

## **Submission from Queensland Secondary Principals' Association**

This is not a complete position statement on academic standards in our state secondary schools, rather a range of related issues we would like to raise with the committee. We reserve the right to raise further issues at the hearing, and look forward to discussing the issues below at the hearing.

1. We see constant evidence of high-quality academic student outcomes across Queensland's state secondary schools. This is reflected in our students achieving high levels of achievement in academic subjects in all of our schools. Our system and its standards are highly regarded, and our schools are eagerly sought out by overseas students to enhance their education. Academic success of students is a priority of our Principals and teachers, and school communities expect access to academic success in their local schools. Our students who proceed to tertiary studies have a high rate of success, and our schools have many students who have gone on to celebrated academic careers.

2. Higher retention rates to the end of Year 12 have seen a broader range of students continuing for longer in our schools over recent years. Our state high schools have responded by guaranteeing a comprehensive curriculum for the student cohort, in particular by moving extensively into vocational education programmes for students. As an example, we believe Queensland schools head the nation in the number of school-based traineeships. This movement into vocational education by our schools is demanding of time, energy and resources, but we believe we have achieved this without detriment to the academic outcomes of our schools.

3. A factor mitigating against student success in some areas is a shortage of specialist subject teachers, particularly in rural and remote areas. There is anecdotal evidence of teachers having to teach outside of the curriculum areas for which they were trained. We are also aware of cases where Principals have "pruned" the curriculum by withdrawing subjects for which quality teachers could not be found...the most frequent example of this would be Foreign Languages.

4. Student motivation is a key to their success at school, be that academic success or whatever. This requires schools to be cognisant of social, economic, emotional and cultural factors at play amongst their students and the wider community. This aspect of supporting and encouraging our students through their adolescent years is so important to their success at school, indeed to their success in later life. The homes of some of our students lack role models of success; we strive to overcome this.

5. In recent years we see an increasing trend for our schools to partner with universities to allow selected senior students to commence university study while still at school. These students enrol in academic subjects at the tertiary level, and have a really high level of success. Many of our schools offer vertical curriculum movement for students, allowing high-achieving students to progress more quickly through their studies and move to a higher academic level than their age peers. Such flexibility is very important to extending our high achievers.

6. A highly-qualified, motivated workforce of teachers and school leaders is central to the academic advancement of our students. Teacher supply is a problem in achieving this, as is sufficient funding for ongoing, quality professional development.

7. State schools cater for the vast majority of students with disabilities. Their rapidly increasing numbers are very time and resource intensive. Does this detract some of our attention from academic excellence?....Perhaps.

8. Many of our Principals and teachers are frustrated by the unacceptable literacy levels of young people entering our secondary schools. Schools offer "catch up" courses, but frequently these students continue to struggle with their secondary studies in some subjects. This detracts from the student's ability to succeed in what are regarded as "academic" subjects.

9. Choosing the correct career pathway is important to the motivation and success of young people, both academic and other pathways. A sufficient number of well-qualified school guidance counsellors is essential to assist young people and their families with these decisions. There is a present and pressing need to expand these services in our schools.

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