Dear Committee Members,

Thankyou for taking the time to conduct this inquiry, and for giving me the opportunity to provide a brief submission. I have asked that my name be withheld to protect the privacy of people who would be able to be identified from connections within my submission. I am a senior teacher, currently teaching Physics in a large rural state high school. I have also taught Chemistry under the previous syllabus, Physics under the previous syllabus, Maths A under the previous syllabus and Maths B under both.

I will briefly address each of the topics of the inquiry, first by making a personal statement, then by giving a small sample of information collected from students and staff that I work with.

1. **Ensuring assessment processes are supported by teachers.**

   Personal statement: I find the current assessment processes unclear and unnecessarily time consuming for students and myself. The concepts behind the processes, such as using criteria to explain to students what they need to show, and assessing a range of learning styles through different types of assessment seem valid. Unfortunately, when put into practice, these concepts do not seem to survive. All systems of assessment (marks based, criteria based, ….) have problems, can be rorted, and allow some students an apparent advantage over others. Personally, I would prefer to use an assessment system that uses up less of my time and the students' time, so that we can concentrate on actually learning and understanding the work instead.

   Sample information from school: My job as a Physics teacher in this school became available because the previous teacher no longer wished to teach it because he felt that the current syllabus did not allow him to give the students a good Physics education. Of the senior science/maths teachers at my school, I know of only one who fully supports the assessment processes. Even he, however, questions the validity of the assessment in some cases.

2. **Student participation levels.**

   Personal Statement: This topic would be better addressed by looking at valid statistical data. My observations are based on a population that is too small to be representative of the whole state.

   Sample information from school: Last year I was shocked to hear that the year 11 enrolment for Physics was small enough that it may not be able to run (our school has more than 1000 students). In future years, we have to run year 11 & 12 at the same time so that they can become a composite class if required due to low numbers.

   I asked my year 12 physics class to rate our EEI that we are currently working on (which they seem to be enjoying) based on the level of productiveness and interest of the task. On a scale of 0 (really worthless and of no interest) to 10 (really meaningful and very interesting), the EEI scored an average of a 6 with my students.

3. Validity of assessment.

Personal Statement: I believe our assessment system is invalid for many reasons. Firstly, because the criteria we use to make judgements are essentially impossible to interpret, and difficult to use impartially. Secondly because the panel system does not work as effectively as the design would suggest. Thirdly because extended assignments completed at home favour students who are willing to cheat, or who can afford a good tutor.

Sample information from school:

Out of interest, I asked some of my colleagues to tell me what one single dot point (out of the 45 dot point descriptors in the Physics Exit Criteria) meant. The syllabus says that an A standard in IP will show "systematic analysis of primary and secondary data to identify relationships between patterns, trends, errors and anomalies." The answers given by my colleagues (the first three have taught subjects with this criterion, the second two are senior science teachers who have not experienced this particular criterion) were:
- *Selecting appropriate data points (the useful bits)*
- *I don't understand that one, because of the continual criticism I have had from panel each time I try to interpret it, but I would guess that it means using a systematic method to analyse a table and/or graph*
- *An organised response with structure, logical pattern. Usually if they have the complete answer to the question, then they must have shown systematic analysis.*
- *They've taken a part of the data and quoted that. They've been selective.*
- *A trend is a relationship, so I don't know what they mean by that. But leaving that out, analysing the data to find a relationship.*

As you can see, each person interpreted the statement differently, although there is a sort of general common understanding that may or may not be the intent of the statement. None of them was able to give an explanation of all the terms used in the descriptor, so I am no wiser as to what it means (although I am using and have used it to assess my students).

Another sample of information relates to problems with our panel system, which is supposed to ensure validity of the assessment and grading, particularly comparability between schools. In 2011, I sent my year 11 Physics assessment to panel for monitoring. I acknowledged to panel that the ERT was not up to scratch (for various reasons), but felt that the other 3 assessment items which were 2 exams and an EEI were of a suitable standard. This was confirmed by the panel with the following feedback.

In 2012, the year 11 Physics teacher used the <u>same assessment items</u> for the 3 that received this positive feedback, and modified the ERT to make it meet the syllabus requirements. The feedback received from the panel this time was…

As you can see, this directly contradicted the advice given about the same assessment items the previous year, and obviously left us quite confused as to what is expected. This is not an isolated incident. Most teachers that I talk to acknowledge that the feedback you get depends on the person who is reviewing your assessment items. As can be seen from the above feedback, this has the potential to change a student's level of achievement from a VHA to an HA or lower. It is possible to contest this within the panel system, of course. However, it does make the validity of assessment questionable, if teachers who are given panel training have such a different opinion about the standard of assessment when comparing at the broad level of

VHA/HA/SA/LA/VLA but I have to be able to position a student on one of 10 rungs within each level of achievement. One might also wonder how the different panels across the state can give comparable feedback, if members in a single panel can have such a different view.

Summary - Thankyou for taking the time to consider this facet of our education system. No assessment system that I have heard of, or can imagine, is flawless. However, at times it feels like the current system is unnecessarily opaque and difficult to work with. If it could be replaced with a simpler system that was easier for students, parents and teachers to understand, I would hope that a greater proportion of home and class time could be spent on enjoying learning the subject matter.