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Education and Innovation Committee

From: John Mattick [redacted]
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To: Education and Innovation Committee
Subject: Parliamentary Enquiry: Assessment Methods for Senior Maths, Chemistry and Physics

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The Education and Innovation Committee,

- I am concerned about the deterioration of the education system in Queensland. I submit the following comments to the current Inquiry into Senior Mathematics, Physics and Chemistry Assessment:

- I dislike the vague words on report cards. I would prefer to see written summaries accompanied by percentage scores from their tests.

- The extended research assignments are not only stressful, they are (in my experience) frequently completed with parental help, often extensive, which means that assessments of them are biased in favour of those families who have the education, time and commitment to assist. This means that fair assessment is impossible. The only way to fairly assess student's abilities and achievements, and therefore their future university of employment opportunities, is through standardised examinations.

- 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.

- Calculators are overused. Children should be able to do basic maths without having to use a calculator.

- In my experience teachers are stressed and short of time, partly because of increased paperwork and partly because they are required to develop their own curriculum from vague guidelines issued by the Queensland Studies Authority.

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

- There are too many narrow subjects in years 11 and 12. This causes premature specialisation and inhibits students' opportunity to obtain a broad education. It also makes teaching at first year university very difficult, because of the variable background in foundation subjects, e.g., in science, where I have direct experience: the students are either bored or terrified in first year university, depending on whether they have done chemistry, physics or biology in high school, and first year teaching is therefore largely remedial. Related subjects should be grouped to provide a common platform for subsequent education.

I write as a long-term resident of Queensland, where my 3 children were partly educated, and as a former Chair of the Queensland Studies Authority (2004-2007). My younger children are completing their education in NSW, where they are doing very well, partly because of more rigorous curricula, and partly

because the students are streamed, which enables teaching to be much better tuned to abilities and interests. This is not pigeon-holing, as the students move fluidly between streams within their grade based on subject affinity and performance.

I do hope some reasonable rigour and structure can be re-introduced to the education system and the objective assessment of student achievements in Queensland, in the interests of both their education and fair opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

John Mattick

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