

30/10/2008

John Carter

Committee Secretary

Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee

Department of the Senate

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**RE: Senate Inquiry into Schools Assistance Bill 2008**

Dear Mr. Carter,

I am concerned about this Bill, and about three areas in particular, which I detail below:

1. Curriculum

Our school has had the honour of re-introducing phonics to Australia, through the Fitzroy Readers. This change, **the enactment of a better teaching method**, runs the potential to be dis-allowed under this Bill, in that if the Bill, or the regulations that it will later support are too prescriptive, then change, progress and evolution will be impossible. I do not feel that it is the role of the Government to micro-manage schools, and hope that this is not the intention of this Bill. Prescribe a curriculum framework or curriculum content that schools follow, but do not prescribe methods for imparting that content. Phonics is a good example. It is the best literacy teaching method that we have discovered to date, but

if a better one were to be discovered in the future, well, the legislative framework would be working against the children of Australia, if it (or change) were banned by legislation.

## 2. Funding

I believe that the legislative framework should encourage parents, a school's community and society at large to contribute to the education of the children of Australia. Members of the Government have recently made statements which could be interpreted as penalising schools for receiving donations. To me, this seems counter productive to the educational outcomes we as a nation need. Surely, it is unproductive for us, as a nation, to penalise contributions to a school by reducing its funding. I hope that this Bill does not allow for this potential.

## 3. Qualified Audit

I am not sure what this means, but hope that it does not lead to financially viable schools being penalised, or having to jump through more red tape.

Finally, I firmly believe that if the Government is serious about improving the quality of the education that the students of Australia receive, then this will be done through allowing parents greater opportunities and choice in seeking schools for their children, supporting them financially in their choice, and not making it harder for schools to offer families these choices. I hope that this is the position that the Government decides upon.

Yours,

Timothy Berryman (Principal)

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