



# A Charter for the Teaching Profession

As a national professional body for teachers and school leaders, Teaching Australia is proposing that the teaching profession develop a national charter. A charter would be a high level statement of what teachers collectively believe, value, know and do, and would affirm the principles that underpin the practice of teaching. It would stand over time and apply to teaching in all contexts.

## **Some reasons for a charter**

A charter serves as a unifying set of commitments and understandings for a profession, both for the profession itself and for the community. It conveys the commitment of the profession to serve the community and a sense of what it means to be part of the profession. It reflects the ideals and commitment to the public good that members of the profession hold in common and conveys the complexity of professional practice in general terms.

Teaching Australia believes that a charter for the teaching profession would help give the profession a clear sense of identity and common purpose. There is a need for a more coherent and unified voice for the teaching profession. Teachers face the challenge of working in an increasingly complex and interrelated world. A charter that conveys clear messages to the community about the role of teaching and the responsibilities that teachers recognise and accept would increase the standing and influence of the teaching profession.

## **Participating in the development**

Teaching Australia has initiated the development of a charter as part of its commitment to strengthening the profession and enhancing the quality of teaching and school leadership.

As a first step, in cooperation with associations of teachers and principals and with unions, Teaching Australia is seeking the views of members of the profession about some issues of principle, such as the value of having a charter, the purposes a charter might serve, the audience for a charter, what the elements might be, and the approach to length, depth, content and language. Specific wording is something we would like to focus on at a later stage.

We encourage all teachers and school leaders to become involved in developing the charter and to contribute to raising consciousness of teaching as an honourable and honoured profession.

## **A CHARTER FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION A QUESTION AND RESPONSE FRAMEWORK**

This framework is provided as an aid to discussion and input. It poses some of the central questions about developing a charter, but there will be others that teachers and principals will wish to raise and explore. The framework is not intended to limit discussion or response.

There are many examples of charters across a range of professions. They vary in form, structure, level of detail and language. A sample charter for the teaching profession is attached. Some useful websites which show a few examples of charters developed in other professions include:

[www.mja.com.au](http://www.mja.com.au) (physicians);

[www.ifla.org/faife/ethics/code\\_of\\_ethics\\_netherlands.htm](http://www.ifla.org/faife/ethics/code_of_ethics_netherlands.htm) (librarians);

[www.ieu.org.au/education/charter.htm](http://www.ieu.org.au/education/charter.htm) (teachers);

### **1. Concept of a charter for the teaching profession**

Reasons to have a charter might include giving the profession a sense of identity and common purpose, defining the nature of professional teaching, providing a touchstone for the profession and assurance to the public about values, principles and practice.

What value do you see in having a charter? What purpose/s would you see a charter serving?

- Develop a focus on the professional beliefs, work and activities of teachers
- Clarify the values and teaching roles and responsibilities so they are understood by the community.
- Assist in providing consistent feedback to individuals, schools and communities regarding the nature of teaching.
- Raise the profile of teachers within the community
- Needs to recognise the “unmeasurable” aspects of teaching.

### **2. Audience for a charter**

In the sample charter, the audience is both teachers and the wider community that they serve. What is the right balance with this dual purpose?

- There should be a balance between the two types of audiences. The charter will have relevance to individuals who are considering teaching as a career and to individuals who are studying to be teachers.
- A charter needs to be simple and avoid jargon. Teachers will respect and value such an approach. The register of the charter should be aimed at the community as this will ensure a better fit to audience.
- Such a charter is best written by or Teaching Australia “Plain Speaking” experts that develop user friendly documents.

### **3. Elements of a charter**

The sample charter contains three basic elements – the importance of teaching, our commitment as a profession and a distillation of our teaching role. Other charters take different approaches. Do these elements cover the ground?

- Yes, covers some of the other aspects. Need to focus more on the empowerment of teachers and ensuring teaching is a profession with avenues for fulfilment and recognition.

#### 4. Length of document

The sample charter reflects a view that the charter will be most effective if it is a concise high-level statement that will stand over time. Other charters have more detail.

What is the right length?

- A single A4 page is an appropriate length. More detail than this would complicate the message. The shorter it is – the more chance of it being remembered and utilised.

#### 5. Language

The sample charter aims to capture the complexity of teaching and to convey that complexity in simple language, with limited use of adjectives and adverbs, to a wide audience. It tries to avoid professional jargon that would make the charter an exclusive document. What should the approach be?

- The language used in the sample provided under “our teaching role” is jargon laden. A charter for the profession should be stated simply, yet conveys complex concepts.

#### 6. Other comments

- The focus of teaching within Australia should be to improve learning opportunities and expand experiences.
- Raising the professional profile of teachers within the community is paramount to the success of education in the future.

#### 7. Please indicate your perspective/s below

##### Individual response:

- Current teacher
- Past teacher
- Current principal
- Past principal
- Parent
- Teacher educator
- Other – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

##### Group response:

- School
- Professional association
- Union
- Parent association
- Other – please specify \_\_\_\_\_

#### Responses due: 15 September 2006

Individuals may respond either through their association or direct to Teaching Australia

- Web: [submit form]
- Email: [charter@teachingaustralia.edu.au](mailto:charter@teachingaustralia.edu.au)
- Fax: 02 6125 1644
- Post: 5 Liversidge Street, Acton ACT 0200

## A SAMPLE CHARTER FOR THE TEACHING PROFESSION

This charter is a statement of what teachers collectively believe, value, know and do.

It affirms the values and principles that guide members of the Australian teaching profession as we serve the community.

We believe education is fundamental to the wellbeing of individuals in a democratic society and to the social and economic wellbeing of the nation. Education sustains and creates knowledge, understanding and wisdom for the present and the future.

### **Our commitment:**

In becoming teachers we take on a special trust to use our professional knowledge, skills, understandings and judgement in the best interests of all students:

- to understand and meet individual learning needs
- to work ethically with integrity, respecting dignity and privacy
- to use facts and evidence to inform practice
- to respect the role of parents and to work closely with them
- to work constructively with colleagues and other professionals
- to reflect on practice and engage in on-going professional learning
- to support and mentor new members of the profession
- to work for the advancement of the teaching profession.

### **Our teaching role:**

Teaching is complex. It involves using professional knowledge, skills and expertise to plan and manage learning, taking into account individual social and developmental needs.

Essential elements of teaching practice include:

- analysing and understanding what each young person knows and can do
- establishing high learning expectations for each young person
- planning and using strategies for effective learning and learning assistance
- monitoring and assessing the progress of each young person
- providing helpful feedback and reporting honestly and clearly on the progress of each young person
- reviewing our work and revising our teaching strategies.