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**Submission to the Allen Consulting Group:**

**Establishing a National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership**

**Authorised by:**

Mary Kalantzis, President

The organisation consents to being identified in a report that proposes an implementation strategy for the NIQTSL. This submission does not contain any confidential information.

The Australian Council of Deans of Education is the peak organisation representing the deans of faculties of education and heads of schools of education in Australian universities and other higher education institutions.

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## Preamble

Teaching should be designed for what it is – a highly flexible and in-demand set of human attributes transferable right across the knowledge economy (ACDE 2001; 112).

We know that the passion, energy and skill of school leaders lie at the heart of educational transformation (National College for School Leadership, England, 2002)

The ACDE welcomes the proposed National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL). Indeed, such an institute is long overdue. Greater investment in the teaching profession is imperative given the established connection between quality of teaching and leadership, and student outcomes. That investment, advocacy and the dissemination of information be coordinated at a national level is highly desirable. The Council believes that a national institute designed to develop and support the profession could provide far-reaching benefits.

### 1. Guiding principles

Few could disagree with the proposed guiding principle that the NIQTSL should *impact positively on the quality of teaching, school leadership and learning outcomes for students across all schools*. However, this principle presumably underpins many government initiatives in education. A more specific guiding principle might refer to the purpose of enhancing professionalism.

The Council concurs with the second principle, namely that the Institute should be managed by the profession for the profession. Management by the profession is necessary if the stated goals of the Issues Paper are to be achieved.

The need to complement without duplicating existing relevant activities is paramount. The Council believes that the Institute would be well placed to complement existing activities nationwide.

In a federal system, the need to promote national perspectives and consistency is manifest. The Council endorses this guiding principle. The Institute could facilitate improved comparability in areas such as standards and quality assurance, and could promote labour mobility across employing authorities. Greater mobility and comparability is particularly important given many unhelpful state and territory variations which currently prevail.

Absent from the proposed guiding principles is any mention of research. While seen as a possible function of the Institute, research is in fact at the heart of attempts to improve leadership, professionalism and learning. The Council would prefer to see the role of evidence acknowledged in a guiding principle of the NIQTSL. A relevant model here is the Center for the Future of Teaching and Learning, based in California. Its activities are based on principles of: ‘improving understanding through accurate, useful research; communicating research and knowledge to those who can act; and applying research results so that new strategies are based on the best current knowledge’ (2003). These principles explicitly affirm the causal link between evidence and improved teaching, leadership and learning outcomes. The ACDE maintains that improvements in school leadership and quality teaching depend on extensive research being conducted, supported, disseminated and implemented.

## 2. Roles and Functions

The Issues paper identifies five possible key functions of the Institute.

### *Development of school leadership capabilities*

The Council endorses this function, though with some qualification. In supporting ‘both current and potential school leaders’, the Institute must take a broad definition of leadership. Many school leaders in areas such as curriculum are not given titles of formal responsibility, but remain leaders whose capabilities require development. In developing capabilities, the Institute could explore and broker ways in which leadership is recognised and rewarded within the profession.

### *Development of professional standards*

Improved comparability of standards across states and disciplines would promote greater mobility and better career pathways. The Council believes that the NIQTSL could play a key facilitative role in achieving this important goal. Specific activities could involve lobbying legislatures and convening discussions among registration agencies, discipline bodies and other stakeholders, and possibly developing a broad and inclusive national standards framework. The Institute may be in a position to provide incentives to stakeholders to develop and adhere to a set of national standards. This would not of itself require a further level of regulation. The Council believes that standards designed to have a regulatory role in the accreditation, registration and promotion of teachers would require broader public consent and input from a wider range of stakeholders.

### *Developing professional learning*

This is a vital role of the proposed Institute. The forthcoming joint overview by the ACDE and the Australian Council of Deans of Science, *Professional Learning for Enhancing Teaching and Learning within Science, Mathematics and Technology in Australia*, highlights the importance of professional learning to improving outcomes. From the observation of major Australian programs in science, mathematics and technology, and from analysis of national and international literature, the Overview makes several key findings. Professional learning programs are rarely evaluated comprehensively. Where they are, evaluations suggest clear links to improved teaching and learning outcomes. Despite these links, professional learning remains largely ephemeral and episodic. These findings are shared by the Commonwealth commissioned report, *Australia’s Teachers: Australia’s Future* (2003).

There is therefore a need for greater provision of professional learning. Perhaps more importantly, there is a need for: greater research into the kinds of professional learning which are most effective; better documentation and dissemination of that research; future programs and practices to be modelled explicitly on research findings. The Institute could play a valuable role in serving as a national information clearinghouse of programs, and in disseminating information to stakeholders. It could also facilitate research into, and provision of, professional learning through a distributed model. This would lead to the transparent allocation of funds to stakeholders of the highest expertise across the nation. The model would ensure that professional learning is better coordinated nationally, but not at the cost of diversity and quality.

### *Quality assurance of Australian teacher education courses, other professional learning courses and overseas qualifications*

Quality assurance of courses and qualifications is currently undertaken by the Australian Universities Qualifications Authority (AUQA) and by various state registration bodies. Nevertheless, the NIQTSL could play a useful advisory and facilitative role in promoting national consistency. Rather than adding another level of accountability, it could instead work with states, territories, employing authorities, universities, teachers and other stakeholders to provide quality assurance services at the national level. This may include providing national benchmarks, and processes for recognising that individual professionals are up to date in their content and pedagogical knowledge. The Institute could also assist in the recognition of overseas-qualified teachers. National input would be valuable in assessing the comparability of overseas and Australian qualifications.

### *Research*

Promoting and enabling research is integral to the success of the Institute. Research is best seen not a separate role, but rather one which underpins the success of the other functions proposed. Advances in school leadership, quality teaching and professional learning all depend on a broad research base. As the Council argued in its submission on national research priorities in 2002:

The scope for Commonwealth Government investment in education research to have a measurable and significant positive impact is broad. In *The Impact of Educational Research* (2000), Tom Phelan gathered results from five distinct though related studies on education research. His report found 'compelling evidence that Australian educational research is respected internationally and makes a difference in the worlds of schools, and policy development' (Phelan 2000: 4). Phelan also found, however, that research 'accounts for less than one per cent of the total personnel resources devoted to education and training in Australia. Of these resources, university-based research accounts for about 90 per cent' (Phelan 2000: 5).

More recently, the Council's joint Overview with the ACDS, and *Australia's Teachers: Australia's Future*, have confirmed an urgent need for further research into professional learning. The message from both reports is clear: research leads to better outcomes, and there is not enough of it being conducted. The Institute could be most effective in promoting, facilitating and disseminating educational research, and in serving as the clearinghouse so badly needed. This would also provide a much-needed national focus. Presently, research productivity is held to be very uneven between institutions, and research activities are seen to be distributed poorly (Phelan 2000: 10-13). These problems could be addressed by the Institute allocating research funds on a distributed model, similar to the ARC and NHMRC.

Specific funds would need to be allocated to achieve these research related goals. Importantly, the NIQTSL could devise a grants scheme to support research in quality teaching and school leadership, perhaps specifying annual priorities for part of the funds allocated for this purpose. Priorities may be set by an expert board of rotating members, and research fellows may be seconded from across the country to work for limited periods of time at the Institute. The NIQTSL could enter into partnerships with universities by providing research support via a grants scheme.

### **3. Governance and Operational Matters**

If the Institute is to be run by and for the profession, this principle must be reflected in its governance structure. A representative governing council would primarily comprise teachers, principals, teacher educators and academic researchers. The ACDE would expect to be represented on the governing council as the national organisation of the deans of faculties of education and heads of schools of education.

Operationally, the Council supports a ‘hub and spoke’ model, with a physical presence complemented by networked models. The Institute could be associated with all universities where teacher education is undertaken, and linked to professional associations and unions. While establishing the physical facility in Canberra makes some geographic sense, it does not follow that the three Canberra-based universities should be privileged in terms of representation on the governing council or at other levels of the Institute. Whatever the geographic suitability of Canberra for a national institute, the performance and profile of its three universities in teacher education does not support such a conclusion. Membership of the governing council, and of the Institute more broadly, should be awarded according to merit rather than circumstance. Transparent mechanisms for inclusion and access to resources and research are also required. In the case of research, the need for an inclusive national body is particularly urgent given that current research schemes and agencies are not paying adequate attention to educational research.

Finally, it is important that public funding to the Institute be sustained. For the Institute to be able to conduct valuable educational research, disseminate a range of information, and contribute to school leadership and professional learning, the maintenance of public funding is imperative. Aside from Commonwealth funding, state and territory governments may also provide support to the Institute to the extent that it meets their needs. If the Institute runs a research grants scheme, it could consider private sector support similar to ARC linkage grants.

#### **4. Performance Indicators**

The Council believes the following performance indicators would best measure the success of the Institute:

##### *Improvements in School Leadership*

- Improved rewarding and recognition of leadership within schools;
- Increased status of educational leadership.

##### *Improvements in Professional Standards*

- Increased endorsement of standards frameworks and rising participation by individuals and corporate bodies in (voluntary) procedures to demonstrate certified adherence to standards;
- Increased labour mobility, resulting from improvements in the consistency and comparability of standards.

##### *Improvements in Professional Learning*

- Greater and higher quality provision, evidenced through quantitative and qualitative evaluation, including student outcomes.

##### *Improvements in Quality Assurance*

- Sustained credibility of teaching and learning methods;
- Enhanced confidence in teacher preparation and Australian schooling;
- Endorsement of national benchmarking;
- Consistency in determining the validity of overseas teaching qualifications.

##### *Research*

- Broad dissemination of information through electronic and other media;
- Establishment of a clearinghouse accessible to and accessed by all key stakeholders;
- Development of high quality research projects and outcomes supported by the NIQTSL;
- Increased levels, and more equitable distribution, of educational research nationally.

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