address the special professional learning needs of rural and regional schools, as well as other schools in areas of disadvantage.⁶⁸⁰ A representative of the Country Education Project commented that the Teacher Professional Leave Initiative has been especially beneficial for rural schools, and suggested that a quota should be allocated for rural schools within the program.⁶⁸¹

On the other hand, the Committee notes that targeted grants for teacher professional learning have certain disadvantages. Complex application processes can require a level of resourcing and expertise that is beyond the reach of the schools or individuals most in need of support. One principal also expressed concern that competitive funding can leave professional learning issues unaddressed in schools whose applications are unsuccessful.⁶⁸² At the same time, a representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development reported that the Department takes a proactive approach to identifying schools that may benefit from a particular program, and then encourages and supports them to apply.⁶⁸³

One participant contrasted the competitive approach in grants-based programs with the successful Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program, in which every Victorian

⁶⁷⁸ Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, *Australian Government Quality Teaching Program*, DEEWR website, <<http://www.qualityteaching.deewr.gov.au/agqtp/>>, accessed 9 July 2008.

⁶⁷⁹ Ms J. Holt, General Manager, Curriculum Projects, Curriculum Corporation, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 2.

⁶⁸⁰ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 17.

⁶⁸¹ Mr P. Brown, Executive Officer, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 14.

⁶⁸² Ms L. Devlin, Principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 16.

⁶⁸³ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 17.

government school was guaranteed participation.⁶⁸⁴ Many participants commented that additional funding for professional learning for all teachers who need it should be provided whenever a major government reform or initiative is introduced.⁶⁸⁵ The Victorian Independent Education Union commented that it is important for such funding to also reflect the needs of non-government schools in implementing a state-wide mandatory curriculum or assessment initiative.⁶⁸⁶ The Committee agrees that funding for relevant teacher professional learning should be included as a component of major government education initiatives, whether distributed at the school or cluster level or through direct government provision of state-wide professional learning programs.

System support for partnerships in teacher professional learning

The Strategic Partnerships Program was identified in the inquiry as an additional source of system resources for teacher professional learning in Victoria. The program is a long-standing departmental initiative to support the involvement of not-for-profit organisations in both teacher and student learning. Over the 2006–2008 triennium, the program provided \$5.2 million annually to 93 not-for-profit organisations. The size of grants to individual organisations varied widely depending on the nature of their projects.⁶⁸⁷

Subject associations make up a significant proportion of the organisations funded under the Strategic Partnerships Program, and receive grants specifically to develop projects related to teacher professional learning. Other not-for-profit organisations may also apply for Strategic Partnerships funding for projects that have either a teacher or student learning focus. The Committee notes that projects focused on student learning will typically also involve some level of formal or informal teacher professional learning, as partner organisations introduce teachers to new expertise and experiences.

Table 4.1 shows the 86 organisations listed on the Department’s website as funded in 2006–2008 through the Strategic Partnerships Program.

Table 4.1: Organisations funded through the Strategic Partnerships Program 2006–08

Arts	Historical and cultural organisations
Arts Victoria	Ballarat City Council / The Eureka Centre
Ausdance Victoria	Bendigo Trust
Australian Centre for the Moving Image	Brambuk, Gariwerd
Complete Works Arts Education Inc	Coal Creek Heritage Village
Cultural Infusion Limited	Flagstaff Hill
Drama Victoria	History Council of Victoria
Flying Fruit Fly Circus	Law Institute of Victoria
Geelong Performing Arts Centre	Museum Victoria
Hothouse Theatre	Parliament of Victoria
Melbourne Youth Music Council Inc	Sovereign Hill Museums Association

⁶⁸⁴ Ms L. Devlin, Principal, Mount Blowhard Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 16.

⁶⁸⁵ For example, Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 4; Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 19; Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 16; Dr L. Ingvarson, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 5; Professor R. Tytler and Professor D. Symington, Deakin University, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁶ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1.

⁶⁸⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Triennial Funding Application Guidelines, Strategic Partnerships Program 2009–2011*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 8.

Regional Arts Victoria	State Library of Victoria
Song Room	Swan Hill Pioneer Settlement Museum
Soundhouse Music Alliance	Teacher associations and support organisations
The Arts Centre	Art Education Victoria Inc
The Cunningham Dax Collection	Association of Music Educators
The Dandenong Ranges Community Music School	Australian Council for Health, Physical Education and Recreation: Victorian Branch
Victoria Musica Viva in Schools	Australian Literacy Educators' Association, Victoria
Visual Communication Victoria	Australian Teachers of Media
Western Edge Youth Arts Inc	Career Education Association of Victoria
Westside Circus Inc	Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria
Galleries	Design and Technology Teachers' Association Victoria
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art	Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery	History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd
City of Greater Bendigo	ICT in Education Victoria Inc
Geelong Gallery	Mathematical Association of Victoria
Gippsland Art Gallery	Modern Language Teachers' Association of Victoria
Hamilton Art Gallery	School Library Association of Victoria Inc
Heide Museum of Modern Art	Science Teacher's Association of Victoria
Horsham Regional Art Gallery	Social Education Victoria
Mornington Peninsula Regional Gallery	Teacher Learning Network
National Gallery of Victoria	Victorian Association for Environmental Education
Warrnambool Art Gallery	Victorian Association for Philosophy in Schools
Science, the environment and sustainability	Victorian Association for the Teaching of English Inc
Aquatic Environment Education Centre at Wonga Wetlands	Victorian Association of TESOL and Multicultural Education
CERES Community Environment Park	Victorian Association of Traffic Safety Education Teachers
Creswick Landcare Centre	Victorian Commercial Teachers Association
CSIRO Education, Victoria	Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association
Gould Group	Victorian Information Technology Teachers Association
Kyabram Fauna Park	Victorian Outdoor Education Association
Marine Discovery Centre, Queenscliff	Student support organisations
Natural Resources Conservation League of Victoria	Driver Education Centre of Australia
Oceanis Foundation–Underwater Zoo	Duke of Edinburgh's Award-Victoria
Parks Victoria	Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Foundation
Royal Botanic Gardens Melbourne	Student Youth Network Inc
Zoos Victoria	Young Achievement Australia

Source: Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Strategic Partners*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/studentlearning/programs/partnerships/programs.htm>>, accessed 27 August 2008.

Several participants from organisations that have received Strategic Partnerships funding endorsed the value of the program to their teacher professional learning activities.⁶⁸⁸ However, one subject association representative commented that the association could not 'rely' on Strategic Partnerships funding to deliver quality teacher professional learning on an ongoing basis.⁶⁸⁹ Three others suggested that funding to subject associations should be increased.⁶⁹⁰ At the same time, the Committee heard that the high profile of subject associations in Victorian teacher professional learning is 'not the norm' for all Australian states. In New South Wales, for example, it is reportedly more common for professional learning to be organised directly through the Department.⁶⁹¹

The Australian College of Educators supported an ongoing role for subject associations in teacher professional learning, but recommended that all funding be accompanied by clear expectations for accountability and program evaluation.⁶⁹² The Committee notes that the Strategic Partnerships model currently provides for projects and funding levels to be evaluated in each funding round. Although the Department has recently introduced 'surety of funding' for long-term strategic partners, the Committee believes that regular evaluation should continue, to ensure that programs continue to be delivered to the highest possible standard.⁶⁹³

Individual contributions

Another way of supplementing school resources for teacher professional learning is for teachers to contribute to their professional learning themselves. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that responsibility for providing funding for teacher professional learning tends to be shared between the system, the school and the teacher. Most teachers identified their school as the major source of funding for their professional learning (73% in Victoria; 56% in the total sample) and around eight out of ten had received some funding from their school for professional learning in the previous 12 months (86% in Victoria; 80% in the total sample).⁶⁹⁴ Nevertheless, the survey found that over half the Victorian teachers (55%) had contributed some personal funding for their own professional learning, although this was fewer than for all teachers surveyed (65%).⁶⁹⁵

The Committee heard mixed views as to whether teachers should be expected to contribute personal funds to their professional learning. The Australian College of Educators argued that funding for professional learning should be a 'shared responsibility' between governments, schools and individuals.⁶⁹⁶ The College was critical of the tendency among many teachers, especially those in the middle to late stages of their careers, to regard professional learning as 'something that must be given to them'.⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁸⁸ Mr T. Brandenburg, President, ICT in Education Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 33; Mr D. Kelman, Artistic Director, Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program, Western Edge Youth Arts Inc, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 1; Mr B. Allan, Education Coordinator, The Eureka Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 24; History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁶⁸⁹ Mr T. Brandenburg, President, ICT in Education Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 33.

⁶⁹⁰ School Library Association of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Victorian Commercial Teachers Association, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 37.

⁶⁹¹ Mr C. Smith, President, Science Teachers' Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 28.

⁶⁹² Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 4.

⁶⁹³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Triennial Funding Application Guidelines, Strategic Partnerships Program 2009–2011*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁴ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 6.

⁶⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁶⁹⁶ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁶⁹⁷ *ibid.*, p. 1.

Mr Andrew Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, suggested that individuals should pay for professional learning that has individual benefit, and organisations should pay for professional learning that meets organisational needs:

...if it is professional learning being undertaken that maximises contribution to organisational development and organisational outcomes, then possibly it is something that the organisation needs to invest in and encourage and support. That is part of best practice for most organisations these days. However, if it is being pursued more substantially for the individual development, then you might ask the question of whether that should be borne by the individual.⁶⁹⁸

At the same time, Mr Ius noted that the interests of the organisation and the individual frequently overlap, as professional learning for individual gain is also likely to benefit the school. Mr Ius suggested that funding for professional learning should therefore be a matter of negotiation between the teacher and the school.⁶⁹⁹

The Committee agrees that investment in teacher professional learning represents a genuine and worthwhile investment in quality education. The Committee therefore believes that schools and systems should provide adequate resources for effective professional learning to occur. In cases where schools make a substantial contribution to an individual professional learning pursuit, the Committee believes it may be appropriate to negotiate terms to ensure that the knowledge is of benefit to the school. These may include a formal expectation that knowledge will be shared with colleagues, or a commitment to a specified tenure or pre-defined school improvement project.

The balance between system, school and individual contributions to teacher professional learning attracted particular comment with respect to university study. The Victorian Independent Education Union argued that schools should provide a 'significant contribution' towards course fees for teachers undertaking higher qualifications.⁷⁰⁰ Others argued more generally that the level of financial support for teachers undertaking higher degrees should be increased, without identifying whether this should be the responsibility of schools, universities, systems or the government.⁷⁰¹ A submission from the staff of Heywood and District Secondary College went as far as suggesting that teachers upgrading their qualifications should be exempt from HECS fees.⁷⁰²

The Master in School Leadership Program is one way in which the Victorian Government is using a partnership approach to assist schools and teachers with HECS expenses. Monash University and the University of Melbourne act on behalf of the Department to deliver the master's program, which incorporates on-campus, school-based and industry-based professional learning experiences. The Department subsidises course costs for participants and provides funding for 13 days of teacher release. The total cost of the course to participants is \$5 500, payable in four instalments over the two-year period.⁷⁰³

The Committee recognises that a higher degree is one of the most expensive forms of professional learning a teacher may undertake. At the same time, the Committee recognises that undertaking a higher degree represents a significant commitment on the part of the teacher to substantially develop their expertise, which should be supported as far as possible. The Committee endorses the Master in School Leadership Program as a genuine

⁶⁹⁸ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 35.

⁶⁹⁹ *ibid.*

⁷⁰⁰ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁷⁰¹ Ms E. Burns, President, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 40; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

⁷⁰² Heywood and District Secondary College Staff, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁷⁰³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Master in School Leadership*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/masters.htm#H2N100AF>>, accessed 27 August 2008.

opportunity for Victorian schools and teachers to overcome two of the major barriers to further tertiary studies – course fees and time release. The Committee recommends that the Department explore the provision of similar scholarships or targeted grants for university study in future, not confined to school leadership but rotating between other priority areas for the development of teacher expertise.

Creating a culture of professional learning in schools

Throughout the inquiry, many participants referred to support for professional learning in terms of the ‘culture’ of the school.⁷⁰⁴ One even objected to the suggestion in the terms of reference that professional learning may be ‘delivered into schools’, arguing that ‘a culture of professional learning should bubble up from the very core of the school and spill out’.⁷⁰⁵ A professional learning consultant commented that school culture is more important to the success of teacher professional learning activities than the quality of the activities themselves. He argued that even ‘flawed’ professional development activities may be effective in schools with a learning culture, but that even high-quality activities will have little effect if the school does not have a culture to support them.⁷⁰⁶

The Committee heard that receptiveness to change is an important element of school cultures that support teacher professional learning. One participant observed that there is little benefit to upgrading teachers’ knowledge through professional learning if the school itself is ‘stuck in the past’.⁷⁰⁷ Others commented that teachers need to feel that they can take ‘calculated risks’ and try something new in their school environment, without fear of failure.⁷⁰⁸ Further comments suggested that opportunities to try out new approaches and experience success are necessary for teachers to gain the confidence to embed new learning into their practice.⁷⁰⁹

‘Our key concept is the Professional Community. We seek to make very clear that this is absolutely pivotal for effective teacher professional learning. Full professional life cannot be achieved in isolation.’

Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria

The Association of Independent Schools of Victoria linked the idea of school culture to another concept mentioned frequently in the inquiry: the ‘learning community’:

The presence of a supportive learning culture has been shown by many researchers to be an important precondition for effective professional learning. Schools which re-culture as learning communities are more likely to be effective in developing a school-wide approach to teaching and learning with a focus on quality teaching within an active, accountable professional community.⁷¹⁰

The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey confirmed that a learning community is perceived as an important foundation for teacher professional learning. In the survey, nine out of ten Victorian teachers placed a ‘high value’ on being part of a professional learning community, and three-quarters felt such a community existed in their school.⁷¹¹

At the same time, the Committee acknowledges the potential for some confusion over the ‘learning community’ concept. In the course of the inquiry, the Committee heard the term

⁷⁰⁴ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 12; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 5; Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3.

⁷⁰⁵ Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁷⁰⁶ Mr P. Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd, Written Submission, March 2008, p. 6.

⁷⁰⁷ Associate Professor J. Henry, Committee Member, Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 18.

⁷⁰⁸ Dr H. Schnagl, Board Member, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 3; Victorian Applied Learning Association, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 7.

⁷⁰⁹ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 9; Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships, Written Submission, February 2008, p. 2.

⁷¹⁰ Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 12.

⁷¹¹ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers’ Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 71.

applied in a variety of contexts, describing anything from internal school organisational structures⁷¹² to elaborate cross-school learning networks.⁷¹³ A 2007 article on the subject by US education expert Dr Richard DuFour made the observation that the term 'learning community' has been used to describe 'every imaginable combination of people with an interest in education'.⁷¹⁴ Nevertheless, evidence to the inquiry enabled the Committee to identify some of the actions schools may take to create the kinds of communities and cultures that support teacher professional learning.

Performance and Development Culture Program

The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development's Performance and Development (P&D) Culture Program has been a major initiative aimed at establishing learning community cultures in Victorian government schools. The program required schools to demonstrate five elements that indicate a commitment to supporting the performance and development of their staff (refer Table 4.2).

Table 4.2: Elements of the Performance and Development Culture Program

1.	Induction for new teachers at the school.
2.	Use of multiple sources of feedback on teacher effectiveness for individual teachers and teams of teachers.
3.	Customised individual teacher development plans based on individual development needs, student learning and school priorities.
4.	Quality professional development to meet individual development needs.
5.	Belief by teachers that the school has a performance and development culture.

Source: Office of Learning and Teaching, Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2006, *A Performance and Development Culture: Advancing professional practice in schools*, Office of Learning and Teaching, DE&T, Melbourne, p. 7.

The Department explained that these elements are derived from analysis of the culture of other organisations where staff have high levels of autonomy and accountability in keeping their professional knowledge up-to-date.⁷¹⁵ Schools that have successfully provided evidence of all five elements, based on surveys and other forms of school-based data, have received P&D Culture accreditation from the Department. In addition to meeting the costs of the external P&D Culture assessment, the Department has provided \$1 400 to each school involved in the program, to assist with the processes and documentation required to achieve accreditation.⁷¹⁶

In 2007 and 2008, the Department's regional offices nominated successful accredited schools to act as 'reference schools' for those that had not yet achieved P&D Culture accreditation. Reference schools received an additional \$5 000 to meet the costs of their supporting role.⁷¹⁷ Committee members and staff attended a number of Open Sessions in reference schools as part of their investigations. It was clear that these schools regarded the P&D accreditation process as a positive initiative. For some, accreditation had required only

⁷¹² Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4.

⁷¹³ Mr T. Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School, Written Submission, August 2007, p. 3.

⁷¹⁴ R. DuFour 2007, 'Professional Learning Communities: A bandwagon, an idea worth considering, or our best hope for high levels of learning?', *Middle School Journal*, vol. 39, no. 1, p. 2.

⁷¹⁵ Office of Learning and Teaching, Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2006, *A Performance and Development Culture: Advancing professional practice in schools*, Office of Learning and Teaching, DE&T, Melbourne, p. 7.

⁷¹⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Frequently Asked Questions*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/panddc/faq.htm#18>>, accessed 8 October 2008.

⁷¹⁷ *ibid.*

modest changes to the school's existing performance management processes. For others, it represented a substantial cultural shift in the way performance and development was understood and implemented in the school.

A representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development told the Committee that the P&D Culture Program has been successful in encouraging schools to develop comprehensive strategies for teacher professional learning.⁷¹⁸ Various other participants, including two peak bodies for Victorian principals, further endorsed the value of the program in setting out system-wide expectations for staff development and appraisal.⁷¹⁹ One participant commented that simply going through the process for accreditation has been an important learning curve for his school, irrespective of whether the accreditation itself was attained.⁷²⁰

The Department's stated intention was for all Victorian government schools to have achieved P&D Culture accreditation by the end of 2008.⁷²¹ By November 2008, 1 095 government schools had completed accreditation.⁷²² While the accreditation process will not be continued beyond 2008, the Department plans to support non-accredited schools to achieve the standards for accreditation in 2009. This will occur through 'facilitated support visits' from a trained P&D Culture facilitator, and ongoing support from the Department's newly-appointed Regional Network Leaders.⁷²³ It is intended that all Victorian government schools will have approved processes in place for supporting staff performance and development, including teacher professional learning, by the end of 2009.

Once P&D Culture processes are in place in government schools, a further challenge remains to sustain them. The Department has announced its intention to provide resources in 2009 to support accredited schools in maintaining P&D Culture standards. This includes a new P&D Culture section to be incorporated into School Level Reports.⁷²⁴

The Committee strongly supports the P&D Culture Program as a strategy for improving the processes that will support effective teacher professional learning in Victorian government schools. The Committee believes that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development should place a high priority on supporting schools yet to achieve standards for accreditation, to ensure that all government schools incorporate the five elements described in the program. In addition, the Committee recommends that the Department closely monitors reporting of P&D Culture processes in School Level Reports to ensure that these elements are maintained beyond the achievement of accreditation. In particular, the Committee believes that schools should be expected to provide evidence of ongoing formal processes for planning, delivering and evaluating teacher professional learning.

⁷¹⁸ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 14.

⁷¹⁹ Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5; Balwyn High School, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 13.

⁷²⁰ Mr G. Milner, Member, Country Education Project Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 21.

⁷²¹ Office of Learning and Teaching, Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2006, *A Performance and Development Culture: Advancing professional practice in schools*, Office of Learning and Teaching, DE&T, Melbourne, p. 1.

⁷²² Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Performance and Development Culture*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/management/schoolimprovement/panddc/default.htm>>, accessed 14 November 2008.

⁷²³ *ibid.*

⁷²⁴ *ibid.*

Leadership to support a culture of professional learning

The Committee heard that school leadership has a vital role to play in creating school cultures that support teacher professional learning. At the same time, the Committee is aware that planning and evaluating teacher professional learning equitably and effectively is a complex and demanding task. A representative of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development commented that the Department has invested 'heavily' in ensuring that school leaders have the skills to lead professional learning effectively.⁷²⁵

A key initiative in this area is the Leading Professional Learning Program, a full-year course comprising four days of workshops and a school-based project, delivered by Monash University. Places are available on application to teachers and school leaders involved in coordinating the professional learning of others in their schools.⁷²⁶ The Committee notes that courses addressing leadership for professional learning are also available through other professional learning providers, such as the Teacher Learning Network and the Australian Institute of Management.

At the same time, effective leadership of professional learning requires significant time as well as expertise. Some concerns arose during the inquiry that the new requirement for teachers to complete 100 hours of professional learning every five years will further intensify the workload of those responsible for leading professional learning in Victorian schools.⁷²⁷ The director of staff development in a school with over 100 teachers envisaged an 'enormous' increase in workload if he is expected to ensure that teachers record their professional learning appropriately.⁷²⁸ One principal was sufficiently concerned about the administrative implications of the new requirements to suggest that schools may simply refuse to comply.⁷²⁹

The Committee notes that many organisations in other industries employ skilled professionals dedicated to human resource management, including the coordination of staff professional learning. Evidence to the inquiry suggests that this approach is also being adopted in Victorian schools. The Committee heard from two education professionals whose role is focused on staff development, combining coordination of professional learning with actual delivery of some professional learning activities through a mentoring and coaching role.⁷³⁰

The Victorian Independent Education Union recommended that all schools should have an appointed professional development coordinator, with sufficient time and resources to help teachers identify their professional learning needs and locate suitable programs.⁷³¹ While the two full-time professional learning coordinators who participated in the inquiry came from large, well-resourced schools, the Committee notes that many schools may not have the resources to employ a dedicated staff member in this role. The Committee therefore believes that there is a role for the Department in ensuring that someone with the skills and time to plan teacher professional learning effectively is available to every Victorian

⁷²⁵ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 15.

⁷²⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), *Leading Professional Learning*, DEECD website, <<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/proflearning/schoolleadership/program/leadpl.htm>>, accessed 9 July 2008.

⁷²⁷ Mr B. Davern, Principal, Mount Clear Secondary College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 4; Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11.

⁷²⁸ Dr A. Ford, Director, Staff Development, Ballarat Grammar, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 4.

⁷²⁹ Mr J. Burt, Principal, Ballarat Specialist School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 14.

⁷³⁰ Ms J. Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P-9 College, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2; Ms L. O'Grady, Head of Innovation in Middle Years and ICTEV Teacher of the Year 2007, Caroline Springs College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 29.

⁷³¹ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 7.

government school. This may be a school-based role in larger schools, but may also be made available at a regional or cluster level for schools that cannot support such a role in their current staffing arrangements.

An additional source of professional learning leadership for Victorian government schools is provided through the Schools for Innovation and Excellence Program. Grants provided to school clusters through the program included funding for a cluster educator (or cluster coordinator). The Committee heard that the cluster educator was a key factor in the success of the program,⁷³² and played an important role in organising professional learning activities relevant to local needs and priorities.⁷³³ A spokesperson for national education agency Curriculum Corporation told the Committee that Innovation and Excellence cluster educators have also supported Victorian schools' involvement in cluster-based Australian Government professional learning programs.⁷³⁴ The Committee supports an ongoing role for cluster educators in leading professional learning projects across school clusters.

The Committee believes that it is especially important to ensure that effective leadership for professional learning is available in Victorian schools that are struggling to achieve their full potential. Leadership teams in these schools may benefit from additional expert assistance in planning teacher professional learning and developing broader strategies for school improvement. Support from an external source may serve to provide a fresh perspective, raise awareness of best practice, and help devise high-level strategies for significant change.

During international investigations, the Committee heard that Scotland offers assistance for schools in planning school improvement strategies through its school inspection processes. Following a school inspection, the HM Inspectorate of Education may undertake any of a range of 'follow-through' activities, depending on the strengths and weaknesses identified in the school. These include an option to undertake further 'support visits', to work with the school and its local authority staff to develop strategies to address identified areas for improvement. The Inspectorate has reported that the follow-through process is 'a very positive one' overall. Almost all schools successfully assume responsibility for main 'points of action' identified through the support visits, and achieve genuine improvement to the services they offer to their students.⁷³⁵

The Victorian school system does not have a school inspection process comparable to the Scottish model. However, the Committee notes that the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has recently announced plans to provide 'urgent assistance' for schools where students are not performing to expected standards.⁷³⁶ This may include school-to-school mentoring arrangements, additional professional learning opportunities, as well as external support with the management of staff and school resources. In particular, the newly-appointed Regional Network Leaders are expected to contribute to the provision of more intensive support for schools in need of improvement.⁷³⁷ The Committee suggests that assistance with the development of effective teacher professional learning plans should be a key element of this support.

⁷³² Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 3; Ms W. Baker, Principal, Pleasant Street Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 16.

⁷³³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *Evaluation of Phase 1 of the Schools for Innovation and Excellence (SIE) Initiative*, DEECD, Melbourne, pp. 1–2.

⁷³⁴ Ms G. England, Senior Project Manager, Curriculum Projects, Curriculum Corporation, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 5.

⁷³⁵ Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Education, *Follow Through*, HMIE website, <<http://www.hmie.gov.uk/AboutUs/InspectionResources/Follow+Through.htm>>, accessed 8 October 2008.

⁷³⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 26.

⁷³⁷ *ibid.*

Online tools to support a culture of professional learning

The Committee believes that new technologies have an important role to play in helping schools to develop and maintain organisational structures to support teacher professional learning. The Committee notes that the new Pdi Online database (refer Chapter 2) is a significant development in the use of online facilities to help teachers plan and locate professional learning opportunities. The Victorian Institute of Teaching has indicated that the functions of Pdi Online will be expanded further in future, to include facilities such as online registration for professional learning programs and customised teacher email alerts.⁷³⁸

New technologies are also being used to improve processes for monitoring and recording professional learning. The Committee heard that schools are increasingly using online technologies such as learning management systems to track the professional learning of their staff.⁷³⁹ 'PD Tracker' software is one such innovation brought to the attention of the Committee. First developed as a small project in 1998, the software has been developed and expanded to help schools monitor professional development activities for their staff.⁷⁴⁰ In the course of the inquiry, the Committee heard from schools that have found the program to be beneficial in implementing their Performance and Development Culture processes.⁷⁴¹

The Committee believes there is scope for online professional learning search and registration facilities and online tracking processes to be integrated into a single system. An example of this integration can be found in another online facility, PDOnline, which was adopted by five regions of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development before Pdi Online was developed.⁷⁴² PDOnline resembles the current and proposed functions of Pdi Online, in listing professional learning activities offered by each region in a searchable database, and enabling teachers to register their attendance electronically. However, it also provides teachers with regular email summaries of the professional learning they have undertaken in a given period, to assist them in maintaining their professional learning records. It is uncertain what impact the development of Pdi Online will have on the use of PDOnline software in departmental regional offices and their schools.

During international investigations, the Committee heard an excellent example of how a more integrated system of online management for teacher professional learning may evolve. CPDFind, a national online database developed by Learning and Teaching Scotland, lists all registered Scottish professional learning providers, and enables teachers to search, register and create customised email alerts for professional learning programs. It also enables teachers to record the professional learning they undertake in an online portfolio, as well as an online learning journal.

Another notable feature of the Scottish online professional learning system is CPDReflect, a tool which helps teachers to reflect on their current practice against professional standards. Teachers can also access professional advice from colleagues through CPDReflect, or can create a professional learning 'wish list' to address identified needs.⁷⁴³ The CPDReflect concept is similar to the online resources currently available to support the Principles of Learning and Teaching self-assessment process, which have received favourable evaluations from teachers in Victorian government schools.⁷⁴⁴ The Committee notes that the

⁷³⁸ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

⁷³⁹ Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 9.

⁷⁴⁰ PD Tracker website, <<http://pdtracker.com.au/index.php>>, accessed 27 May 2008.

⁷⁴¹ Participant comments in Performance and Development Culture Open Sessions: Altona North Primary School, 13 March 2008; and Bentleigh West Primary School, 13 March 2008.

⁷⁴² Professional Development Online Services, *Log in*, pd-online website, <<http://www.pd-online.net/pd-user-login.php>>, accessed 9 September 2008.

⁷⁴³ Learning and Teaching Scotland, *What is CPDReflect?*, LTS website, <<http://ltsblogs.org.uk/cpdteam/2008/03/04/what-is-cpdreflect/>>, accessed 20 October 2008.

⁷⁴⁴ Supplementary information provided by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), August 2007.

WA College of Teaching has also developed an online facility for reflecting on and evaluating teacher professional learning.

The Committee was very impressed with the Scottish online facility overall, and believes that a similar facility would be of great value to teachers in Victoria. The Committee recommends that the Victorian Government assess the range of electronic facilities currently available to help teachers plan, locate, register for, record and evaluate their professional learning. The Committee believes that a strategy for integrating these systems should be explored, with a view to providing a comprehensive facility for teachers to undertake all aspects of organising their professional learning online. This should include facilities to record participation in accredited programs as described in Chapter 2, as well as the teacher-identified professional learning activities that may also contribute to the mandated 100 hours. In addition, the online facility should enable teachers to reflect on their practice, and record the impact of the professional learning they have undertaken on their teaching practice and on student learning.

Planning for effective teacher professional learning

Throughout the inquiry, representatives of schools, system authorities and teacher associations commented that schools must reflect a range of priorities from different stakeholders in their teacher professional learning programs. Schools must not only mediate between the different professional learning needs and preferences of individual teachers, but must also reflect the broader priorities determined at the school or system level.⁷⁴⁵ The Committee heard that mediating between these priorities can be challenging, and requires schools to adopt a considered and transparent approach to professional learning planning.

The Committee found that a critical but constructive approach to change is a key element of balancing school and system priorities in teacher professional learning. Dr Neville Johnson discussed this issue in detail in a 2003 paper prepared for the then Department of Education and Training. For Dr Johnson, effective change management occurs in schools where leadership teams adapt external reforms and initiatives to suit local priorities:

Effective learning teams never lose control of the improvement and change process. When they are faced with an outside proposal for change, they shape it to address the learning and teaching challenges of their own school context, but without the proposal losing its critical characteristics and essence.⁷⁴⁶

'What you want from teachers is to critically engage with change.'

Mr Paul Martin,
President,
Victorian Association for
the Teaching of English

Another participant quoted noted educationalist Dr Michael Fullan in cautioning against an uncritical response to change:

The greatest problem faced by school districts and schools is not resistance to innovation but the fragmentation, overload and incoherence resulting from the uncritical acceptance of too many different innovations.⁷⁴⁷

A representative of the Catholic Education Office agreed that 'knee-jerk' responses to external initiatives can undermine the professional learning goals schools set for

⁷⁴⁵ For example, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 20; Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Victorian Association for Environmental Education, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6; Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Mr T. Condon, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 11 February 2008, p. 12; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 4.

⁷⁴⁶ N. J. Johnson 2003, *Perspectives on Education: Working in Teams*, Department of Education and Training (Victoria), Melbourne, p. 22.

⁷⁴⁷ M. Fullan, cited in Dr J. Anderson, Representative, Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 10.

themselves, especially in a policy environment subject to both state and federal government reforms.⁷⁴⁸

As well as engaging critically with system priorities, schools must consider the needs and preferences of individual teachers when planning professional learning. Many participants made the comment that professional learning must be perceived by teachers as relevant to their needs in order for it to be successful.⁷⁴⁹ However, some raised concerns that current resourcing arrangements may make it difficult for teachers to pursue the professional learning that they consider to be most relevant. The Committee heard that a whole-school approach to planning can deter teachers from pursuing 'valid professional interests',⁷⁵⁰ or may prevent teachers from accessing specialised programs with which their principals are unfamiliar.⁷⁵¹ It may also create competition for professional learning resources between school staff.⁷⁵²

The Committee heard the suggestion that more transparent funding of professional learning within school budgets would give teachers greater autonomy in making decisions about their own professional learning.⁷⁵³ One participant suggested that school budgets should identify a guaranteed professional learning amount for every teacher, including funds for teacher release.⁷⁵⁴ The Committee nevertheless believes that it is preferable for schools to adopt a flexible, cooperative approach to professional learning planning, rather than to be constrained by designated 'entitlements' to individual teachers. As noted previously, effective strategies for teacher professional learning will involve a wide range of collaborative, individual, school-based and off-site activities, which may be very difficult to break down into annual expenditure at the individual teacher level.

The Committee heard several examples of the processes that schools use to align individual teacher professional learning plans with whole-school priorities. These included:

- A whole-school planning day at the start of term four, with an emphasis on congruence and whole-school goals. Staff then build their individual professional development plans around these goals.⁷⁵⁵
- Teachers each developing individual learning plans based on their career aspirations, which are then matched against a whole-school action plan by school administrators.⁷⁵⁶
- Guidelines for teachers wishing to attend professional development activities, whereby they must present a case to the leadership team for why they want to attend a particular program, and how it will benefit the school.⁷⁵⁷

The Committee commends these strategies as supporting transparent and well-considered professional learning planning processes.

⁷⁴⁸ Mr L. Mitchell, Head of Educational Services, Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 38.

⁷⁴⁹ For example, Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 11; Australian Council for Educational Research, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2; Christian Schools Australia, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 4; Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 1; Mr B. Burgess, President, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 4.

⁷⁵⁰ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

⁷⁵¹ Ms G. Thomas, Irlen Regional Director, Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 3.

⁷⁵² History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁷⁵³ Ms T. Taylor-Cox, Teacher, Thebarton Senior College and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence by a Beginning Teacher, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007), Written Submission, June 2007, p. 2.

⁷⁵⁴ Mr R. Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5.

⁷⁵⁵ Mr R. Knight, President, History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 41.

⁷⁵⁶ Mr I. Clarkson, Principal, Rainbow Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 13.

⁷⁵⁷ Ms L. O'Grady, Head of Innovation in Middle Years and ICTEV Teacher of the Year 2007, Caroline Springs College, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 32.

The Performance and Development Culture Program provides another important mechanism for helping Victorian government schools to align school, system and teacher professional learning priorities. As noted above, schools seeking accreditation under the program are expected to consider all three priority areas in developing teacher professional learning plans. The program also requires schools to gather multiple sources of feedback to evaluate teacher performance, and determine priorities for teacher development.⁷⁵⁸ These sources may include student achievement data, as well as qualitative and quantitative feedback from parents, teachers and students in the school. The Committee believes that a data-driven approach is likely to be the most effective way to align school, system and teacher priorities in planning teacher professional learning. It enables professional learning planning to be focused around a goal common to all levels of the education system: the demonstrable improvement of student learning.

Mediating between different priorities for teacher professional learning also requires schools to adopt a long-term strategic approach. One participant commented that schools should not expect to do everything at once, but should choose a focus area, year by year, to achieve genuine results in teacher professional learning over the longer term.⁷⁵⁹ A spokesperson for the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development supported the prerogative of schools to 'concentrate on particular things at a particular time', and the role of school leadership in mediating between system and school priorities.⁷⁶⁰ The Victorian Independent Education Union also recommended that schools allocate resources for professional learning on a cyclic basis, such as over a three-year period, to ensure that all teachers' needs are met over time.⁷⁶¹

Many participants commented that Victorian educators are now moving away from one-off professional learning events to more sustained, long-term programs, in line with international best practice.⁷⁶² Current departmental guidelines for Victorian government schools expect that schools will assess school data, set targets and identify the professional learning required to reach them as part of their four-year strategic plans.⁷⁶³ The Committee heard that long-term school improvement plans should be broken down into short-term, 'doable' professional learning projects, to avoid an 'incessant' approach to change.⁷⁶⁴ One participant agreed that specific teacher professional development activities should have a clear beginning and an end,⁷⁶⁵ while another suggested one school semester as the maximum duration for a single professional learning activity.⁷⁶⁶

One Victorian principal provided the Committee with an example of an effective long-term professional learning initiative in her four-year Schools for Innovation and Excellence cluster project. To sustain momentum throughout the project, the focus of the project changed slightly each year. In the first year, teachers learned about inquiry learning, and practised it

⁷⁵⁸ Office of Learning and Teaching, Department of Education and Training (Victoria) 2006, *Blueprint for Government Schools: Performance and Development Culture – Guidelines for Applicants for Accreditation*, Office of Learning and Teaching, DE&T, Melbourne.

⁷⁵⁹ Dr G. Calnin, Director of Policy and Research, Association of Independent Schools of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 8.

⁷⁶⁰ Ms J. Petch, Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building, Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 6 August 2007, p. 18.

⁷⁶¹ Victorian Independent Education Union, Written Submission, June 2007, p. 6.

⁷⁶² Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 28; Mr S. Pryor, Executive Officer, The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 17 September 2007, p. 36; Ms J. Mackay, Director, Behaviour Management in Education, Written Submission, July 2008, pp. 1–3; Mr D. Hornsby, Consultant, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 9.

⁷⁶³ Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2007, *School Strategic Planning Guidelines 2009*, DEECD, Melbourne, pp. 4–5.

⁷⁶⁴ Dr N. Johnson, Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy, Written Submission, March 2008, pp. 4–5.

⁷⁶⁵ The Mathematical Association of Victoria, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 4.

⁷⁶⁶ Australian College of Educators, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

in their own professional learning activities. In the second year, they were supported by consultants to trial the new learning methods they had practised with their students. The third year saw the establishment of cross-school learning teams, and the final year involved planning to sustain the new learning beyond the formal project period.⁷⁶⁷

The Committee also heard that an effective professional learning program may become 'self-sustaining', with one change leading to another through a 'ripple effect'.⁷⁶⁸ As one professional learning project is completed in a school, it will inevitably give rise to new 'wonderings' or reveal new opportunities for developments in teaching practice. In this way, a continuous cycle of learning and improvement can be sustained at the whole-school level, just as it is sustained by individual teachers in their day-to-day practice.

Casual relief teachers (CRTs)

The Committee heard that not all Victorian teachers have access to support from schools in their professional learning. Casual relief teachers (CRTs), and other teachers who are not permanently employed by schools, represent between 10 and 14 per cent (10 000 to 15 000) of registered teachers in Victoria.⁷⁶⁹ The Victorian Institute of Teaching described these teachers as a vital group within the teaching profession 'without whom schools could not continue to function effectively'.⁷⁷⁰

Registered Victorian CRTs are governed by the same policy framework as teachers in permanent employment. In terms of professional learning, this means that Victorian CRTs are also subject to the new requirements to complete 100 hours of professional learning every five years to renew their registration. The Committee heard that the new requirements for ongoing professional learning offer an opportunity for the expertise and professional standing of CRTs to be developed and supported. Mr Daryl Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria (a professional network for Victorian CRT agencies), endorsed 'stringency for teacher registration and renewal' as a way to strengthen CRT quality and professionalism.⁷⁷¹

'[CRTs are] a previously neglected cohort of teachers who in most cases are yearning to build their connectedness, sense of worth and professional standing in schools.'

Mr Daryl Brooks,
President,
Teacher Agency
Network of Victoria

Unlike permanently employed teachers, Victorian CRTs also have an alternative to full teacher registration to be eligible for employment in schools, called Permission to Teach (PTT). The PTT(CRT) category applies to individuals who are not fully qualified as teachers, but who have completed at least three years of tertiary education, including at least one year of approved teacher education.⁷⁷² PTT(CRT) may be granted for up to five years, and permits the individual to undertake casual relief teaching only.⁷⁷³ While PTT(CRT) does not currently carry any requirements for ongoing professional learning, the 2008 review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching suggested that 'appropriate professional development standards' should also be developed for the PTT(CRT) category.⁷⁷⁴ The Committee agrees that all CRTs, whether fully registered or otherwise, can make a genuine contribution to student learning in

⁷⁶⁷ Ms J. Parry, Assistant Principal, Ringwood Heights Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 28 March 2008, p. 37.

⁷⁶⁸ Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 19.

⁷⁶⁹ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 17.

⁷⁷⁰ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

⁷⁷¹ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 11.

⁷⁷² Victorian Institute of Teaching 2007, *Permission to Teach Policy*, VIT, Melbourne.

⁷⁷³ Victorian Institute of Teaching, *Key Changes to the Permission to Teach Policy*, VIT website, <http://www.vit.vic.edu.au/content.asp?Document_ID=815>, accessed 3 October 2008.

⁷⁷⁴ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 61.

Victorian schools, and should therefore be engaged in continual development of their teaching practice.

At the same time, the Committee heard that access to professional learning is an issue of significant concern for many Victorian CRTs. The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey indicated a high level of dissatisfaction among CRTs with professional learning, compared to their colleagues in permanent employment. In the survey, casual teachers rated their professional learning much lower than their full-time or part-time colleagues on measures relating to quality, relevance and support.⁷⁷⁵ The Committee found that this results from a number of barriers that may inhibit effective professional learning for Victorian CRTs.

Barriers to professional learning for CRTs

In the 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey, the barrier to professional learning most commonly identified by Victorian casual teachers was lack of information about professional learning opportunities (75%).⁷⁷⁶ Mr Daryl Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, commented that CRT agencies are currently the main conduits for information about professional learning for CRTs. Mr Brooks endorsed the new Pdi Online database as a valuable resource to improve awareness of professional learning opportunities among CRTs.⁷⁷⁷ However, the Committee notes that CRTs are still likely to have fewer *ad hoc* opportunities to find out about professional learning options than teachers working permanently in schools.⁷⁷⁸

The second most frequently identified barrier to professional learning in the survey was the need for many CRTs to fund their own professional learning (identified by 73% of Victorian casual teachers). The two CRT agencies that made submissions to the inquiry agreed that the cost of participating in professional learning presents significant difficulties for CRTs.⁷⁷⁹ One observed that some single professional learning programs are the 'equivalent in cost to 2–4 days salary'. Many CRTs therefore restrict themselves to 'freebies', often compromising the quality and relevance of the programs they undertake.⁷⁸⁰ In addition to covering the costs of their professional learning, CRTs also lose the opportunity to work if they undertake professional learning activities during the school term.⁷⁸¹ The Committee heard that unlike permanently employed teachers, CRTs therefore prefer professional learning to be offered during evenings, weekends, school holidays, or times of the year in which work is less readily available.⁷⁸²

The third barrier identified by a high proportion of Victorian casual teachers in the survey (71%) was the lack of professional development activities specifically for CRTs.⁷⁸³ While CRTs may access professional learning programs targeted at permanently employed teachers, the Committee heard that many such programs are not relevant to the particular nature of CRT work. Mr Brooks observed that currently, only the Victorian Institute of

'...we do not [want to] have a group of professionals out there that all our schools use who are falling further and further behind in knowledge about VELs, about assessment and reporting.

In schools we are trying to look after our own staff, but as a system I think we need to look at that big body of people too that the system really requires to function effectively.'

Mr Barry Heywood,
Principal,
Miners Rest Primary School

⁷⁷⁵ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 25.

⁷⁷⁶ *ibid.*, p. 7.

⁷⁷⁷ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 11.

⁷⁷⁸ Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 11.

⁷⁷⁹ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5; Primary Education Management, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

⁷⁸⁰ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5.

⁷⁸¹ Primary Education Management, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁷⁸² Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5.

⁷⁸³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 7.

Teaching, CRT agencies and 'a select few private providers' offer professional learning programs designed specifically for CRT needs.⁷⁸⁴

The Victorian Institute of Teaching currently delivers a range of professional learning programs especially for Victorian CRTs. While the Institute's statutory responsibilities do not usually extend to the delivery of professional learning, the Institute has moved into this area to fill an identified gap in the system.⁷⁸⁵ The Institute's chief executive officer told the Committee that the Institute currently delivers CRT professional learning programs around Victoria as they 'discover a need'. However, they are limited in their ability to do so both by their current jurisdictional authority and their current resource base.⁷⁸⁶

Both CRT agencies that made written submissions to the inquiry also offer some professional learning activities to the CRTs they employ. The Committee notes that many CRT agencies have made a commitment to maintaining the currency of their educational expertise through a voluntary Code of Practice developed by the Teacher Agency Network of Victoria.⁷⁸⁷ However, agency-delivered programs are largely training activities, covering topics such as CRT resources and tips, first aid training, legal responsibilities in Victorian schools and career development in education.⁷⁸⁸ One agency noted that CRT agencies currently have neither the resources nor the expertise to provide deeper-level professional learning related to curriculum or pedagogy.⁷⁸⁹

The Victorian Institute of Teaching argued that schools are well-situated to develop and deliver quality professional learning programs for CRTs, and that it is 'clearly in their interests and in the interest of student learning' for them to do so.⁷⁹⁰ However, it acknowledged that schools do not typically have the resources to provide professional learning opportunities to non-permanent staff.⁷⁹¹ Mr Brooks reported that many schools do attempt to offer professional learning to the CRTs they employ, but that this 'does not occur on a consistent or equitable basis' due to budgetary constraints.⁷⁹² The 2007 Victorian Institute of Teaching survey found that only 24 per cent of Victorian casual teachers considered that the school where they had most recently worked provided good support for CRT professional learning.⁷⁹³

The Committee heard that teacher networks may also help CRTs to access professional learning. The Teacher Learning Network offers programs at a discounted rate for union members who are not in regular employment.⁷⁹⁴ A spokesperson from the Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, also reported that some CRTs access professional learning provided by the regional network, although typically on an *ad hoc* basis rather through a planned, sustained approach.⁷⁹⁵ CRTs may often be unable to attend network professional learning at the same times as permanent

⁷⁸⁴ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 11.

⁷⁸⁵ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 76.

⁷⁸⁶ Mr A. Ius, Chief Executive Officer, Victorian Institute of Teaching, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 16 July 2007, p. 32.

⁷⁸⁷ Teacher Agency Network of Victoria 2006, *Code of Ethics*, TANVIC website, <<http://www.tanvic.com.au/ethics.html>>, accessed 16 July 2008.

⁷⁸⁸ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 5; Primary Education Management, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁷⁸⁹ Primary Education Management, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 2.

⁷⁹⁰ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

⁷⁹¹ *ibid.*

⁷⁹² Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 11.

⁷⁹³ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers' Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 106.

⁷⁹⁴ Teacher Learning Network, TLN website, <<http://www.tln.org.au>>, accessed 1 October 2008.

⁷⁹⁵ Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

teachers, as this is exactly when they are likely to be called upon to work.⁷⁹⁶ The Committee also notes that the need to keep fees to a minimum for all network members may limit the ability of teacher networks to provide professional learning to CRTs at affordable rates.

The Committee is concerned that the barriers CRTs experience in accessing professional learning may deter them from maintaining full teacher registration as the new requirements for ongoing professional learning are phased in. This may further reduce CRT supply in areas that already face significant difficulties in covering teacher absences, especially rural and regional areas. The Committee believes it is therefore essential for strategies to be implemented to ensure that the new requirements for teacher professional learning serve their intended purpose as a support for, and not a disincentive to, professionalism in the Victorian CRT workforce.

Improving support for CRT professional learning

Recommendations that Victorian education systems should do more to support professional learning for CRTs recurred throughout the inquiry.⁷⁹⁷ One solution may be to modify expectations for teacher professional learning according to the number of hours that teachers work. The Committee notes that a recent draft professional learning framework released by the Queensland College of Teachers provides ‘pro rata’ professional learning requirements for teachers who are not employed full-time. While full-time teachers will be expected to undertake 30 hours of professional learning per year, Queensland teachers who teach for fewer than 200 days have a pro rata reduction in hours (refer Table 4.3).

Table 4.3: Pro rata professional learning requirements for Queensland teachers

Days/hours teaching employment per year	CPD requirements per year
200 days and above [1000 hours and above]	At least 30 hours
160 – 199 days [800 – 999 hours]	At least 25 hours
120 – 159 days [600 – 799 hours]	At least 20 hours
80 – 119 days [400 – 599 hours]	At least 15 hours
40 – 79 days [200 – 399 hours]	At least 10 hours

Source: Queensland College for Teachers 2008, *Continuing Professional Development Framework (draft for consultation)*, QCT, Brisbane, p. 5.

The Committee agrees that a pro rata approach to professional learning requirements may go some way towards assisting teachers who do not work full-time, including those in part-time or casual employment. However, it would not address the other difficulties inherent to CRTs’ specific circumstances. The Victorian Institute of Teaching observed that a key challenge for Victorian CRTs is that no central employer is responsible for their professional learning.⁷⁹⁸ Regardless of the hours that they work, CRTs therefore still may not have the same access to employer-funded professional learning that is available to teachers permanently employed in schools.

⁷⁹⁶ Australian Research Group Pty Ltd 2007, *Victorian Report: Teachers’ Professional Development*, report commissioned by the Victorian Institute of Teaching, Australian Research Group, Melbourne, p. 7.

⁷⁹⁷ For example, Teacher Learning Network, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 8; Ms K. Howden-Clarnette, School Improvement Officer, Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6; Mr B. Heywood, Principal, Miners Rest Primary School, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Ballarat, 13 August 2007, p. 6.

⁷⁹⁸ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

Mr Daryl Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, suggested that the Victorian Institute of Teaching would be the appropriate body to assume responsibility for implementing a more structured approach to professional learning for Victorian CRTs.⁷⁹⁹ In a 2006 paper discussing the impact of the new professional learning requirements on CRTs, the Institute stated that it is 'committed to providing support for these teachers to meet the requirement for professional development activities to renew registration'.⁸⁰⁰ The Committee agrees that as the cross-sectoral agency with responsibility for the entire Victorian teaching profession, there is scope for the Victorian Institute of Teaching to expand its role in supporting professional learning for the CRT workforce.

As well as providing some professional learning for CRTs directly, the Committee believes that the Institute may have an important role to play in encouraging schools and other organisations to help address CRTs' professional learning needs. The Institute has recently trialed a program to provide schools with funding of up to \$1 500 to deliver professional learning for CRTs and teachers returning to the profession. The Institute reported that schools have 'responded enthusiastically' to the pilot program, and recommended that a central fund should be established for this program to continue.⁸⁰¹

The Committee heard that there may also be a role for the Institute in assisting CRT agencies in the provision of professional learning. One CRT agency recommended that agencies be supported to expand their role in providing professional learning to the CRTs they employ. It suggested that agencies should be subject to some form of accreditation, which would enable them to apply for funding to host high-quality CRT professional learning, either provided directly by the agency or with assistance from schools.⁸⁰²

The Committee agrees that professional learning for CRTs may be effectively delivered by a range of providers, including schools, CRT agencies and teacher networks. It recommends that the Victorian Government consider ways in which such providers may be better supported at a system level. This may include the establishment of a central fund available on application for the development of CRT-specific professional learning programs.

At the same time, the Committee believes that schools already offer many professional learning opportunities that may be of benefit to the CRTs that they employ. These may include planning days, visiting speakers or teacher-delivered presentations. The Committee encourages schools and networks to make their professional learning programs available to CRTs in their region where appropriate, especially to any CRTs with whom they have an ongoing relationship. There may also be scope for schools to work in collaboration with CRT agencies in promoting school-based professional learning programs to other CRTs in their local area. The Committee believes that these arrangements will not only improve access to professional learning for CRTs, but will also benefit schools by ensuring that local CRTs have up-to-date knowledge about their particular programs and priorities.

Summary and recommendations

The Committee recognises that schools are the key agencies in the implementation of effective strategies for teacher professional learning. Over the course of the inquiry, the Committee was impressed to see the diversity of professional learning programs and activities that Victorian schools currently provide. It believes that decisions relating to planning and resourcing for professional learning should continue to be made primarily at the school level, to respond to the particular needs of students and teachers, and their school communities.

⁷⁹⁹ Mr D. Brooks, President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 12.

⁸⁰⁰ Victorian Institute of Teaching 2006, *Renewal of Registration for Teachers with Full Registration: Discussion paper for consultation*, VIT, Melbourne, p. 9.

⁸⁰¹ Victorian Institute of Teaching, Written Submission, July 2007, p. 5.

⁸⁰² Primary Education Management, Written Submission, June 2008, p. 1.

The Committee heard a variety of strategies schools may undertake to maximise the resources they have available for teacher professional learning. These include using time more efficiently, capitalising on school-based or local expertise, and accessing additional system resources through targeted programs. The Committee believes that the new requirements linking professional learning to teacher registration will further challenge schools to develop innovative strategies for planning and resourcing a broad range of professional learning programs. The Committee therefore believes that there is a case for collating and disseminating models of best practice, to assist Victorian schools in allocating their professional learning resources most effectively.

Most of all, the Committee was encouraged to see a shift in how teacher professional learning is reflected in the culture of Victorian schools. The Committee commends the Performance and Development Culture Program as a significant initiative in ensuring that professional learning is effectively planned, monitored and evaluated in Victorian schools at the school and teacher level. The Committee believes that these cultures should now be further supported, through targeted assistance for school leaders, and online tools to help all teachers effectively manage and reflect on their professional learning and practice.

The Committee was concerned, however, to hear that casual relief teachers, a vital group within the Victorian teaching workforce, may be missing out on the growing support provided by schools for teacher professional learning. The Committee believes there is a strong case for the needs of this group to be better addressed at a system level, especially in light of the new professional learning requirements for maintaining teacher registration. At the same time, there is also scope to enhance the role of schools in helping CRTs to access professional learning, by enabling CRTs to tap into the wide variety of teacher professional learning activities that they currently provide.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- 4.1. That the Victorian Government ensure that adequate resources for teacher professional learning are available to all Victorian schools, including resources to meet the special needs of rural and regional and underperforming schools.
- 4.2. That the Victorian Government assist schools to optimise the use of available resources for teacher professional learning, by:
 - continuing to develop and promote flexible models for integrating teacher professional learning within teachers' working hours;
 - supporting and enhancing collaboration through school clusters and networks;
 - supporting and enhancing partnerships between schools and other sectors in the delivery of locally-based professional learning;
 - incorporating adequate resources for high-quality teacher professional learning in all government education reforms; and
 - supporting schools with an identified professional learning need to access additional resources through targeted programs.

4.3. That the Victorian Government support schools to establish and maintain effective processes for planning and monitoring teacher professional learning, in line with a performance and development culture, by:

- requiring all teachers to maintain annual professional learning plans and records of their professional learning activities and outcomes;
- requiring schools to maintain professional learning plans, available for public viewing, that balance system, school and individual teacher priorities; and
- making additional support available for the development of professional learning and school improvement plans in schools with an identified need.

4.4. That the Victorian Government provide teachers with an online facility to:

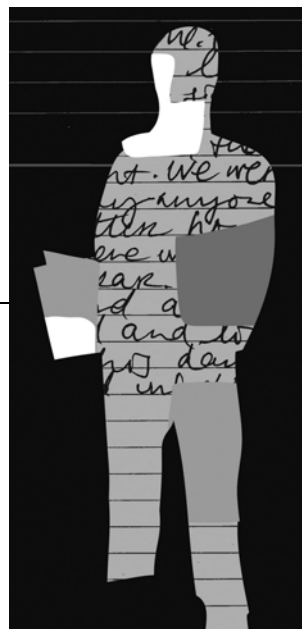
- search a database of accredited professional learning providers, including descriptions of their programs and participant feedback;
- plan and organise their professional learning, including online registration for programs delivered by accredited providers;
- reflect on their current practice against relevant professional standards, to identify future professional learning needs; and
- record their professional learning activities, including analysis of the impact of professional learning on teaching practice and student outcomes.

4.5. That the Victorian Government promote and facilitate improved professional learning opportunities for casual relief teachers, by:

- encouraging schools to include casual relief teachers in relevant professional learning activities; and
- exploring options for assisting professional learning providers to develop and deliver professional learning activities that address the specific needs of the casual relief teaching workforce.

Chapter 5

Early childhood sector



Although the Committee has focused its inquiry on teachers in Victorian schools, it is aware that there are many teachers in Victoria who do not work in the school sector. In particular, recent reforms in Victoria have led to increasing recognition of teacher professionalism in early childhood education. In August 2007, the Office for Children was moved from the Department of Human Services to the newly-formed Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. This represented the first of a series of major Victorian Government initiatives to better integrate teaching and learning in early childhood and primary schooling. Detailed policies in this area are described in the Department's policy statement, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, released in September 2008.

The growing integration of early childhood and school education in Victoria led the Committee to address early childhood teaching as part of the inquiry. At the same time, recent reforms have also highlighted a need for closer integration between early childhood education and child care services. For this reason, the Committee's investigations with regard to the early childhood sector have also extended to child care professionals, including those who may not have been traditionally recognised as having teaching roles. Research has shown that the early years of a child's life are crucial for building firm foundations to support their learning throughout their formal schooling, and beyond.⁸⁰³ The Committee believes that all professionals who interact with children in education and care settings have a critical role to play in supporting this development.

Policy context

The Committee found that the regulatory framework for developing professional expertise in the early childhood workforce is more complex than for the school teaching profession, due to the wide variety of services that operate in the sector. Children younger than school age may attend a range of services, which differ widely in their hours and programs. These include education services such as kindergartens and preschools, child care services such as long day care, family day care or occasional care, and intervention programs for children with special learning needs.

⁸⁰³ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform: Early Childhood Development Discussion Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 5.

Most Victorian children attend kindergarten for either one or two years prior to starting school, with a 94 per cent kindergarten participation rate reported in 2008.⁸⁰⁴ For children in child care, the Committee heard that working patterns for parents mean that long day care is currently the most common arrangement.⁸⁰⁵ Many long day care centres also offer the opportunity for children to attend sessional kindergarten programs, either co-located or off-site.

As well as differing in their programs, early childhood education and care services differ in their governance structures. Most kindergartens in Victoria are managed by volunteer parent committees, local government, cluster managers, independent schools, or as part of a long day care facility.⁸⁰⁶ In contrast, the Committee heard that around two-thirds of child care providers in Victoria are commercially operated.⁸⁰⁷

Recent policy developments in Victoria and at a national level have sought to reduce the boundaries between early childhood education and care. The Australian Government has committed to ensuring that all four-year-olds will be able to access 15 hours of teacher-led preschool per week by 2013.⁸⁰⁸ Given that long day care is an increasingly popular model for four-year-old care, better integration between kindergartens and child care facilities will be necessary to improve children's access to both education and care services.⁸⁰⁹ The Victorian Government has also committed to better integrating early childhood education and care, to ensure that children in care have access to high-quality educational services.⁸¹⁰

The Committee heard that this closer integration of services for Victorian children will change the way that early childhood professionals work and interact. Not only will it lessen the divide between early childhood teachers and teachers in schools, it will also open up opportunities for collaboration between early childhood professionals from a range of backgrounds and services. The Committee found that these changes have profound implications for professional learning policies for the Victorian early childhood workforce.

Professional learning policies for early childhood teachers

Different policies to support and develop professional expertise apply to different types of early childhood services. Kindergarten programs must be planned and delivered by a qualified early childhood teacher with at least a three-year degree. While there is no professional regulatory authority for the sector comparable to the Victorian Institute of Teaching, provisions for professional learning for early childhood teachers are set out in their Multi-Employer Certified Agreement. The Committee found that professional learning expectations for Victorian kindergarten or preschool teachers set out in the Agreement are broadly similar to those for teachers in Victorian schools.

The Agreement requires early childhood teachers to commit to maintaining a Professional Development and Enhancement Plan (PDEP) as a condition of their annual incremental salary progression.⁸¹¹ As part of their PDEP, early childhood teachers must complete at least four days of professional learning annually. This minimum is applied on a pro-rata basis for part-time employees, reflecting the high proportion of part-time workers in the

⁸⁰⁴ M. Morand MLA, Minister for Children and Early Childhood Development, 'Improved Access to Early Childhood Education for Victoria', *Media Release*, June 12, 2008.

⁸⁰⁵ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

⁸⁰⁶ Kindergarten Parents Victoria, *Kindergartens in Victoria*, KPV website, <<http://www.kpv.org.au/page/view/kindergartens-in-victoria-131/>>, accessed 12 November 2008.

⁸⁰⁷ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 3.

⁸⁰⁸ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁰⁹ Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 9.

⁸¹⁰ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 23.

⁸¹¹ *Early Childhood Educators' Multi-Employer Certified Agreement 2005*, pp. 14–15.

sector. The PDEP process requires early childhood teachers to plan and document their professional learning activities over the annual salary review period, and to maintain evidence of the professional learning activities they have undertaken. They then submit evidence of this participation to their employer to sign off, in order to be eligible for an incremental salary increase.⁸¹²

In light of the recent inclusion of early childhood development within the Education Department, the 2008 review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching suggested that the Institute should be given a role in registering and regulating Victorian early childhood teachers. The review commented that given teachers with an early childhood degree may teach children up to eight years of age, many teachers working in early childhood education are also already registered with the Institute. Furthermore, it noted that work on a system of registration for early childhood professionals has already been commenced by the former Office for Children. The review concluded that it would be logical to locate teacher registration at all levels within a single authority, thereby creating 'economies of scale'.⁸¹³

Some discussion around the potential introduction of registration for early childhood teachers arose in evidence to the inquiry. The president of Early Childhood Australia (Victoria) endorsed the establishment of a professional body to ensure that measures to support professionalism are available to the early childhood workforce. However, the president remained cautious about endorsing a role for the Victorian Institute of Teaching in this regard, noting that it does not currently have a close relationship with or understanding of the early childhood field.⁸¹⁴ Another participant commented that diverse organisational arrangements in the sector may make it more difficult to implement workforce regulations than in the school sector, where the majority of teachers are employed by the Department.⁸¹⁵

Perhaps most importantly, the Committee heard that closer regulatory alignment between early childhood teachers and school teachers may deepen divides within the early childhood workforce. As noted above, the early childhood workforce is comprised not only of early childhood teachers, but also of a high number of workers involved in the delivery of child care services. The Committee heard the view that prior campaigns to align early childhood teachers more closely with teachers in schools have contributed to a 'culture of distrust and lack of respect' between early childhood teachers and child care workers.⁸¹⁶ One participant commented that if the 'teacher component' of the early childhood workforce is separated out and aligned with the Victorian Institute of Teaching, there is a risk that this divide will be further entrenched.⁸¹⁷

Professional learning policies for other early childhood professionals

Evidence to the inquiry showed support for a more integrated approach between early childhood education and child care professionals. Ms Barbara Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association, commented that the 'outmoded notion that child care is fundamentally different from teaching' has been a barrier to effective professional learning

⁸¹² *Ibid.*, p. 15.

⁸¹³ FJ and JM King and Associates 2008, *Review of the Victorian Institute of Teaching*, commissioned by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria), DEECD, Melbourne, p. 33.

⁸¹⁴ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 26.

⁸¹⁵ Ms R. Kinson, Education Consultant, Written Submission, July 2008, p.1.

⁸¹⁶ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 4.

⁸¹⁷ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 26.

for early childhood professionals in the past.⁸¹⁸ Ms Romeril explained that her organisation takes a strong view that all adults who interact with young children are teaching them, and that young children will learn in every environment.⁸¹⁹ The Child Care Centres Association of Victoria also remarked that the widespread assumption that long day care centres are simply 'somewhere safe for parents to park their child' is incorrect. The Association asserted that in reality, long day care already functions more like an extended kindergarten program, with a strong focus on child development.⁸²⁰

However, early childhood education and care services differ in expectations for staff qualifications. The Committee heard that few long day care services currently employ degree-qualified early childhood teachers.⁸²¹ Long day care centres must employ at least one staff member with a minimum two-year diploma, and may also employ additional staff holding Certificate III in Children's Services or with no qualification at all. The Committee notes that in 2007, the proportion of staff employed in Victorian child care centres with a two-year tertiary qualification or higher was around 55 per cent.⁸²² Family day care providers are not currently required to hold a formal qualification.

A key aspect of the Victorian Government's strategy to better integrate child care and early childhood education is to raise the level of formal qualifications across the early childhood workforce.⁸²³ A recent OECD report on early childhood services found that degree-qualified teachers are accepted internationally as a key determinant of the quality of both early childhood education and care.⁸²⁴ This view was supported by several of the early childhood organisations that participated in the inquiry.⁸²⁵ The Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has also noted that an emphasis on formal professional training may be a valuable way for the sector to attract and retain quality personnel.⁸²⁶

The Committee heard the view that the top priority for such policies should be raising qualifications for those already working in the sector, who have demonstrated their commitment to early childhood education and care.⁸²⁷ From 2008, the Victorian Government is providing support for practising early childhood professionals to upgrade from a diploma to an early childhood teaching degree, through the Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships for Pathway Students Scheme. The scheme provides 50 two-year scholarships for diploma holders currently working in long day care to upgrade to a degree, on the condition that they commit to working in a kindergarten program in a long day care centre for at least two years afterwards.⁸²⁸ The scheme provides \$6 000 over the two years towards course fees, and also provides employers with up to 20 days release time for the participating staff member.

The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union supported the scheme as an effective response to the need to upgrade qualifications in the long day care sector, and to the

⁸¹⁸ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 2.

⁸¹⁹ *ibid.*

⁸²⁰ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 2.

⁸²¹ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

⁸²² Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform: Early Childhood Development Discussion Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 18.

⁸²³ *ibid.*, p. 32.

⁸²⁴ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development 2006, *Starting Strong II: Early Childhood Education and Care*, OECD, Paris, p. 216.

⁸²⁵ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 23; Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 9; Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 32.

⁸²⁶ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform: Early Childhood Development Discussion Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 18.

⁸²⁷ Representatives of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 20.

⁸²⁸ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) n.d., *Early Childhood Teacher Scholarships for Pathways Students: Frequently asked questions*, DEECD, Melbourne.

barriers that must be addressed for this to take place.⁸²⁹ However, the Union commented that the scheme is limited in scope, and suggested that it should offer twice as many scholarships, and increase the amount of study leave provided to one day per week.⁸³⁰ One Union representative also suggested that the program should be expanded to offer opportunities to those upgrading from certificate to diploma level.⁸³¹

Another key recommendation from the Union was that steps should be taken to clarify articulation through various early childhood qualifications, from certificate to diploma to degree.⁸³² The Union is currently working with leading tertiary providers to develop a best-practice model for articulation within the child care sector.⁸³³ The president of Early Childhood Australia (Victoria) agreed that it is important to develop a pathway with numerous entry points, so that early childhood professionals can pursue further opportunities from wherever they are currently positioned on the qualifications spectrum.⁸³⁴ The Committee notes that improving opportunities for articulation is likely to not only lift the expertise of early childhood professionals, but also open up career pathways to support retention in the workforce.

Recognition of prior learning (RPL) is another key issue in improving the level of qualifications in the early childhood workforce. The Committee heard that many early childhood professionals have extensive experience, which has given them the expertise equivalent to that required by a Certificate III, or even a diploma course. Representatives of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union indicated their support for existing RPL programs that enable such workers to gain qualifications in a reasonably short space of time.⁸³⁵ However, they noted that RPL is typically negotiated with training institutions on a case-by-case basis, and suggested that a more systematic approach be adopted, so that individuals do not have to negotiate terms for themselves.⁸³⁶

Other participants were more cautious about RPL opportunities. Early Childhood Australia (Victoria) is the organisation responsible for evaluating the quality of Victorian early childhood training programs. Its president commented that qualifications with a high component of RPL may have had 'a very minimal component of actual training', and should be 'looked at very carefully' if they are to be used as the basis for progression to a higher qualification. While recognising the value of on-the-job learning, the president suggested that even many years experience in a poor-quality service may not build skills equivalent to those that may be developed through formal training.⁸³⁷

The Committee agrees that it is highly desirable for early childhood services to be delivered by an appropriately skilled and qualified profession. It believes that measures to improve the level of qualifications in the early childhood workforce will not only improve the level of service quality, but will increase professionalism within the sector, and raise the sector's status in the broader community. At the same time, the Committee is aware that the sector is extremely diverse. The introduction of any such measures will therefore need to take

'Degree level qualifications in child development and how children learn help to optimise educational outcomes; however unqualified staff bring life experiences and practical wisdom as do parents, grandparents [and] extended family members.'

Community Child Care Association

⁸²⁹ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

⁸³⁰ *ibid.*, p. 4.

⁸³¹ Ms J. Walsh, Secretary, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 18.

⁸³² Supplementary information provided by the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), September 2008.

⁸³³ *ibid.*

⁸³⁴ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 24.

⁸³⁵ Representatives of the Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 18.

⁸³⁶ *ibid.*, p. 19.

⁸³⁷ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 24.

account of the different needs of different types of early childhood professionals, as well as the challenges they may face in upgrading their professional expertise.

The Committee also believes that policies for professional learning for child care professionals should not focus on qualifications alone. Like other professionals, early childhood carers will benefit from participation in a range of professional learning activities, including many that do not lead to a formal credential. The Committee recognises the difficulties of introducing formal expectations for ongoing professional learning in a sector which does not currently have a regulatory body for members of the profession. However, it is the Committee's view that the Victorian child care workforce would benefit from the introduction of such expectations, to recognise and support their continuing development, irrespective of their level of qualification.

Recognition for developing professional expertise

The need for recognition for professional learning was an issue raised for both early childhood teachers and other professionals in the sector. One participant commented that there is currently no guarantee for early childhood teachers that upgrading to a master's degree or further qualification will result in professional advancement.⁸³⁸ She went on to observe that many kindergarten teachers choose to move into primary schooling to pursue the career opportunities available in the school sector.⁸³⁹ Other participants also identified a need for improved incentives and recognition for further training for child care workers and early childhood intervention professionals.⁸⁴⁰

The Committee nevertheless found that some mechanisms do exist for recognising early childhood professionals who upgrade their expertise. The certified agreement covering early childhood teachers provides opportunities for progression to two higher categories of teaching practice. Early childhood teachers with a minimum of three years' experience who have completed three PDEP rounds may apply for progression to the level of 'Accomplished Teacher'. After seven years' experience and the completion of a further four PDEP rounds, they may apply for recognition as an 'Exemplary Teacher'.⁸⁴¹ In each case, teachers must submit an 'Application for Validation', and have evidence of their practice assessed by an external validator and their employer.⁸⁴² Where both validator and employer agree that a higher teaching classification is warranted, the application is approved.⁸⁴³ Kindergarten Parents Victoria supported the validation process as a means of recognising the importance of ongoing professional learning for early childhood educators.⁸⁴⁴

The current award governing child care professionals in Victoria also sets out different wage rates for unqualified, Certificate III, diploma-qualified and advanced diploma or degree-qualified staff.⁸⁴⁵ This provides some level of recognition for the development of professional expertise. However, the Committee heard that many child care professionals do not consider the resultant increase in wages to be worth the investment of time and resources to complete a higher qualification.⁸⁴⁶ The Committee believes that improving support for professional learning for child care professionals may go some way towards

⁸³⁸ *ibid.*, p. 26.

⁸³⁹ *ibid.*, p. 27.

⁸⁴⁰ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 6; Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3; Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) Inc, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 3.

⁸⁴¹ *Early Childhood Educators' Multi-Employer Certified Agreement 2005*, p. 11.

⁸⁴² *ibid.*, p. 17.

⁸⁴³ *ibid.*

⁸⁴⁴ Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 5.

⁸⁴⁵ Australian Industrial Relations Commission, 'Hours of Work' in Part 6 of *Australian Industrial Loose-Leaf Consolidation Children Services (Victoria) Award 1998*, Award no AW772675CRV.

⁸⁴⁶ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

improving perceptions of the relative costs and benefits of upgrading their knowledge and skills.

Types of content for professional learning in the early childhood sector

Overall, the priorities for professional learning for early childhood educators identified in the inquiry were similar to those identified for teachers in schools. Like school teachers, early childhood professionals must have the skills to provide high-quality developmental programs, protect the welfare of children, respond appropriately to challenging behaviours, and attend to special learning or developmental needs. The Committee was interested to note that like schools, early childhood services also place a high priority on leadership development. This priority has recently been recognised by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, which has stated that the recently announced Victorian Institute of Educational Leadership will provide some leadership programs especially for the early childhood sector.⁸⁴⁷

As part of its role as Professional Support Coordinator for Victorian Children's Services, the Community Child Care Association undertakes ongoing analysis of the professional learning needs of staff in Victorian child care services. The analysis is based on the Association's participation in regular networks and forums, surveys, other regular contact with children's services and professional support providers, and reviews of relevant literature.⁸⁴⁸ The Association provided the Committee with a list of priority content areas for professional learning for long day care providers, the largest group of child care professionals in Victoria:

- changes in families' social environments, work arrangements and expectations of services;
- best practice in protective care for children at risk;
- responding to challenging behaviours in children;
- creating innovative play spaces;
- creating environments that support children from diverse backgrounds;
- health and safety, including healthy eating;
- management, leadership and human resource management skills for service leaders and deputies;
- inclusion of children with additional needs and knowledge of specific disabilities; and
- inclusion of children from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.⁸⁴⁹

The list broadly encompasses the various priorities that were identified by other early childhood stakeholders in the inquiry, although Gowrie Victoria added that skills in information and communication technologies (ICTs) are also essential.⁸⁵⁰

'...responding to that broad range of questions, from the very basic "How do I do this job when I walk in the door in the morning?" through to the much bigger questions of "Why am I doing this job? What does this mean about me and my role in the world and my impact on these children and then future generations of Australians?" is a big task.'

Ms Barbara Romeril,
Executive Director,
Community Child Care
Association

⁸⁴⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 35.

⁸⁴⁸ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

⁸⁴⁹ *ibid.*, p. 3 (adapted).

⁸⁵⁰ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

'Early childhood educators are motivated by their own drive to learn and improve themselves, so that they can better engage with and develop and assist parents to develop the children in their care.'

Child Care Centres
Association of Victoria

Another priority identified for professional learning in the early childhood sector was the need to build skills in engaging and educating parents and families. The Committee heard that early childhood professionals, whether working in child care settings or kindergartens and preschools, regard parent support as a critical element of their role. Both Kindergarten Parents Victoria and the Child Care Centres Association of Victoria commented that early childhood services have a valuable role in educating parents about early childhood learning, and how they may support their child's development in partnership with the service provider.⁸⁵¹ Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) also identified parent relationships as an important area for professional learning, as they are an essential element of early childhood programs for children with additional needs.⁸⁵²

Nevertheless, evidence to the inquiry presented mixed views regarding the content that early childhood professionals themselves typically prioritise in their professional learning. Gowrie Victoria told the Committee that demand for professional learning programs in the sector is often 'reactive', resulting from changes to early childhood regulations, and that compliance-oriented programs are therefore among the most popular.⁸⁵³ One child care centre leader agreed that it takes 'a lot of encouragement' to involve early childhood educators in professional learning in deeper-level content areas such as developing learning programs, theories of learning, or behaviour management.⁸⁵⁴ At the same time, the Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) reported a positive trend in the variety of professional learning programs available to early childhood professionals, from specific, compliance-based programs such as first aid courses, to 'current thinking, new ideas and innovations'.⁸⁵⁵ This suggests a growing awareness of and demand for deeper-level professional learning programs within the early childhood workforce.

Modes of delivery for professional learning in the early childhood sector

As was the case for teachers in schools, evidence to the inquiry did not reveal a single mode of delivery for professional learning that is most suitable to the early childhood workforce. Given the current emphasis on formal qualifications in the sector, one participant argued that it is most important for early childhood sector professional learning to provide articulation into or credits for accredited training courses.⁸⁵⁶ However, a representative of the Community Child Care Association told the Committee that her Association is most often asked to supply one-on-one, on-site assistance rather than specific courses of programs.⁸⁵⁷ This suggests that early childhood professionals are motivated to seek professional learning both to pursue higher qualifications, and simply to improve their capacity to deal with the issues that arise in their day-to-day work.

⁸⁵¹ Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3; Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁵² Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) Inc, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 1.

⁸⁵³ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁴ Ms K. Seadon, Assistant Director, Perry Street Child Care Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 20.

⁸⁵⁵ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 15.

⁸⁵⁶ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁵⁷ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, pp. 4–5.

Externally-delivered courses and programs

Victorian early childhood professionals have a range of options for pursuing courses of further study to upgrade their qualifications. Skills Victoria lists 58 providers that offer the Diploma of Children's Services, and 114 that offer Certificate III in Children's Services.⁸⁵⁸ Early childhood education degrees are offered at seven universities across Victoria, with some offering additional opportunities for master's or doctoral programs.⁸⁵⁹ The Committee nevertheless heard that there may be a need for further development of postgraduate courses in specialist areas of early childhood intervention for children with additional needs.⁸⁶⁰

The organisations that participated in the inquiry also deliver a wide range of further professional learning opportunities. Gowrie Victoria offers 190 professional learning courses delivered by a team of around 40 qualified and experienced presenters, which attract around 4 000 participants every year. These include short courses and workshops, as well as credentialed programs. Gowrie Victoria also offers professional learning opportunities through observation at its own child care facility.

The Community Child Care Association, contracted by the Australian Government as the Professional Support Coordinator for Victorian Children's Services, offers learning opportunities to professionals in government-approved child care services. These include short courses, evening sessions, online courses and self-guided learning packages.⁸⁶¹ Another major professional learning opportunity identified in evidence was the annual Early Childhood Education Conference convened by Kindergarten Parents Victoria, which attracts about 700 participants per year.⁸⁶²

The Committee heard mixed opinions regarding the suitability of the professional learning opportunities currently available to early childhood professionals in Victoria. One participant commented that there are excellent providers of professional learning for early childhood professionals available across the state.⁸⁶³ However, others were less optimistic about the current range of provision. One submission identified a need for more high-end courses, complaining that too many of the courses currently available are overly repetitive or simplistic.⁸⁶⁴ The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) reported that early childhood educators find that professional learning programs are too often delivered by the same presenters.⁸⁶⁵ Another participant added that it is generally not profitable to offer professional learning for early childhood educators, meaning that few private providers are currently available.⁸⁶⁶ She went on to recommend that the government investigate ways to identify current providers of professional learning in the early childhood sector, and assist or encourage new providers in the field.⁸⁶⁷

The Committee found that concerns about the availability of professional learning for early childhood professionals relate especially to access in non-metropolitan areas.⁸⁶⁸ The two major providers of early childhood professional learning who participated in the inquiry commented on their efforts in ensuring that opportunities are available throughout Victoria. The Community Child Care Association is obliged to 'get a good spread geographically' as a

⁸⁵⁸ Skills Victoria website, <<http://www.skills.vic.gov.au/>>, accessed 11 November 2008.

⁸⁵⁹ Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAC) website, <<http://www.vtac.edu.au/>>, accessed 11 November 2008.

⁸⁶⁰ Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) Inc, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 3.

⁸⁶¹ Supplementary information provided by the Community Child Care Association Inc, September 2008.

⁸⁶² Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 6.

⁸⁶³ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

⁸⁶⁴ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 7.

⁸⁶⁵ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 13.

⁸⁶⁶ Ms R. Kinson, Education Consultant, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁶⁷ *ibid.*, p. 3.

⁸⁶⁸ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 13.

condition of its Australian Government funding. However, a representative of the Association told the Committee that some regions simply do not have the 'critical mass' to enable professional learning to be implemented locally.⁸⁶⁹ Gowrie Victoria also provides non-metropolitan courses within its extensive professional learning program, most of which are short-term, but some of which lead to a Certificate III or diploma. The chief executive officer of Gowrie Victoria told the Committee that regional provision is 'very costly' for the organisation, and still often involves significant travel for rural and regional participants.⁸⁷⁰

The Committee heard that flexible or online delivery of professional learning can be highly valued by early childhood professionals. As well as improving access in rural and regional areas, flexible delivery helps those juggling full-time work and family commitments with ongoing training. One participant told the Committee that she gained a bachelor's degree through the Pathways Program at the University of Melbourne, which enabled her to undertake most of her learning either in the workplace or online. The participant commented that this suited her as a full-time worker and parent, although also observed that some may struggle to find the discipline and motivation to undertake a course with such a high proportion of self-directed study.⁸⁷¹

Two major providers of professional learning for early childhood professionals in Victoria also endorsed the value of online modes of delivery. A representative of the Community Child Care Association told the Committee that its new online program is going 'surprisingly well'.⁸⁷² An important element of the program's success is that it enables participants to interact with the trainer in real time, rather than relying on 'a mechanised tick-the-box process'.⁸⁷³ In a written submission, the Association added that self-guided and online learning have proved to be successful modes of delivery for many unqualified or less experienced early childhood professionals.⁸⁷⁴ Gowrie Victoria is also looking at developing online programs in certain areas. However, its president commented that as early childhood is a relationships-based industry sector, it is necessary to be able to observe a staff member interacting with a child or parent in order to assess them.⁸⁷⁵

On-site and collegial professional learning

Like school teachers, early childhood professionals may also enhance their professional learning opportunities by learning from each other. Mentoring was one form of collegial professional learning to receive support in the inquiry, and the Committee notes that professional learning through peer support and mentoring already occurs informally in the early childhood sector.⁸⁷⁶ Another participant supported the value of team-based approaches to professional learning for early childhood professionals.⁸⁷⁷

However, the Committee heard that some early childhood professionals may find it difficult to undertake collegial professional learning activities in their workplaces. One of the key issues raised by Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) was the small size of many

⁸⁶⁹ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 5.

⁸⁷⁰ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 31.

⁸⁷¹ Ms K. Seadon, Assistant Director, Perry Street Child Care Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 19.

⁸⁷² Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 3.

⁸⁷³ *ibid.*

⁸⁷⁴ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 5.

⁸⁷⁵ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 30.

⁸⁷⁶ Kindergarten Parents Victoria, *Vision 2011: A Vision for early childhood education – preparing children for life*, KPV website, <<http://www.kpv.org.au/page/view/vision-2011-48/>>, accessed 3 November 2008.

⁸⁷⁷ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 30.

kindergartens compared to schools, which limits the opportunities that early childhood teachers have to learn from each other.⁸⁷⁸ While long day care centres typically have a minimum of 14 staff, the Committee heard that kindergartens may consist of only one teacher and an untrained assistant.⁸⁷⁹ This not only limits opportunities for collegial professional learning, but may also create difficulties in implementing staff appraisal and professional guidance processes, such as the PDEP.⁸⁸⁰

The Committee heard that improved networking opportunities may be especially important in increasing the opportunities that early childhood professionals have to learn from one another. Most Victorian kindergartens are part of cluster management or local government groups, which provide some opportunities for professional dialogue.⁸⁸¹ Several participants argued for improved support for professional networks, to encourage the spread of best practice, and enable professionals to work together to meet local challenges and needs.⁸⁸² Kindergarten Parents Victoria is currently involved in a pilot project to create networks in three local government areas, to provide early childhood teachers with improved access to 'on-the-job' professional learning.⁸⁸³

In general, the Committee endorses the value of collegial or centre-based professional learning activities. As noted earlier in the report, on-site professional learning activities provide valuable opportunities for professionals to share expertise, and discuss and reflect on their practice in authentic workplace environments. For degree-qualified early childhood teachers (as for school teachers), on-site or collegial professional learning activities may also offer a worthwhile and cost-effective means of meeting the required minimum hours of professional learning.

At the same time, the Committee is concerned that these opportunities may be less well-supported by the current workforce regulations for non-degree-qualified child care workers. The Committee believes that the current emphasis on raising the level of formal qualifications in the child care sector may reduce the appeal of collegial professional learning, which does not offer credits for a formal degree. The Committee encourages centres and early childhood professionals to nevertheless consider the value of in-house programs in supporting the development of staff, and to seek ways to build them into their day-to-day activities. The Committee also suggests that participation in in-house professional learning should be recognised in any recognition of prior learning component of an early childhood certificate or diploma course, where appropriate.

Making connections beyond the early childhood sector

The Community Child Care Association argued that on-site professional learning activities may also be enhanced by collaboration with external experts. It recommended that resourcing be provided for research collaborations between early childhood services and university academics. The Association pointed to the New Zealand Centres of Excellence Program as an example of international best practice in this kind of collaboration.⁸⁸⁴ Beginning in 2003, six Centres of Excellence were selected across the country on three-year cycles, to participate in action research projects (with support from external partners) to explore and disseminate best practice. The program was found to be a valuable

⁸⁷⁸ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 18.

⁸⁷⁹ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 32.

⁸⁸⁰ *ibid.*, p. 30.

⁸⁸¹ *ibid.*

⁸⁸² Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 6; Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 4.

⁸⁸³ Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 10.

⁸⁸⁴ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 5.

way for early childhood services to improve their capacity to respond to local needs, and forge stronger links with families and communities.⁸⁸⁵

In addition, the Committee heard that the creation of the new Department of Education and Early Childhood Development has opened up possibilities for collaboration between early childhood and school teachers in professional learning.⁸⁸⁶ The Department has announced

‘Teachers from both [school and early childhood] sectors need to understand the skills and strengths of each, and work to recognise and exchange those skills. If the imperative is: “What is best for the children”, rather than maintaining “silos” of knowledge and experience, this then can be a strong motivator for enhanced programs for children.’

Gowrie Victoria

plans to increase opportunities for early childhood and primary school teachers to share professional learning and expertise, including proposals to increase co-location of primary schools and early childhood services.⁸⁸⁷ Some participants endorsed the provision of opportunities for school and early childhood teachers to share their knowledge in an environment of mutual respect.⁸⁸⁸ Another commented that closer links between early childhood and school education may be especially beneficial for children with additional learning needs, in enabling specialist support to continue into primary schooling.⁸⁸⁹

Some participants expressed concern that closer integration may put early childhood education at risk of being absorbed into a school-based model.⁸⁹⁰ However, the Committee also heard that the increasing use of play-based learning in the early years of schooling has improved opportunities for knowledge-sharing between the school and early childhood education sectors to occur on a reciprocal basis.⁸⁹¹ The Committee notes that this relationship is likely to be further strengthened by the new Victorian developmental framework for children aged 0–8 years, to support a smooth transition from early childhood education into schooling. Two participants endorsed the development of the framework, with one describing it as ‘the most important thing that has happened to the early childhood sector for some time’.⁸⁹²

Implementing professional learning in early childhood services

As for schools, the successful implementation of professional learning in the early childhood sector depends on the support that is provided at the centre level. This support must include the allocation of resources to enable professional learning to occur, and effective leadership to create workplace cultures that encourage staff to engage in continual learning and improvement to their practice. However, the Committee heard that both early childhood teachers and child care workers currently face a number of challenges in implementing effective strategies for professional learning in their workplaces.

⁸⁸⁵ B. Overall 2006, ‘Review of “Catching the waves: Innovation in early childhood education”’, *Kairaranga*, vol. 7, no. 2, p. 47.

⁸⁸⁶ Mr J. Graham, Research Officer, Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 12 September 2007, p. 20.

⁸⁸⁷ Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victoria) 2008, *Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform: Early Childhood Development Discussion Paper*, DEECD, Melbourne, p. 18.

⁸⁸⁸ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1; Kindergarten Parents Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 5.

⁸⁸⁹ Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) Inc, Written Submission, August 2008, p. 2.

⁸⁹⁰ Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 11; Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 24.

⁸⁹¹ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1; Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 11.

⁸⁹² Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 29; Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 24.

Resources for professional learning

The two unions representing early childhood teachers and child care workers indicated that their members typically identify lack of time and resources as the most significant barriers to their professional learning.⁸⁹³ The Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch) commented that the limited funding available for professional learning means that early childhood teachers must often cover the costs of professional learning themselves.⁸⁹⁴ The Union also reported that early childhood teachers often undertake professional learning during weekends and evenings, due to limited resources to meet the cost of teacher replacement.⁸⁹⁵ A representative of Kindergarten Parents Victoria agreed that many kindergarten administrators simply feel that they do not have sufficient resources to cover the costs of day-to-day professional support and development for their staff.⁸⁹⁶

The Committee heard that it is also common for child care professionals to be expected to undertake professional learning in their own time.⁸⁹⁷ Child care services face the same difficulties as early childhood education services in locating replacement teachers and covering the costs of their employment.⁸⁹⁸ Other participants reported that the costs of professional learning for child care workers are also most likely to fall on the individual.⁸⁹⁹ One remarked that covering the costs of their own professional learning is a substantial barrier for many child care workers, given the low wage rates in the sector.⁹⁰⁰

The Committee heard that some provision has been made to supply resources for professional learning in current regulations and industrial agreements for early childhood professionals. The current industrial agreement for Victorian early childhood teachers requires employers to allocate two 'child free days' per year, which may be used for professional learning determined by the employer.⁹⁰¹ The remaining two days of professional learning for early childhood teachers (out of the requisite four) may also be undertaken during working hours, provided this does not disrupt teachers' other contracted non-teaching duties.⁹⁰² Like school teachers, early childhood teachers have designated hours in a working week in which they are free from teaching duties, to prepare programs for children and undertake management support and ancillary tasks.⁹⁰³

However, the agreement also suggests that early childhood teachers may undertake some professional learning in their own time.⁹⁰⁴ Kindergartens and preschools close for school holidays as determined by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development. The agreement states that early childhood educators in classroom teaching roles are entitled to school holidays as set out by the Department, with those in leadership positions instead receiving four weeks annual leave.⁹⁰⁵ The Committee heard that some early

⁸⁹³ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3; Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 14.

⁸⁹⁴ Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, August 2007, p. 17.

⁸⁹⁵ *ibid.*

⁸⁹⁶ Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 12.

⁸⁹⁷ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 6.

⁸⁹⁸ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 7.

⁸⁹⁹ Ms J. Walsh, Secretary, Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 17; Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 30; Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 6.

⁹⁰⁰ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 6.

⁹⁰¹ *Early Childhood Educators' Multi-Employer Certified Agreement 2005*, p. 15.

⁹⁰² *ibid.*

⁹⁰³ *ibid.*, p. 23.

⁹⁰⁴ *ibid.*, p. 15.

⁹⁰⁵ *ibid.*, p. 28.

childhood teachers access professional learning in their holiday time,⁹⁰⁶ although this is not 'the standard' across the sector.⁹⁰⁷

Financial resources for professional learning are also a shared responsibility between early childhood teachers and their employers, to be negotiated as part of the PDEP process.⁹⁰⁸ One education consultant expressed concern that there is currently no obligation on employers to provide funding for early childhood teachers' professional learning. However, she also remarked on a 'welcome increase' in employer support for professional learning over recent years, due to efforts on the part of early childhood organisations to raise the profile of professional learning in the sector.⁹⁰⁹

The Committee heard that it is often more difficult for child care professionals to access professional learning opportunities, compared to their colleagues in early childhood education. Child care professionals do not have the same contractual entitlements to child-free days or non-contact working hours, limiting the time that they have available for professional learning during the normal working day.⁹¹⁰ They also often do not have additional opportunities to undertake professional learning during school holiday periods, as long day care centres often operate for up to 50 weeks per year.⁹¹¹ Furthermore, the Committee notes that the longer operating hours of child care services, which must accommodate parents' working arrangements, may make it difficult to organise collegial professional learning activities adjacent to the working day.

The Committee heard that many child care professionals may also be less willing to undertake professional learning in their own time. The assistant director of one child care centre commented that it is 'unfair' to expect staff to give up their own time for professional learning when the wage they receive 'does not reflect that kind of commitment'. She commented that higher-trained child care staff will often be more likely to attend after-hours professional learning, but that it can be 'very hard' to get staff with lower wages and lesser responsibilities to attend training outside working hours.⁹¹² Gowrie Victoria commented that child care staff are often happy to attend professional learning after hours when it is offered at their centre, but that it would be preferable for centres to close for a day to enable whole-staff professional learning.⁹¹³

Some regulatory measures to support professional learning in child care services are provided through the current quality assurance processes at the national level. Almost all Victorian long day care services participate in the national Quality Improvement and Accreditation System (QIAS), to be eligible for approval as a provider under the national Child Care Benefit Scheme.⁹¹⁴ The QIAS sets out a series of quality areas and principles that services must meet to be eligible for approval, one of which is 'management provides professional development opportunities for staff'.⁹¹⁵ The QIAS is complemented by parallel quality assurance systems for family day care services and outside school hours care,

⁹⁰⁶ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 31.

⁹⁰⁷ Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 13; Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 8.

⁹⁰⁸ *Early Childhood Educators' Multi-Employer Certified Agreement 2005*, pp. 14–15.

⁹⁰⁹ Ms R. Kinson, Education Consultant, Written Submission, July 2008, p. 1.

⁹¹⁰ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 8.

⁹¹¹ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 31.

⁹¹² Ms K. Seadon, Assistant Director, Perry Street Child Care Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 20.

⁹¹³ Gowrie Victoria, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1.

⁹¹⁴ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

⁹¹⁵ National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc, *QIAS – 7 Quality Areas and 33 Principles*, NCAC website, <http://www.ncac.gov.au/child_care_professionals/qias_quality_areas.asp#7>, accessed 10 November 2008.

which also provide for staff participation in professional learning activities.⁹¹⁶ The Child Care Centres Association of Victoria indicated its support for the QIAS, which it commented is 'looked on with envy by the rest of the world'.⁹¹⁷

The Committee heard that the current policy emphasis on building skills in the child care workforce may also generate further support for ongoing professional learning at the employer or system level. One participant commented that most centres are now prepared to cover the cost of a Certificate III training program for unqualified staff wishing to upgrade their skills.⁹¹⁸ The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union also recommended that the Australian Government provide low-cost or no-cost courses for teachers upgrading their skills through the Skilling Australia Initiative.⁹¹⁹

Creating a culture of professional learning

One participant told the Committee that the most effective strategy for overcoming barriers to professional learning for early childhood professionals will be the establishment of a culture of professional learning across the sector. This should include ensuring that all services have staff capable of providing pedagogical leadership, as well as developing day-to-day professional learning activities such as action learning, mentoring and professional reading groups.⁹²⁰ The Committee notes that a professional learning culture must also involve recognition of the importance of professional learning by both employers and employees, reflected in the allocation of their time and resources.

Evidence to the inquiry revealed varied opinions regarding the extent to which a culture of professional learning currently exists within the early childhood sector. The Committee heard that a cultural shift is occurring in the sector, with early childhood staff exhibiting growing awareness of their own professionalism, and of the need for ongoing professional learning to maintain high standards of professional practice.⁹²¹ However, the evidence suggested that this culture may be less developed in certain areas, especially in child care services. Two participants identified a 'cultural barrier' to professional learning in child care, in that some employers do not regard lower-qualified or lower-paid staff as worthy of investment in ongoing learning.⁹²² Some also commented on the high workforce turnover in the child care sector, compared to kindergarten or preschool services.⁹²³ The Committee notes that this may set up a 'vicious cycle' with regard to investment in professional learning, as staff do not feel motivated to make a long-term investment in their learning, and employers see little incentive to support them.

The Committee also heard that some child care professionals may themselves not be confident or comfortable with upgrading their professional expertise. Ms Gilda Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, told the Committee that this may be most problematic in the family day care sector, which is typically comprised of parents who care

⁹¹⁶ National Childcare Accreditation Council Inc, *Quality Assurance in Children's Services*, NCAC website, <http://www.ncac.gov.au/about_ncac/qa_childrens_services.asp>, accessed 10 November 2008.

⁹¹⁷ Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

⁹¹⁸ Ms K. Seadon, Assistant Director, Perry Street Child Care Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 17.

⁹¹⁹ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 4.

⁹²⁰ Community Child Care Association Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 7.

⁹²¹ Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 2; Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc, Written Submission, September 2008, p. 8.

⁹²² Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p.3; Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 27.

⁹²³ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 1; Ms M. Carter, Chief Executive Officer, Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 14; Ms B. Romeril, Executive Director, Community Child Care Association Inc, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 5.

'Partly it is a cultural thing and we have to shift the culture to understand that if you want to be a professional, you need to do professional development on an ongoing basis.'

Ms Meredith Carter,
Chief Executive Officer,
Kindergarten Parents
Victoria

for a small number of additional children in their homes. Ms Howard commented that family day care operators often 'do not see a need to be qualified as child-care workers, because they are mothers and they have the skills they require'.⁹²⁴ Another participant commented that many unqualified early childhood educators in all types of services have had unsuccessful experiences with formal schooling themselves, and therefore have some apprehension about returning to formal study.⁹²⁵

The Committee heard a number of suggestions regarding how early childhood professionals with limited experience of formal study may be supported to undertake ongoing professional learning. One participant noted that courses which include recognition of prior learning are highly successful in encouraging unqualified early childhood professionals to take on 'little bits and pieces' of study to fill knowledge gaps.⁹²⁶ The Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union also recommended that less confident students could be supported by mixed methods of course delivery, and better preparation and support programs to bridge gaps in academic literacy.⁹²⁷ Gowrie Victoria's chief executive officer told the Committee that the organisation has experienced

success with targeted programs that enable unqualified early childhood professionals to learn together with colleagues in similar circumstances.⁹²⁸ The Committee notes that informal in-house professional learning may also be highly effective in encouraging early childhood professionals to assess and develop their practice in an environment of collegial support.

The president of Early Childhood Australia (Victoria) also suggested that government requirements should be introduced to provide all early childhood staff with a guaranteed quantity of professional learning. In the organisation's view, this would ensure that 'battles' over resourcing for professional learning will not have to be 'fought on the floor' every time a professional learning opportunity arises.⁹²⁹ The Committee agrees that strengthening expectations for all early childhood professionals to engage in professional learning will help to ensure that the importance of professional learning is recognised at the employer level. It may also encourage the professionals themselves to regard professional learning as an essential part of their work, and support the growth of a culture of professional learning across all levels of the early childhood workforce.

Summary and recommendations

The early childhood sector in Victoria is currently undergoing significant review and reform. The Committee is pleased to note that these reforms have engaged with the issue of increasing the professionalism and expertise of all early childhood professionals, irrespective of the services in which they work. The Committee believes that this can only improve the level of service provided to Victorian children in the crucial early years of development, as well as creating and supporting a culture of ongoing professional learning in the sector.

⁹²⁴ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 31.

⁹²⁵ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

⁹²⁶ Ms K. Seadon, Assistant Director, Perry Street Child Care Centre, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 19.

⁹²⁷ Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union (Victorian Branch), Written Submission, September 2008, p. 3.

⁹²⁸ Ms G. Howard, Chief Executive Officer, Gowrie Victoria, Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 31.

⁹²⁹ Ms M. Fox, President, Early Childhood Australia (Victoria), Transcript of Evidence, Public Hearing, Melbourne, 18 September 2008, p. 24.

The Committee acknowledges that higher qualifications form an important part of this strategy. It therefore supports the availability of scholarships and other opportunities for early childhood professionals to upgrade their credentials, and endorses the development of seamless pathways to facilitate articulation through higher levels of expertise. The Committee believes it is important to recognise the existing expertise of the early childhood workforce in developing these pathways, by including opportunities for the recognition of prior learning within credentialed early childhood professional learning programs.

At the same time, the Committee believes that the growing professionalism of the early childhood workforce should not solely be represented in the pursuit of higher qualifications. The Committee encourages early childhood educators and employers to explore a range of professional learning opportunities, including both credentialed and non-credentialed programs. As for teachers in schools, on-site activities that draw on the expertise of colleagues may be especially valuable as ways to share professional knowledge and facilitate reflection on practice.

Overall, the Committee believes that the early childhood sector is only just beginning to realise its potential as a highly professionalised and expert workforce. The Committee believes that a major step forward in building this professionalism may be a system of registration for early childhood professionals, which takes into account the different types of services and different categories of worker present in the sector. This could then lay the foundations for a sector-wide regulatory framework, encompassing professional standards and expectations for ongoing professional learning.

RECOMMENDATION

5.1. That the Victorian Government support professional learning for all professionals involved in the delivery of early childhood education and care, by:

- supporting expectations for early childhood professionals to engage in ongoing professional learning, and for their employers to provide opportunities for them to do so;
- facilitating clearer pathways for articulation between certificate, diploma and degree qualifications, including opportunities for the recognition of prior learning where appropriate;
- continuing to make scholarships and other forms of support available for existing early childhood professionals seeking to upgrade their expertise; and
- encouraging early childhood professionals to pursue opportunities for collegial professional learning, through site-based programs, networks or collaboration with schools and other service providers.

Adopted by the Education and Training Committee
Legislative Council Committee Room, Parliament House
East Melbourne

8 December 2008

Appendix A

Written submissions

Name of individual/organisation	Date received
Mr Glenn Born, Physical Education Specialist and Level 3 Teacher, Ocean Road Primary School, Western Australia	7 May 2007
Ms Mary Asikas, Principal, Seaford 6–12 School, South Australia	14 May 2007
Mr Ange Kenos, Niddrie	26 May 2007
St John's Lutheran Primary School Council, Portland	5 June 2007
St John's Lutheran Primary School Staff, Portland	5 June 2007
Heywood and District Secondary College Staff	8 June 2007
Group Training Association of Victoria	13 June 2007
Glen Waverley Secondary College	15 June 2007
Ms Melissa Cranston, Moyhu	19 June 2007
AUSSIE (Australian United States Services in Education)/Editure	21 June 2007
Dr Barry Fields, Program Coordinator (Secondary/Middle Schooling), Faculty of Education, University of Southern Queensland	22 June 2007
Mr Dave Kelman, Artistic Director, Schools, Community, Research, Arts, Youth and Performance (SCRAYP) Program, Western Edge Youth Arts Inc	22 June 2007
Council of Professional Teaching Associations of Victoria Inc	22 June 2007
Ms Cilla Leonard, Reading Recovery Tutor, Horsham	26 June 2007
Global Education Project Victoria	26 June 2007
Australian Association of Special Education Inc, Victorian Chapter	26 June 2007
Principals' Association of Specialist Schools Inc	26 June 2007
Australian Institute of Physics, Victorian Branch, Education Committee	27 June 2007

Name of individual/organisation	Date received
Victorian Independent Education Union	27 June 2007
Geography Teachers' Association of Victoria Inc	28 June 2007
Faculty of Education, Deakin University	28 June 2007
Victorian Association for Environmental Education	28 June 2007
Balwyn High School	28 June 2007
Central Gippsland Institute of TAFE (GippsTAFE)	28 June 2007
History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd	28 June 2007
School of Education, University of South Australia	28 June 2007
Australian Council for Educational Research	28 June 2007
The Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc	28 June 2007
School of Education, RMIT University	28 June 2007
Association of Independent Schools of Victoria	29 June 2007
Victorian Home Economics and Textiles Teachers' Association	29 June 2007
Dottoressa Viviana Golding, Co.As.It. Italian Network Leader, Barwon South Western Region and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence in Teacher Leadership, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007)	29 June 2007
School of Education, Victoria University	29 June 2007
South Gippsland Secondary College	29 June 2007
Faculty of Education, Australian Catholic University	29 June 2007
Curriculum Corporation	29 June 2007
Microsoft Pty Ltd	29 June 2007
School Library Association of Victoria	29 June 2007
Christian Schools Australia	29 June 2007
Professional Learning Research Strength, Faculty of Education, Monash University	29 June 2007
Ms Tanya Taylor-Cox, Teacher, Thebarton Senior College, South Australia and Recipient, Best National Achievement, Excellence by a Beginning Teacher, National Awards for Quality Schooling (2007)	29 June 2007

Name of individual/organisation	Date received
Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia	29 June 2007
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria Ltd	2 July 2007
Victorian Commercial Teachers Association	2 July 2007
The Mathematical Association of Victoria	3 July 2007
Learning Difficulties Australia	5 July 2007
Doncaster Innovation and Excellence Cluster	6 July 2007
Victorian Institute of Teaching	9 July 2007
Australian Government Department of Education, Science and Training	10 July 2007
Victorian Association for the Teaching of English	11 July 2007
Country Education Project Inc	16 July 2007
Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc	17 July 2007
Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc	18 July 2007
Mr Tony Shaw, Principal, Glen Park Primary School	6 August 2007
Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch)	6 August 2007
School of Education, Flinders University	13 August 2007
Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd	17 August 2007
Victorian TAFE Association	13 November 2007
Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships	11 February 2008
Mr Terry Condon, Principal, Roxburgh Rise Primary School, Board Member, Victorian Principals Association and Victorian Primary School Representative, Australian Principals Association Professional Development Committee	11 February 2008
Mr Peter Cole, Associate, Resources for Courses Pty Ltd	27 March 2008
Dr Neville Johnson, Honorary Senior Fellow, University of Melbourne and Director, Making Connections Educational Consultancy	27 March 2008
Mr Keith Lewry, Principal, Yarragon Primary School	19 May 2008
Mrs Suzanne Elliott, Year 3 Teacher, Glen Iris	27 May 2008

Name of individual/organisation	Date received
Associate Professor Kerry Hempenstall, Division of Psychology, School of Health Sciences, RMIT University	3 June 2008
Dr Gary Simpson, Head of Science Faculty and Coordinator of Curriculum Initiatives (Independent Learning), Woodleigh School	5 June 2008
Mr Robert Anderson, Casual Relief Teacher, Melbourne	7 June 2008
Ms Tanya Clarke, Psychologist, Upper Yarra Secondary School	14 June 2008
Australian College of Educators	16 June 2008
Mr Ross Huggard, Professional Development Provider and Leading Teacher, Frankston South	21 June 2006
Ms Anna Boulic, Communiq'Arte	23 June 2008
Ms Jennifer Costello, Professional Growth Facilitator, Carranballac P-9 College, Point Cook	23 June 2008
Mr David Santamaria, Teacher and Managing Director, DMS Systems Pty Ltd	24 June 2008
Primary Education Management	26 June 2008
Ms Gloria Thomas, Irlen Regional Director, Irlen Dyslexia Centre Melbourne	26 June 2008
Mr Daryl Brooks, Schools Director, Resource Ed Personnel Pty Ltd and President, Teacher Agency Network of Victoria	27 June 2008
Mr John Joseph, Director, Focus Education Australia Pty Ltd	27 June 2008
Ms Lesley Wing Jan, Private Education Consultant, Greensborough	1 July 2008
Teacher Learning Network	4 July 2008
Ms Rosalie Kinson, Education Consultant, Dingley Village	10 July 2008
Doxa Youth Foundation	10 July 2008
Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria	11 July 2008
Ms Jenny Mackay, Director, Behaviour Management in Education	11 July 2008
Mrs Cheryl McKenzie, Expert Teacher, Ashburton Primary School and President, Specific Learning Difficulties (SPELD) Association of Victoria	11 July 2008
Victorian Applied Learning Association	20 August 2008
Early Childhood Intervention Australia (Victorian Chapter) Inc	28 August 2008

Name of individual/organisation	Date received
Professor Russell Tytler and Professor David Symington, Deakin University	10 September 2008
Community Child Care Association Inc	12 September 2008
Gowrie Victoria (Lady Gowrie Child Centre (Melbourne) Inc)	17 September 2008
Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc	18 September 2008
Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Victorian Branch	18 September 2008
Child Care Centres Association of Victoria Inc	18 September 2008
Ms Cecilia Pemberton, Speech Pathologist and Director, Voice Care Australia; Associate Professor Jennifer Oates, La Trobe University; and Dr Alison Russell, Children, Youth and Women's Health Service	19 November 2008

Appendix B

Public hearings and briefings

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 16 July 2007

Name	Position	Organisation
Ms Joan Holt	General Manager, Curriculum Projects	Curriculum Corporation
Ms Gabrielle England	Senior Project Manager, Curriculum Projects	Curriculum Corporation
Mr Phil Brown	Executive Officer	Country Education Project Inc
Mr Glyn Milner	Member	Country Education Project Inc
Professor Annette Gough	Board Member	Australian Council of Deans of Education
Ms Susan Halliday	Chairperson	Victorian Institute of Teaching
Mr Andrew Ius	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Institute of Teaching
Mr Geoff Emmett	Group Manager, Standards and Professional Learning	Victorian Institute of Teaching

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 6 August 2007

Name	Position	Organisation
Dr Lawrence Ingvarson	Principal Research Fellow	Australian Council for Educational Research
Ms Kerry-Anne Hoad	Manager, Centre for Professional Learning	Australian Council for Educational Research
Ms Marion Meiers	Senior Research Fellow	Australian Council for Educational Research
Ms Judy Petch	Acting General Manager, Teacher and School Capacity Building	Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Ms Cathy Beesey	Acting Group Manager, Student Learning Programs Division	Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development

Mrs Raylene Dodds	Acting Assistant General Manager, Leadership and Teacher Development	Office for Government School Education, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Mr John Firth	Chief Executive Officer	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority
Ms Helen Wildash	General Manager, Curriculum	Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

Public Hearing – Ballarat, 13 August 2007
Learning Community Forum, Morning Session

Name	Position	Organisation
Mr John Burt	Principal	Ballarat Specialist School
Dr Alan Ford	Director, Staff Development	Ballarat Grammar
Mr Brendan Maher	Principal	Emmaus Catholic Primary School
Mr John Richards	Head of Junior School	St Patrick's College
Mr Allan McKinnon	Principal	Linton Primary School
Mr Bernie Davern	Principal	Mount Clear Secondary College
Ms Karen Simpkin	Assistant Deputy Principal and PD Coordinator	Damascus College
Ms Lynne Devlin	Principal	Mount Blowhard Primary School
Mr Barry Heywood	Principal	Miners Rest Primary School
Ms Karen Howden-Clarnette	School Improvement Officer	Grampians Regional Office, Department of Education and Early Childhood Development
Ms Sue Deans	Acting Principal	Buninyong Primary School
Ms Wendy Baker	Principal	Pleasant Street Primary School
Mr George Porter	Assistant Principal	Sebastopol College
Mr Patrick Tacey	Principal	Creswick North Primary School
Mr Gary Palmer	Assistant Principal	Ballarat High School
Mr Paul Rose	Principal	Ballarat Secondary College
Mr Ian Clarkson	Principal	Rainbow Primary School
Mr Wayne Morgan	Principal	Mount Clear Primary School
Mr Ron Sawyer	Assistant Principal	Mount Clear Primary School
Mr Peter Clifton	Principal	Magpie Primary School

Public Hearing – Ballarat, 13 August 2007
Learning Community Forum, Afternoon Session

Name	Position	Organisation
Mr Peter Mould	Coordinator, ASISTM Program	Buninyong Primary School
Mr Jim Delaney	Educational Consultant, Primary	Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat
Mr Tony Brandenburg	Executive Officer	Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat
Mr Leigh Mitchell	Head of Educational Services	Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Ballarat
Ms Virginia Fenelon	Acting Director, Professional Organisational Learning	University of Ballarat
Ms Annette Chappell	Senior Policy Advisor to the Deputy Vice-Chancellor, Academic and Research	University of Ballarat
Mr Greg Jakob	Director, Planning, Quality and Review, TAFE Division	University of Ballarat
Ms Sue Goodbourn	Acting Head, TAFE Development Unit	University of Ballarat
Professor Lawrie Angus	Head, School of Education	University of Ballarat
Associate Professor Maxine Cooper	Coordinator, Bachelor of Education Program	University of Ballarat
Associate Professor Sue McNamara	Head, School of Education	Australian Catholic University
Ms Karen McLean	Lecturer, School of Education	Australian Catholic University
Mr Peter Hoban	Education Officer	Sovereign Hill Museums Association
Mr Bob Allan	Education Coordinator	The Eureka Centre
Ms Pauline Doran	Education Officer	Ballarat Fine Art Gallery
Ms Rosemary Waghorne	Assistant Director, Vocational Training Policy	Minerals Council of Australia
Mr Barry Wright	Executive Officer	Highlands Local Learning and Employment Network
Ms Mary-Jane Rigby	Acting Coordinator, Youth Services	City of Ballarat
Ms Jodie Downey	Strengthening Generations Project Officer, Community Planning and Development	City of Ballarat

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 12 September 2007

Name	Position	Organisation
Mr Brian Burgess	President	Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals Inc
Dr Gaye Williams	Vice President (Development)	Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia
Dr Judy Anderson	Representative	Mathematics Education Research Group of Australasia
Ms Meredith Peace	Vice President (Secondary)	Australian Education Union (Victorian Branch)
Mr John Graham	Research Officer	Australian Education Union, (Victorian Branch)
Mr Dave Kelly	Chief Executive Officer	Quality Associates International South East Asia Pty Ltd
Mr Paul Martin	President	Victorian Association for the Teaching of English
Mr Michael Spurr	Executive Director	History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd
Mr Rodney Knight	President	History Teachers' Association of Victoria Ltd

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 17 September 2007

Name	Position	Organisation
Dr Gerard Calnin	Director of Policy and Research	Association of Independent Schools of Victoria
Dr Heather Schnagl	Board Member	Association of Independent Schools of Victoria
Ms Anne-Marie Ryan	Executive Officer	Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc
Associate Professor John Henry	Committee Member	Smart Geelong Region Local Learning and Employment Network Inc
Ms Elizabeth Freeman	Coordinator, Student Wellbeing Unit, Faculty of Education	University of Melbourne
Mr Tony Brandenburg	President	ICT in Education Victoria
Ms Lauren O'Grady	Head of Innovation in Middle Years and ICTEV Teacher of the Year 2007	Caroline Springs College
Ms Elizabeth Burns	President	The Mathematical Association of Victoria
Mr Simon Pryor	Executive Officer	The Mathematical Association of Victoria

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 11 February 2008

Name	Position	Organisation
Ms Kaye Fletcher	Executive Director	Australian Centre for Effective Partnerships
Mr Terry Condon	Board Member Principal Victorian Primary School Representative	Victorian Principals Association Roxburgh Rise Primary School Australian Principals Association Professional Development Committee
Ms Cathy Hickey	Education Officer	Victorian Independent Education Union
Ms Jane O'Shannessy	Representative	Victorian Independent Education Union
Mr Cameron Smith	President	Science Teachers' Association of Victoria
Ms Soula Bennett	Vice President	Science Teachers' Association of Victoria

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 28 March 2008

Name	Position	Organisation
Mr David Hornsby	Consultant	
Ms Kath Murdoch	Consultant	
Dr Neville Johnson	Director	Making Connections Educational Consultancy
Mr Doug Williams		Black Douglas Professional Education Services
Mr Peter Cole	Associate	Resources for Courses Pty Ltd
Ms Jo Parry	Assistant Principal	Ringwood Heights Primary School
Ms Emily Kinns	Project Manager	Gould Group

Meetings – Canberra, 16 June 2008

Name	Position	Organisation
Ms Fran Hinton	Chief Executive	Teaching Australia
Dr Graeme Hall	Manager, Pre-Service Teacher Education	Teaching Australia
Mr Daniel Owen	Manager, Quality Teaching Branch	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Ms Bici Byrnes	Assistant Director, Quality Teaching Branch	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

Mr David Ray	Assistant Director, Transitions and Attainment Branch	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
Ms Trish Wilks	Director, Curriculum Support and Professional Learning	ACT Department of Education and Training
Ms Jennifer Page	Manager, Learning and Development	ACT Department of Education and Training
Ms Cheryl O'Connor	Chief Executive Officer	Australian College of Educators

School Visit – Arawang Primary School, Waramanga (ACT), 16 June 2008

Meeting with students and staff of Arawang Primary School community.

Public Hearing – Melbourne, 18 September 2008

Name	Position	Organisation
Ms Barbara Romeril	Executive Director	Community Child Care Association Inc
Ms Meredith Carter	Chief Executive Officer	Kindergarten Parents Victoria Inc
Ms Jess Walsh	Secretary	Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Victorian Branch
Mr Matthew Hammond	Policy Coordinator	Liquor, Hospitality and Miscellaneous Union, Victorian Branch
Ms Kylie Seadon	Assistant Director	Perry Street Child Care Centre
Ms Marlene Fox	President	Early Childhood Australia (Victoria)
Ms Gilda Howard	Chief Executive Officer	Gowrie Victoria (Lady Gowrie Child Care Centre (Melbourne) Inc)

Appendix C

International investigations

The Committee undertook international investigations in Finland, Scotland and Canada during the period 25 August to 5 September 2008. During these investigations, the Committee conducted meetings for two separate parliamentary inquiries: Inquiry into Effective Strategies for Teacher Professional Learning; and Inquiry into Geographical Differences in the Rate in which Victorian Students Participate in Higher Education.

HELSINKI, 25 August 2008

Ministry of Education

Mr Ikka Turunen, Special Government Advisor, Division for Higher Education and Science

Ms Marja-Liisa Niemi, Counsellor of Education, Division for Higher Education and Science

Finnish National Board of Education

Ms Ritva Jakku-Sihvonen, Director of Quality Assurance and Monitoring, Finnish National Board of Education

Education and Culture Committee, Parliament of Finland

Ms Raija Vahasalo MP, Chair

Ms Sanna Lauslahti MP, Committee Member

Ms Ulrica Gabrielsson, Researcher

Mr Kaj Laine, Committee Counsel

National Union of University Students in Finland

Mr Tuomas Telkkä, President

Mr Juhana Harju, Educational Officer

Mr Tuure Pitkänen, Executive Board Member

Trade Union of Education in Finland

Ms Marjatta Melto, Special Advisor

HELSINKI, 26 August 2008

Kallahti Comprehensive School

Mr Timo Heikkinen, Principal

University of Helsinki

Professor Hannele Niemi, Vice Rector
Mr Markus Laitinen, Head of International Affairs
Ms Martha Norrback, International Affairs

Finnish Council of University Rectors

Professor Krista Varantola, Chair
Dr Liisa Savunen, Secretary General

Finnish Higher Education Evaluation Council

Professor Riitta Pyykko, Chair
Dr Helka Kekäläinen, Secretary General

EDINBURGH, 28 August 2008

General Teaching Council for Scotland

Mr Tom Hamilton, Director of Educational Policy
Mr John Anderson, Head of Professional Practice

CPD Scotland

Mr Con Morris, National CPD Team Adviser
Mr Jim Keegans, National CPD Team Adviser

Learning and Teaching Scotland

Mr Bernard McLeary, Chief Executive
Professor Kay Livingston, Head of International Education

**Education, Lifelong Learning and Culture Committee
Scottish Parliament**

Ms Karen Whitefield MSP, Convenor
Mr Nick Hawthorne, Senior Assistant Clerk

Universities Scotland

Dr Jim O'Brien, Director of the Centre for Educational Leadership, University of Edinburgh
Mr Peter Syme, Director of the Open University in Scotland
Dr Michael Osborne, Director, Centre for Research in Lifelong Learning, Glasgow Caledonian University
Dr Aileen Kennedy, Associate Dean, Initial Teacher Education, Strathclyde University
Professor Ted Cowan, Director of Dumfries Campus, University of Glasgow
Mr Robin McAlpine, Public Affairs Manager, Universities Scotland

UHI Millennium Institute

Professor Robert J Cormack, Principal

Cabinet Secretary for Education and Lifelong Learning

Ms Fiona Hyslop MSP, Cabinet Secretary

Mr Colin MacLean, Director of Schools

EDINBURGH, 29 August 2008

Education and Lifelong Learning Directorate

Mr Phillip Rycroft, Director General for Education and Lifelong Learning

Mr Tim Simons, Head of International Team, Schools Directorate

HM Inspectorate of Education

Mr Graham Donaldson, HM Chief Inspector

Scottish Funding Council

Mr John Kemp, Interim Director, Learning Policy and Strategy

Scottish Wider Access Regional Forums

Ms Margaret Dundas, National Coordinator for Widening Participation

Equality Forward

Ms Linda McLeod, Interim Director

MONTREAL, 2 September 2008

Conference of Rectors and Principals of Quebec

Mr Daniel Zizian, Director General

Mr Réginald Lacroix, Associate Director General

Mr Jacques Frémont, President, Committee of Academic Affairs and Provost and Vice Rector (Academic Affairs), University of Montreal

Mr Michael Laurier, Dean, Faculty of Education, University of Montreal

Canada Millennium Scholarship Foundation

Mr Norman Riddell, Executive Director and CEO

Mr Yves Pelletier, Manager, Pilot Projects

Ms Diana Wickham, Executive Officer, Development

Mr Joseph Berger, Policy and Research Officer

Mr Noel Baldwin, Policy and Research Officer

McGill University

Dr Hélène Perrault, Dean, Faculty of Education

Dr Elizabeth Wood, Associate Dean, Academic Affairs

Dr Spencer Boudreau, Associate Dean, Teaching, Learning and Students

Dr Lynn Butler-Kisber, Associate Professor and Director, Centre for Educational Leadership

QUEBEC, 3 September 2008

Ministry of Education, Recreation and Sport

Ms Diane Gagnon, Director of International and Canadian Affairs

Ms Julie Bissonnette, Advisor, Division of International and Canadian Affairs

Mr Christian Ragusich, Director of College Education

Mr Jean-François Noël, Advisor, Division of University Education and Research

Ms Marie-Josée Larocque, Director of Teacher Professional Learning

Conseil Supérieur de l'Éducation

Ms Nicole Boutin, President

Ms Josée Turcotte, Secretary General

Ms Judith Stymest, President, Advisory Committee on Financial Aid

Mr Paul Vigneau, Secretary, Advisory Committee on Financial Aid

University of Quebec

Mr Daniel Coderre, Vice President Academic and Research

Mr Pierre Lefrançois, Director of Studies and Research

Mr Denis Marchand, Director of Institutional Research

TORONTO, 4 September 2008

Ontario Ministry of Training, Colleges and Universities

Hon John Milloy, Minister of Training, College and Universities

Ms Marie-Lison Fougère, Assistant Deputy Minister, Strategic Policy and Programs Division

Ontario Ministry of Education

Hon Kathleen Wynne, Minister of Education

Deputy Minister Steve Marshall

Mr Paul Anthony, Director, Teaching Policy and Standards Branch

Ms Rebecca Cossar, Education Officer, Teaching Policy and Standards Branch

Ms Patricia Manson, Senior Executive Officer, Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat

TORONTO, 5 September 2008

Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

Mr Ken Norrie, Vice-President, Research

Ms Fiona Deller, Research Director

Ms Laura Butler, Director, Corporate Services

Mr Bob Glass, Acting Director, Executive Services

Ontario College of Teachers

Mr Don Cattani, Chair

Mr Brian McGowan, Registrar and Chief Executive Officer

Ms Janis Leonard, Manager of Accreditation

Ms Michelle Longlade, Director, Standards of Practice and Accreditation

Ms Margaret Aube, Project Leader, Teacher Qualifications

Ms Kathy Anstett, External Relations Officer

Ontario Principals' Council

Ms Laura Hodgins, President

Mr Mike Benson, Executive Director

Ontario Teachers' Federation

Mr George (Joe) Lamoreux, President

Ms Lindy Amato, Director of Professional Affairs

Ms Rhonda Kimberley-Young, Secretary-Treasurer

Ms Siria Szkurhan, Manager, Professional Development Project

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