

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

From : Kay Anderson



I am concerned about the deterioration of our education system in Queensland.
I do not support the QSA's current system of assessment in Mathematics.

I have been teaching Senior Mathematics in Queensland for more than thirty five years. I have taught under the public examination system as well as Radford, ROSBA and under BSSSS and the present QSA. I was Mathematics HOD for fourteen years. I have been a District Panellist for eighteen years, but along with many experienced teachers, no longer believe that I have the ability to make fair judgements about the work from other schools.

I began my career in the seventies when the standards and rigour of Mathematics were very high and, during my career, I have witnessed a gradual decline in these standards and consequently, the mathematics ability of the students I teach.

I feel gravely concerned about the QSA and its approach to assessment. The workload is absolutely horrendous and unmanageable, an enormous burden to teachers and of no benefit to the students. The marking load is crippling and as much as I am passionate about teaching Mathematics, I have become more and more frustrated and disillusioned. I am considering a career change as teaching no longer has rewarding and satisfying outcomes for me. I can't continue to tolerate a system that demands that I give all of my energy to an impossible assessment regime. Instead, I should be giving my energy to the students I teach.

Perhaps more important is the damaging effect this assessment is having on the students. Assessing Mathematics through long written assignments is not valid for many reasons:

- (1) There is the issue of who actually does the assignments. My biggest reservation concerning the importance placed on assignments for obtaining grades is the lack of verification of how much of the work is really owned by the student submitting it.
- (2) Students do not learn much Mathematics by doing them.
- (3) These assignments use up much time which could be used in acquiring basic knowledge and skills. Students are spending every minute of their time on assignments; they very rarely do set homework, and all of this to the detriment of essential time needed to consolidate their work.

The subjective nature of verbal descriptors which QSA call 'standards' is open to different interpretations and means that there is inconsistency in interpretation amongst staff and also panellists. For Mathematics, criteria based assessment is fundamentally flawed and must go. Subjectivity in assessment must be replaced with objectivity. Mathematics is supposed to be right or wrong and marks are the best way to judge this. I support state-wide exams set by teams of experienced teachers. At the very least, something similar to NSW or Victoria where students sit a combination of external and internal exams. Those who make decisions on curriculum in our schools should spend at least 6 months in the classroom every 4 years. Educational theorists without substantial classroom experience should not be employed in

decision making positions. The workload of teachers and students is excessive and must be reduced and redirected into more productive results-based areas.

In conclusion, I believe that urgent action is needed to create a system of assessment that is supported by, and is fair to, both teachers and students. Teachers are stressed, students are stressed, parents are paying tutors and Queensland results still show that the system is a failure. What other evidence is needed? Change must occur quickly because the students are only given one chance.

K Anderson