

**SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES INQUIRY  
INTO TEACHER EDUCATION  
by the  
QUEENSLAND CONSORTIUM FOR PROFESSIONAL LEARNING IN EDUCATION**

---

## **Introduction**

The Queensland Consortium for Professional Learning in Education is a collaborative initiative of the key stakeholders in education in Queensland, established in 1993 under the auspices of the Queensland Board of Teacher Registration. Its purpose is to support the advancement of continuing professional learning in order to enhance the effectiveness of learning and teaching in this State. The Consortium represents the Board's commitment to ongoing teacher professional learning in recognition that this is one part of a continuum.

The Board of Teacher Registration sees teacher education as consisting of a continuum made up of preservice education, induction and career-long professional learning. In this view, preservice teacher education programs equip teachers with the knowledge, skills and understandings they will need to begin to teach, and are complemented by professional learning which continues throughout teacher's careers.

The Consortium is a forum for all providers and clients of professional learning in the education area. Its membership includes

- Queensland education employers;
- Queensland education unions;
- teacher professional associations;
- Queensland higher education institutions;
- teachers;
- education centres;
- parent and community groups;
- the Board of Teacher Registration; and
- other statutory bodies with an interest in education.

The Consortium's current strategic roles, which are often fulfilled through overlapping activities, are to:

1. Advocate for professional learning as both a right and a responsibility of all educators;
2. Promote a culture of quality professional learning;
3. Promote collaboration in professional learning; and
4. Provide information about professional learning issues, processes and opportunities.

The Consortium Executive Committee wishes to address Term of Reference 10, *Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce* in this submission.

## **The Work of the Consortium**

Each year the Consortium aims to publish a report on a key aspect of professional learning in education. It has also conducted two major research projects (1995 and 2001) resulting in the publication and distribution of a number of reports that are relevant to the construction, delivery and resourcing of professional learning for teachers. These reports are:

### **Making Your Professional Development Count (1996)**

The Consortium's first report, published in June 1996, was Making Your Professional Development Count. The report contains: discussion of a specific planning process aimed at ensuring personal and professional development 'does count'; an overview of Consortium initiatives in relation to professional development; details of a number of professional development projects; and the outcomes of a professional development survey of teachers undertaken by the Consortium towards the end of 1995.

### **Self-directed Professional Development (1997)**

Self-directed Professional Development reflects the Consortium's 1996 theme. The first chapter provides an overview of self-directed professional development by highlighting some of the key ideas and linking them to other relevant literature. The second chapter focuses on the broader concepts of lifelong and self-directed learning, confirming their increasing importance as we approach the next century and a new millennium while the final chapter contains information about a range of tools, processes and strategies aimed at assisting individuals and groups with self-directed professional development.

### **Work as Professional Development (1998)**

The Consortium's third professional development report, Work as Professional Development, was published in June 1998. It contains theoretical perspectives on workplace learning and a range of case studies from early childhood through to TAFE.

### **On Disk, On Line: PD and IT (1999)**

On Disk, On Line: PD and IT explores some of the issues associated with the significant impact of information technology on education and on the delivery of professional development. In addition to providing background information about some of the major changes taking place, it also presents case studies from a range of sectors and enterprises.

### **Networks@Work (2002)**

Networks@Work reflects the Consortium's explorations over a two-year period (2000 and 2001) on the nature and role of professional networks in education. While the Consortium has previously been involved in gathering and examining data about aspects of professional development, the nature and scale of the Networks@Work project sets it apart from earlier exercises.

### **A Way Forward: The Future for Teacher Professional Associations and Networks (2004)**

The most recent report, A Way Forward: The Future for Teacher Professional Associations and Networks discusses findings from a survey of Queensland teacher professional associations and networks conducted by the Consortium in 2003. The survey followed earlier case study research conducted by the Consortium into the role of professional associations in contributing to teachers' professional knowledge, the findings of which were published in the Consortium's previous report, Networks@Work (2002).

A Way Forward focuses on the current contribution to teacher professional growth and learning by teacher associations and networks, and it highlights a number of key areas including: the diversity of these groups; the variety of roles they play in providing leadership within the teaching profession; a new focus on 'community of practice' as a possible way forward for teacher associations; and the significant challenges for the entire education community in sharing the responsibilities required to support professional learning

as both a right and a responsibility of every teacher. The report makes 11 recommendations which have implications for the education system as a whole.

## **Comments on Term of Reference 10**

By acknowledging the key messages presented in the above mentioned reports, the Consortium asks that the following be considered in response to Term of Reference 10, *Examine the construction, delivery and resourcing of ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce.*

The workplace is a rich source of authentic learning opportunities. For teachers, as for most professionals, the workplace context is characterised by competing priorities – some imposed from external authorities, others from emergent needs of students and the broader school community. A teacher's knowledge (of content and of pedagogy) must be continuously updated, a process which requires credible tools, mechanisms and learning programs that can address the specific and unique complexities of each local context.

While new concepts of knowledge construction, validation and dissemination/adoption are emerging both in practice and in the education literature, they are too rarely used by the policy makers and bureaucrats to inform change agendas in education. In contrast, innovative thought leaders from within the profession are making extensive voluntary contributions through the leadership of professional learning communities of practice, professional associations and networking to support the continuous learning required of the new professionalism embraced by many teachers. These emergent structures are relationship-based and provide a safe and trusting context which underpins the social construction of new and innovative practices. They nurture the essential elements of teachers being well integrated people with a predisposition to self directed, autonomous, reflective learning. They utilize available literature to inform their practice and increasingly utilize the practice based evidence that can be synthesised from within the expertise base of their membership. These arrangements operate within individual school communities, as learning communities that draw on contributing clusters of schools or as virtual spaces where common professional interest, passion and need dictate.

The Consortium's research over the past five years indicates that these organizations make a demonstrable, but frequently unrecognized and under remunerated contribution, to the ongoing professional learning for teachers already in the workforce. They struggle with the creative tensions of retaining the demonstrable benefits of the covenants built around individual identity, autonomy and norms of reciprocity, collaboration and trust while engaging in partnerships and alliances that bridge the boundaries of associations, systems and business that are driven by short term, unsustainable contractual approaches to mutual obligation.

## **Conclusion**

The Consortium adopts the position that it is no longer an option to do what we have always done or to simply strengthen compliance-driven change strategies targeted at individual teachers.

We would welcome the opportunity to share our thoughts on a balanced approach to new integrated approaches to support ongoing sustainable continuous learning as both a right and a responsibility of all teachers. Teachers have a right to a range of ongoing professional learning opportunities, including access to structured induction processes and a responsibility to take up the opportunities available.