

15 February 2013

Our Ref: 11-1589

Committee Secretary  
House of Representatives Standing Committee on  
Education and Employment  
PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600  
AUSTRALIA

Dear Secretary,

**P&CS QLD SUBMISSION – HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES STANDING COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT - INQUIRY INTO THE AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION BILL 2012**

As the largest stakeholder in education in Queensland, P&Cs Qld have broadly supported the move for a new education funding model, the National Plan for School Improvement and the enactment of recommendations made through the Australian Education Bill 2012. However we have some concerns regarding particular elements of the Bill.

In general P&Cs Qld support the National Plan for School Improvement to which the Bill alludes:

- A better funding structure is essential to strengthening our education system;
- Extra training and support for teachers and principals- P&Cs Qld do not make comment on industrial issues but in general support a push to provide the best teachers and principals. This needs to include recognition of the fact that we do not want to overload our teachers and principals with extra reporting requirements and administration.
- Schools in Queensland already exercise a high degree of autonomy. The level of autonomy and its relationship to accountability are key elements in making this work. Partnerships with the local community should be a given especially engagement of parents.

Our major concern has been the protracted timelines. While we recognise that such a change does not happen overnight, the timelines suggested in the Bill ignore the fact that we need appropriately directed funds as soon as possible. The ultimate goal should be a world-class education system that has the best interests of our children and schools at its heart.

P&Cs Qld support the objects of the Act:

- Excellent education for school students; and
- A highly equitable Australian schooling system

However we would question the target of Australia to be ranked as one of the top 5 highest performing countries by 2025 based on performance in reading, mathematics and science, and based on the quality and equity of Australian schooling. The PISA assessment on which this is to be

based does undoubtedly have its use but it also has its limitations. By focussing so strongly on this one test we run the risk of ignoring the other elements that make up a successful education system.

Some issues identified with the PISA test itself:

- The school year of pupils taking the test is not taken into consideration;
- Home school students are not tested;
- Cultural bias;
- The test measures the ability of students in a focussed manner and does not take into account other elements of learning, intelligence and wellbeing;

The five reform directions, (quality teaching; quality learning; empowered school leadership; transparency and accountability and meeting student need) all provide overarching areas for focussed effort on which we agree but again there is little information available on implementation in the Bill and also in the National Plan.

We believe that there is need for further explanation in the following areas:

- A definition of equity;
- The funding model to be implemented (including a clear definition of a school to incorporate different models of learning);
- Definition of quality teaching and what is proposed to enact this;
- Empowered school leadership- To include parents and appropriate implementation. School autonomy is shown to be successful but only within the correct context and with appropriate accountability. This should be needs based;
- Definition of quality learning;
- Transparency and accountability- It should be recognised that some assessments are most effectively used internally and not for public consumption. Over reliance on one form of assessment such as NAPLAN (or PISA) is incredibly dangerous.

In conclusion, P&Cs Qld support the Bill, however we would like to see greater expediency and a more focussed and detailed description of how it is to be enacted. Providing extra funding for our education is essential but we must also remember that it is the use of these funds in an explicit improvement agenda that will be the ultimate decider on how successful we are in reaching our ultimate goal of improved outcomes for all students.

Yours faithfully,

Peter Levett  
CEO P&Cs Qld