



Submission to the Standing Committee on Employment, Workplace Relations and Education

Inquiry into Academic Standards of School Education

Submitter:	Mr Mike Byrne Executive Director
Organisation:	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
Address:	GPO Box 2441 Brisbane Qld 4001
Phone:	(07) 3336 9306
Fax:	(07) 3229 0907
Email:	director@qcec.qld.Catholic.edu.au

Table of Contents

1	QCEC	1
2	INTRODUCTION	1
3	TERM OF REFERENCE I: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FURTHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT	
3.1	1 – 10 Curriculum	2
3.2	Year 2 Diagnostic Net	3
3.3	Reading Assistance Voucher Program	3
3.4	Middle Schooling	3
4	TERM OF REFERENCE II: YEAR 12 ACADEMIC STANDARDS	
4.1	Years 11 and 12	3
4.2	Indigenous Education	6
4.3	Quality Assurance	
4.3.1	Learning Framework	7
4.3.2	Strategic Renewal	7
4.3.3	Consistency of Teacher Judgment	8
5	CONCLUSION	8

1. QCEC

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission (QCEC) is the peak body representing all Catholic schools in Queensland. It has delegated authority in a number of areas, one of which is advocating and promoting the position of Catholic education and liaising with State and Federal Governments and peak bodies across a range of education issues.

The Queensland Catholic system comprises 286 schools with 295 campuses educating approximately 120,000 students and employing over 11,000 staff.

Catholic schools in Queensland are administered by 23 autonomous employing authorities including 5 diocesan education authorities and 18 Religious Institutes that exist independently of the diocesan education authorities.

The largest authority is Brisbane Catholic Education (Archdiocese of Brisbane) which is responsible for 137 schools. Diocesan authorities in Brisbane, Cairns, Toowoomba, Rockhampton and Townsville are headed by a Bishop/Archbishop who delegates operational authority to a Director/Executive director. Similarly, Leaders of Religious Institutes delegate authority at various levels to school boards and principals and in the case of the Christian Brothers, Edmund Rice Education.

The Queensland Catholic Education Commission is a 16 member body with certain state-wide responsibilities in respect of the Catholic schools administered by these employing authorities.

Catholic education is open to all students who support the ethos of Catholic schooling. The socio-economic, ethnic or indigenous backgrounds of students enrolled in Catholic schools parallels a similar profile to students attending government schools. QCEC is committed to providing education in partnership with the government and independent sectors as a service to the community as a whole.

2. INTRODUCTION

Queensland Catholic schools are strongly committed to providing education of the highest quality. Their focus is on the individual child who has his or her own gifts, needs, interests and style of learning. Expectations are realistic but high. Deeply embedded in the culture of Catholic schools is a structure to develop a strong sense of achievement and self-worth in every student. This is demonstrated through

- nurturing the individual;
- quality teaching and learning;
- offering a broad curriculum

Years Prep – 7 form the primary years of schooling in Queensland with Years 8 – 12 forming secondary. Prep is not a compulsory year.

3. TERMS OF REFERENCE I: PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FURTHER EDUCATION, TRAINING AND EMPLOYMENT

3.1 1 – 10 CURRICULUM

The 1 – 10 curriculum is organized in nine Key Learning Areas (KLAs): English, Mathematics, Science, The Arts, Health and Physical Education, Studies of Society and Environment, Languages other than English, Technology and Religion. All Catholic schools have an extra KLA from Government schools, which is Religious Education. The syllabuses provide a learning continuum which traces a progression and development of knowledge and skills from year level to year level.

The KLAs do not stipulate particular teaching strategies or approaches. Most Catholic systemic schools use outcomes to report on students. The outcomes are an indication of what students know and therefore can be described as content standards rather than achievement standards.

From 1 – 10 there is no standardized assessment in the KLAs. There are however standardized tests in some aspects of literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5 & 7 which are reported against national benchmarks.

Core learning outcomes are not graded by the schools. Students either demonstrate the outcome, or are in the process of working towards demonstrating the outcome or have achieved beyond it.

As a consequence the only system level information currently available regarding student achievement in 1 – 10 is the national benchmark testing. Results for the Catholic sector in 2006 are as follows:

Test results 2006 (QSA)	Year 3	Year 5	Year 7			
Benchmarks:						
Reading and Viewing	425	559	611			
Writing	408	471	529			
Literacy	417	515	570			
Numeracy	434	524	595			
Average Results:				Percentage above benchmark		
Reading and Viewing	548	620	689	29%	11%	13%
Writing	537	643	707	32%	36%	34%
Literacy	543	631	698	30%	23%	22%
Numeracy	544	612	665	25%	17%	12%

The Queensland Curriculum Assessment and Reporting (QCAR) Framework will outline the essential core knowledge and skills that students need to know along with the standards of achievement expected of them. This framework will give teachers the information they need to prepare programs that will cover the core aspects of the curriculum.

An important part of the QCAR framework (to be implemented in 2008) is to include strategies that define 'the Essential Learnings' and to set standards for assessing and reporting student achievement in years 1-10. Included here is a proposed 'bank' of assessment tools linked to the Essential Learnings and standards with comparable assessment.

The framework fosters comparability across schools with more commonality in what is taught. It will also allow flexibility for programs to meet local needs.

3.2 YEAR 2 DIAGNOSTIC NET

A student's development in the areas of literacy and numeracy is closely monitored in the early years of schooling. The Year 2 Diagnostic Net monitors and assesses the student's progress. As part of the Net process students identified with needs are engaged in intervention programs that provide additional support for the students.

3.3 READING ASSISTANCE VOUCHER PROGRAM (RAV)

There has been an excellent take up of Queensland Catholic primary schools with eligible students using the Australian Government funded RAV program. The program provides up to \$700 in tutorial assistance for individual students who have not met the Year 3 reading benchmark in 2006.

3.4 MIDDLE SCHOOLING

Catholic education in Queensland has embraced the middle years of schooling philosophy and practice which targets the identified needs of young adolescents. The focus is on student engagement and achievement. In some schools physical structures have been set up specifically to facilitate middle school learning however this is not essential if the appropriate curriculum pedagogy and school organisation are in place. In Catholic settings pastoral care relevant to young adolescents is integral to the success of students in the middle years.

4. TERMS OF REFERENCE II: YEAR 12 ACADEMIC STANDARDS

4.1 YEARS 11 AND 12

From 2006 young people are required to complete Year 10 and then engage in further learning for two years, or until they achieve a Queensland Certificate of Education, or Certificate III vocational qualification, or turn 17. The Certificate of Education recognizes a broad range of student achievements, including TAFE

courses, school-based apprenticeships, university subjects and structured work experience.

Students wishing to attend universities generally require an OP score ranging from 1 – 25 with 1 being the highest. The score is determined from results gained at the school (school-based assessment) combined with a state wide test (Qld Core Skills) which scale student performance. OP scores that range from 1 – 15 generally allow students entry to tertiary courses. Eighty-six percent (86%) of students who were OP eligible in Catholic secondary schools received an OP from 1- 15 or a VET certification. Of the students who applied for entrance to a tertiary institution, 96% were offered a place.

A crucial part of the senior education phase in Queensland is the process of school based assessment. The moderation of student assessment by panels of teachers is a valuable source of professional development for teachers of years 11 and 12. The meetings are conducted twice a year where teachers in particular subject areas gather to review samples of student work. Teachers have been in-serviced by the Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) to provide informed and constructive feedback to schools.

Catholic schools provide VET opportunities to their students in a number of ways. Students may engage in school-based apprenticeships and traineeships; AQTF accredited VET certificates and qualifications within their school programs; VET subjects as vocational learning strands which develop generic employability skills. Schools may link with TAFE or other Registered Training Organisations to provide vocational subjects for their students. Schools also provide students with practical opportunities in the workplace through work experience and Structured Workplace Learning.

During 2006 School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (SATs) increased by 10% from the previous year.

TABLE 1
SATS STATISTICS 2006

SATs Statistics 2006	
Total SATs	987
SATS Male	529
SATS Female	447
Traineeships	658
Apprenticeships	329

For the first time male students undertaking SATs outnumbered female students by 71.

**TABLE 2
SATs STATISTICS DET REGIONS**

DET Region	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Brisbane	343	312	315	254	213
Central Qld	83	86	60	47	37
North Qld	176	122	117	51	90
South Coast	115	103	87	85	86
Sth West Qld	158	144	96	80	77
Wide Bay/Sunshine Coast	111	133	109	114	95

SATs numbers have continued to trend upwards quite markedly in Brisbane, South Coast and South West Queensland, with a remarkable increase in North Queensland of 44%. Wide Bay/Sunshine Coast DET region has undergone a decline of 16.5% in the same period.

The Queensland Government has committed to an election promise to double the number of school-based apprenticeships and traineeships over the next 3 years.

**TABLE 3
NUMBER OF SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS COMMENCING A SCHOOL-BASED NEW APPRENTICESHIP PROGRAM BY ANTA INDUSTRY GROUP IN 2006.**

CATEGORY A	2006
Arts, entertainment, Sport & Recreation	30
Automotive	61
Building & construction	141
Community Services, Health & Education	34
Finance, Banking & Insurance	Nil
Food Processing	11
TCF & Furnishings	16
Communications	Nil
Engineering & Mining	66
Primary Industry	65
Process Manufacturing	2
Sales & Personal Services	244
Tourism & Hospitality	160
Transport & storage	3
Utilities	23
CATEGORY B	
Business & Clerical	98
Computing	22
Science, Technical & Other	Nil
CATEGORY C	
General Education & Training	5
Not Classified	6
TOTAL	987

There has been a 40% increase in SATs in the area of Building and Construction. SATs in Primary Industry areas have also increased over the past 5 years, being now triple the 2002 level.

Structured Workplace Learning has also increased significantly over the past 5 years.

**TABLE 4
STRUCTURED WORKPLACE LEARNING STUDENTS AND HOURS IN 2002 – 2006**

DET Region	2006	2005	2004	2003	2002
Total Workplace Learning Students	2,629	1,740	2,551	2,870	2,455
Total Workplace Learning Hours	261,304	296,559	246,211	241,515	338,746

Many Catholic schools have close links with organisations that promote Local Community Partnerships (LCP). These partnerships support students in the following ways:

- the Connect Program (Connecting Youth to Employment);
- by providing school based apprenticeships and traineeships;
- offering the Youth Pathways Program;
- through structured workplace learning; and
- through mentoring programs.

Flexible Learning Centres provide support and offer pathways to disengaged students.

4.2 INDIGENOUS EDUCATION

The 2006 DEST August Census indicated 3190 (FTE) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students were enrolled in Catholic schools and learning centres in Queensland. This represented an increase of 117 from 2005 to 2006 and overall, Queensland enrolments comprised 26% of total national enrolments of Indigenous students in Australian Catholic schools.

**TABLE 5
2006 YEAR 12 EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES**

	Indigenous Students	Non-Indigenous Students
OP 1-15	10.2%	55.1%
OP 16-25	16%	21.30%
Did not achieve either an OP or Voc Learning (Statement of Achievement/ or Certificate)	28.2%	3.1%

Year 12 outcomes are improving steadily for Indigenous students. However, as Table 1 indicates the gap between outcomes of Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students in Catholic schools remains significant.

A feature of Catholic education in Queensland is the increasing trend towards collaborative partnerships with government and other non-government education sector schools and agencies preparing young people for future pathways. Education authorities and schools were instrumental in creating innovative partnerships

between schools and industry to improve the training and employment pathways for Indigenous students. Indigenous young people were assisted to develop transitional pathways into further education, training or employment. In addition, students were assisted in linking in with innovative school to work opportunities by accessing school based traineeships and apprenticeships. In collaboration with QSA, Queensland Transport and Queensland Police, the Drive 4 Life Program, is an example of one initiative that aims to enhance the employment opportunities of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, through assisting with driver licensing.

As a result of Australian Government funded initiatives, a significant number of programs throughout Queensland have focused on engaging and retaining disengaged Indigenous students and encouraging and supporting Indigenous senior secondary students to complete Year 12 or its equivalent. For example, the Edmund Rice Flexible Learning Centres have developed culturally inclusive curricula for Indigenous students disengaged from mainstream schooling.

General Comments on 2006 Year 3, 5 and 7 Testing Outcomes for Indigenous Students from 2005 to 2006 Results

- significant improvements in 3, 5 and 7 Writing
- improvements in Yr 3 and 5 Reading
- slight decline in Yr 7 Reading
- slight decline in Yr 3 Numeracy
- significant decline in Year 5 and Year 7 Numeracy

Indigenous students were provided supplementary support through the DEST Indigenous Tutorial Assistance Scheme (ITAS) programs. Tutoring programs and other culturally relevant support programs implemented by education authorities. Indigenous Education Workers play an important role in schools promoting home school liaison and the use of culturally inclusive practice to ensure that students were confident in the school environment.

4.3 QUALITY ASSURANCE

4.3.1 LEARNING FRAMEWORK

All dioceses along with many Religious Institute (RI) schools have developed a Learning Framework that clearly indicates the path to developing life long learners. It sets out the skills and attributes needed to create a learning environment which is student focused. The Learning Framework is future orientated and aims for young people who are reflective self directed learners. The Framework sits within a statement of values and beliefs – an integral part of Catholic education.

4.3.2 STRATEGIC RENEWAL

As part of the cycle of quality assurance Queensland Catholic schools engage in a renewal process every five years which identifies criteria that will enable the school to renew, reflect, plan and take action to improve the educational outcomes of the

school. The process is thorough and comprehensive with outcomes monitored and plans implemented to maintain high quality Catholic education.

4.3.3 CONSISTENCY OF TEACHER JUDGMENT (CTJ)

Teachers in Catholic schools use the CTJ process to build a climate of professional collegiality which enables teachers to move towards agreement on the criteria that leads to consistent judgments about student demonstration of core learning outcomes. Teachers meet on a regular basis to discuss student work in years 1 – 10. The process involves teachers meeting in clusters with typical examples of student work. The purpose is to provide effective quality teaching based on judgments about student work. The CTJ process is a valuable tool for teacher professional development through collaboration and sharing of ideas.

5. CONCLUSION

Queensland Catholic Education has an impressive history of service and is highly regarded by the general community. Catholic schools offer a diverse and holistic education where close links with parents are nurtured. When home and school work together the community can prepare young people to be independent, confident and eager to learn. Today more than ever, there is a growing awareness of the need for an education that is grounded in explicit values that help students to develop and internalize a means of understanding the world and their place in it.

This submission presents clear evidence that Catholic schools in Queensland more than adequately prepare students for education, training and employment. The Catholic schools' sector succeeds in providing much more than the core knowledge and skills young people need to participate in further education.

Catholic education is rich in its depth and diversity and continually strives to enhance young peoples' lives to prepare them in becoming active citizens in Australian society.