

Primary Principals welcome Teacher Education recommendations

The Australian Primary Principals Association (APPA) today welcomed the Teacher Education Ministerial Advisory Group's *Action Now: Classroom Ready Teachers* report and the Government's support of its recommendations.

APPA President Dennis Yarrington said the report recommendations confirmed the views of principals that action is needed to ensure every graduate entering the teaching profession in Australia is classroom ready.

Mr Yarrington said,

"The report highlighted that everyone involved in teacher education – schools, universities, employers and government – must work together so that efforts to improve initial teacher education are cohesive, rigorous and accountable. Most importantly, there is the need for all teachers to achieve the graduate level of the Australian Professional Standards for Teachers before entering any classroom."

APPA applauded the Advisory Group's finding that high performing education systems screen initial teacher education candidates against 'best teacher' criteria. In APPA's view, such criteria would see applicants demonstrating at least top 30% in academic achievement in literacy and numeracy together with the personal skills, emotional intelligence and aptitude so required to become an effective teacher.

Mr Yarrington said that any sophisticated and transparent entry process should include an interview and that the involvement of school principals in this step would help reinforce the partnership between schools and universities. While applauding the strengthening of courses he said caution should be taken in considering any type of specialisation in the primary school context.

"APPA sees value in primary teacher education students undertaking a major study in one or two of the key primary curriculum areas though cautions against limiting the scope of such study to just a few areas. The challenge is to ensure that every primary school teacher teaches literacy and numeracy skills to a high level and has the skills to teach all subjects well."

Mr Yarrington said principals supported the recommendation that universities and schools develop formal partnerships to deliver integrated and structured professional experiences.

"Professional practicum in the first semester is timely so that the pre-service teacher can develop a realistic appreciation and understanding of the expectations of the classroom and the teaching profession. In a practical sense this would enable students to change course or withdraw without a considerable financial penalty. We also recommend at least 100 days of classroom practice over a 4-year primary teaching degree course that includes six weeks of final practicum placement."

APPA is the professional association representing 7,200 primary school leaders in Government, Catholic and Independent schools across Australia.

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Media contact:

**Dennis Yarrington (APPA President)
0466 655 468**