

To: The Education and Innovation Committee, eic@parliament.qld.gov.au

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From Mark O'Connor

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Experience 39 years .

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I am concerned about the deterioration of our education system in Queensland. The following points especially relate to the current Inquiry into Senior Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Assessment:

Ensuring assessment processes are supported by teachers.

- ✘ I have been a panel member for several subjects including Physics for the last 20 years at least. I resigned when E.E.I s and E.R.T s were introduced. They, along with the introduction of A, B etc replacing % results caused so much confusion even among the panel members. Even now there are few guidelines .An example How many A standard , B standard C standard questions should there be in a 2 hour paper.
- ✘ Physics was one of the last subjects to introduce E.E.I s and E.R.T s . Physics teachers were often called dinosaurs by panel members who had introduced their new work programs. Most physics panelists were reluctant to introduce the new assessment method.(With good reasons)
- ✘ At no stage was I ever surveyed/asked did I want a new method of assessment and marking.
- ✘ Neither parents or students want to know about words/letters they simply want to know have they passed an exam. Under the current system you often cannot say this.
- ✘ QSA has provided minimal resources and exemplars.
- ✘ QSA's guidelines change regularly and advice is contradictory.

Student participation levels.

- ✘ The extended research assignments are as big as anything done at third year uni. They take up to a term. They are very stressful. The time these assignments take up, stops students from doing their other homework. It's also very hard for them to do enough hours and be awake for school the next day.
- ✘ I now teach significantly less Physics than before the E.E.I s and E.R.T s were introduced. This is because students lose time and motivation to do their normal studies.
- ✘ I keep in contact with many of my past students. Students who go on to do Engineering and Science tell me they only do multiple choice testing for most of year 1 and year 2 , yet year 11 and year 12 students have to put up with E.E.Is and E.R.T s.
- ✘ Students HATE E.E.I s in particular . I dread having to introduce them each time.
- ✘ A large number of my Physics students are fee paying overseas students They tend to be very good at Maths and struggle with their English . Both the E.E.I s and E.R.T s place a huge amount of stress on them.
- ✘ For a government that makes a lot of money from overseas fee paying students E.E.I s and E.R.Ts are certain to drive students to states that do not use this method of assessment.

The ability of assessment to support valid and reliable judgments of student outcomes.

- ✖ I know teachers who have virtually done their child's E.E.I and or E.R.T. I know teachers who get paid to assist students doing their E.E.Is / E.R.Ts. It has been acknowledged. **SEE Readers Digest August 2011 page 130**
- ✖ It's not right for students' grades to be based on these assignments, as they can be done by tutors or anyone. Senior assessment and university entrance are competitive, so the grading ought to be fair for students.
- ✖ There are too many assignments. Students are spending all their time sitting at the computer doing assignments. They don't seem to be learning much – just getting the assignments done. Sitting at the computer for so long is not healthy, especially for young people.
- ✖ Mathematics, chemistry and physics are based on equations and so are best learned through homework practice. Writing assignments is better suited to other subjects like English or History.
- ✖ As an ex panel member I have seen students getting ordinary marks for supervised written exams but excellent marks for E.E.I s and E.R.Ts. This has helped to raise the overall grade for that student. My conclusion is.All assessment that goes towards a student's exit result should be supervised under exam conditions .
- ✖ I am disturbed that QSA are now imposing this method of assessment on the year 8 to 10 year levels.
- ✖ The use of long writing tasks discriminates against students from non English speaking backgrounds and boys.
- ✖ The *Evaluate and Concluding* category of exam question used in Science is of dubious value. If the QSA insists on this being used, it should provide a data bank of questions.
- ✖ The criteria paragraphs which the QSA call standards, are highly subjective.
-  I support state-wide exams set by teams of experienced teachers. The assessment could be [50% external exam, 50% internal of which an EEI is one tenth (5% of the final total.)].

 Those who make decisions on curriculum in our schools should spend at least 12 months in the classroom every 4 years. Educational theorists without substantial classroom experience should not be employed in decision making positions.

 The teachers I know, are very stressed and short of time. Their paperwork demands are much more than they used to be. Our schools would be healthier if education was streamlined, and teachers had more time to prepare interesting lessons or coach a team.

 The whole education process currently seems nebulous and subjective. If schools used the same senior maths exam across the state, then this would provide a benchmark for employers and ensure consistency and fairness across the state.