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Response to the Australian Education Bill, 2012. By Miss Tracy Cook (Secondary School Head Teacher)
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Please find enclosed my feedback regarding the proposed Education Bill, 2012. I understand that the Education Bill, 2012 has integrated the requirements identified in the Gonski report, however it does not make adequate provision for the successful delivery of a varied curriculum and high quality learning strategies that meet the needs of the comprehensive student population in our New South Wales Schools.

After reviewing the Education Bill document, I as an educator cannot see how this proposed legislation will enhance the learning outcomes achieved within our schools. Whilst it makes broad statements regarding high quality education and equitable high international standards, it does not provide details regarding how funding will support these initiatives.

Australian educators remain at the forefront of educational processes, and our experts are already acquiring relevant data and strategies for use in our Australian schools, of which there is insufficient funding for professional development processes for all teachers.

The Education Bill states that all children are entitled to educational excellence, however these aspects of schooling and learning already exist, however are currently hampered by insufficient economic supports and resources that see our students and teachers situated within learning environments that are old and in dire need of maintenance and repair. In some cases, schools that have teachers with immense expertise in particular subject areas, such as commercial cookery, textiles and arts, are unable to offer these subjects for students to study due to insufficient funds required for provision of appropriate classrooms. In some instances, the classrooms and teachers are available, however stringent restrictions regarding staffing and student enrolment numbers also prevent schools from offering the diversity of subjects required to meet the individual needs of students.

It is easy to state in a document that we want to ensure quality and excellence in education that ensures adequate competition with international stakeholders, however when the current education system is not resourced within the crucial areas, these objectives will remain unattainable. As federal governments provide 'extra funds' to the schools, they need to provide trained accounting staff to ensure that monies are utilised efficiently and within appropriate areas. Schools principals are leading educators, they hold educational qualifications and lack business management skills, therefore the majority of these leaders will not be able to adequately handle the responsibilities associated with school-managed economies.

Quality teaching and learning practises are already present within our schools, however these are difficult entities to evaluate. The federal government has displayed a preference for publishing school results; however these are only reflective of quantitative data relating to student performance. It is difficult to determine an appropriate method of assessing student outcomes relating to skill acquisition and personal best performance via statistical values that focus on examination results and grades. These elements are unfairly scrutinised by the community via websites and news articles, and the resulting pressures on schools is already observed in practises that involve lower ability or challenged students being discouraged from participating in external testing procedures such as NAPLAN, thus the school is ensured greater overall performance indicators with these students absent on the day of testing. The Education Bill 2012, will further enhance these processes, as schools will be forced to increase their focus on achieving and assessing student marks and grades of a high value.

The real focus of education systems must be the provision of learning environments that ensure students reach their full potential. Facilitation of quality teaching methods that guide students in the development of problem-solving, thinking and decision making skills that not only prepare them to be successful individuals in a rapidly changing society, but also provide opportunity to attain or exceed their personal best, either through grade, marks or attainment of competencies relevant to a variety of trades.

Trade training facilities need to be enhanced and subsequent increases in apprenticeship and traineeship salaries is required to ensure an increase in the profile and economic status of tradespeople and scope for youth employment instead of remaining at school in classroom environments that are unsuitable for their personal learning styles.

Leading educators as heads of the school role model best practise, guide and lead our teachers of all levels of expertise in the continuous development and improvement of skills. The Institute of teachers remains an irrelevant and useless external organisation that sets and monitors teacher standards, however in reality is an organisation that charges teachers an annual fee between \$85 and \$900, yet provides no support, instead requiring teachers to immerse themselves in hours of paperwork that tracks the courses they attend and resources devised.

We should look toward the private school model that provides the most effective economical and performance driven educational systems, as financial managers hold responsibilities for planning and purchases, whilst principals maintain leading educator roles. The skills required by the education bill 2012, require principals to engage their time solely in the busy work of economic

affairs, performance management and justification of student results to external bodies. Our current generation of principals and deputy principals cannot cope with these multiple business related tasks. In particular the analysis of student results in comparison with standardised and international standards presents inadequate feedback regarding overall school performance, as these statistics are only reflective of particular aspects of student learning processes. This proposed Bill only further complicates the diverse natures of schools as learning organisations and requires principals to be business managers as opposed to leading educators. It will result in the demise of true, relevant and inspirational teaching practises, as teachers succumb to the increased pressures to achieve student marks that showcase the school on websites and media reports as a high achieving institution.

The Education Bill overlooks the underlying framework that comprises teaching, that is, the ability of teachers to lead learning processes that guide students in attainment of relevant skills and knowledge that assist the student to achieve beyond their personal best. You cannot measure these elements appropriately, thus cannot assume a state of high-quality education based on statistics and results in mathematics and English. Legislative changes must be inclusive of these qualitative factors, and provide resources that further support the dedication and work of teachers and educational leaders.

I hope that my brief description and response is adequate to provide some insight into how educators feel in regards to this proposed Education Bill, 2012.

Please do not hesitate to contact me if any further discussion or notes are required.

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