



EDUCATION AND INNOVATION COMMITTEE

Members present:

Mrs RN Menkens MP (Chair)
Mr SA Bennett MP
Mr MA Boothman MP
Mr MR Latter MP
Mrs DC Scott MP
Mr NA Symes MP

Staff present:

Ms B Watson (Research Director)
Ms E Booth (Principal Research Officer)

PUBLIC HEARING—INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION (QUEENSLAND CURRICULUM AND ASSESSMENT AUTHORITY) BILL 2013

TRANSCRIPT OF PROCEEDINGS

WEDNESDAY, 20 NOVEMBER 2013

Brisbane

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Committee met at 11.18 am

CHAIR: Good morning and welcome to this public hearing to inform the committee's inquiry into the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. I want to introduce the members of the Education and Innovation Committee. I am Rosemary Menkens, the member for Burdekin and the chair of this committee. With me are committee members Mrs Desley Scott, deputy chair and member for Woodridge; Mr Steve Bennett, member for Burnett; Mr Mark Boothman, member for Albert; Mr Michael Latter, member for Waterford; and Mr Neil Symes, member for Lytton. Mr Ray Hopper is an apology this morning.

The bill was referred to this committee on 29 October 2013. The task of the committee is to consider the bill and report back to the parliament about both the policy intent to be achieved and the application of fundamental legislative principles. We are due to report back to the parliament by 30 January. A public briefing from representatives of the Department of Education, Training and Employment was provided on 30 October this year and the transcript of these proceedings is published on our webpage.

This hearing is a formal process of the parliament and parliamentary privilege applies to all evidence presented. Any person intentionally misleading the committee is committing a serious offence. Although this hearing is public, you are able to request through me as chair that any material or information that you provide be kept private and you could object to particular questions. You might also wish to take questions on notice if you do not have information at hand. The hearing today is being broadcast live via the Queensland parliament website. This hearing is also being recorded and will be transcribed by Hansard and the transcript of this hearing will be published on the committee's webpage when it is available.

I also ask members of the media who might be recording any proceedings that they adhere to the committee's endorsed media guidelines. Committee staff have a copy of the guidelines available for you, should you require one. I ask everybody present to please turn off their mobile phones or set them to silent.

ROBERTSON, Mr David, Executive Director, Independent Schools Queensland

WILLS, Dr Janelle, Director, Teaching and Learning, Independent Schools Queensland

CHAIR: I welcome Mr David Robertson and Dr Janelle Wills from Independent Schools Queensland. Thank you for being here today to assist us. Would you like to make a brief opening statement before we ask you any questions that we have in relation to your submission or any other information that you might provide today?

Mr Robertson: Yes. Thank you, Chair, for the opportunity to appear here today to help you in your consideration of this bill. As I think committee members are aware, Independent Schools Queensland is the peak body representing independent schools across our state. Our membership comprises 188 independent schools on 205 campuses educating nearly 115,000 students, which is 15 per cent of all students, and that includes nearly 20 per cent of all secondary students. I want to declare to the committee that I am a member of the Queensland Studies Authority board and I hold that position as a nominee of Independent Schools Queensland.

We support the repeal of the current Education (Queensland Studies Authority) Act 2002 and its replacement by the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority) Bill 2013. Since the establishment of QSA in 2002, the educational landscape has changed significantly and in particular we now have an Australian Curriculum and we have the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority. It is in the context of that changed educational environment that we support the revitalisation and repositioning of the Queensland Studies Authority. As you would all be aware, every state and territory has a statutory authority which performs the functions around curriculum provision, assessment, certification and reporting. Queensland also requires such an authority and the proposed Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority will undertake those important functions.

One of the significant changes in the bill is the proposed governance arrangements for the new authority. I make it very clear that we support the proposed governance of the new authority as an appropriate model to ensure modern and accountable governance. We note from previous reviews undertaken by the government such as the Meade review of QSA itself and the Webbe-Weller review of statutory authorities that they recommended similar governance structures for statutory authorities. Currently, the Queensland Studies Authority has a wide range of committees. We would expect such committee structures to continue, although perhaps with some streamlining, into the future, and these are an appropriate avenue for engagement with a wide range of stakeholders.

The bill provides a very clear position in terms of the use of the Australian Curriculum and the functions of the authority where there is not an Australian Curriculum for a particular subject or subject area. Importantly, we think the bill provides the mechanism whereby the authority will provide support to schools in implementing curriculum, whether it is Australian Curriculum or syllabuses developed by QSA. Independent Schools welcomes the provisions of section 111 of the bill in terms of the accreditation attributes of schools, and this provision will provide certainty for non-state schools in terms of the accreditation requirements and their intersection with the Australian Curriculum. In summary, as outlined in our submission, Independent Schools Queensland will be supporting the bill. I would be happy to provide any further information.

CHAIR: Thank you, Mr Robertson. We do appreciate that. As we understand, you are supportive of the need for the committee system to continue with representatives who have recognised expertise. Instead of being on the governing board under the bill, representatives of various stakeholder groups would have input to their decision making through the committee system; they would not have direct decision-making powers. Can you comment on that new structure and whether you feel that that is appropriate?

Mr Robertson: Yes, we do feel that the proposed board structure of the new authority is appropriate. Obviously under the legislation it will be up to that board as to the committee structure that it appoints and works with, but I think any board would want to gather the views of stakeholders, get feedback on proposals and certainly take into consideration those views when they are making decisions. So I would expect that the authority's board would very strongly support engagement with schools, stakeholders, universities, the whole range of educational stakeholders in terms of their responsibilities for managing the authority.

Mr BENNETT: Good morning. Page 3 of your submission gives some examples of the sorts of subjects that we might need to be accredited, allowing comparable outcomes under the new proposal, and of course the Australian Curriculum subjects. Could you expand on that for me please?

Mr Robertson: Yes. This relates to the intersection of the accreditation requirements for non-state schools and the curriculum. One of the attributes in terms of accreditation of a non-state school is their educational program. In terms of the vast majority of non-state schools, currently their attribute would be their educational program based on QSA syllabuses. Obviously with the introduction of the Australian Curriculum there has been some debate as to whether schools have to actually seek a change in accreditation attribute to say that they are providing the Australian Curriculum. To me that would be totally unnecessary given that it is a curriculum supported by the Queensland government. I think in terms of section 111 of the proposed bill, that just tidies up that particular area and leaves it in no doubt that schools that are implementing the Australian Curriculum will be meeting the accreditation requirements.

CHAIR: From the perspective of the ministerial powers, you provide an example of a non-state school wanting to operate a school overseas as a reason for the minister or the state to grant a licence for the use of QCAA intellectual property directly to that school. What happens at present in that situation? Presumably there would be some state schools operating out of the country or the state.

Mr Robertson: Yes. As you would be aware, the proposed bill has provisions which allow the state to exploit the IP and the new authority can grant a licence to the state to do that. My understanding is that that is no different to the existing provisions in the Queensland Studies Authority Act, but there are examples of non-state schools that may want to run programs overseas. So it is really a matter of just clarifying how they would get access to that intellectual property, and I think there are potentially two ways that could happen. One would be a direct grant of a licence by QSA or the authority that is going to replace it or, alternatively, a grant of licence from the state. As I

understand it at the moment, that is the process that would need to be put in place—that is, the Queensland government would actually have to grant a licence to a non-state school, and that is appropriate. I do not have difficulty with that, but I think it could perhaps be made clearer in the legislation that that could be achieved.

Mr BENNETT: We have been looking at curriculum for over 12 months. Do you see any risk of the whole educational landscape becoming a bit more complicated, maybe P-10 as opposed to 11 and 12s?

Mr Robertson: Potentially I would have to say, no, not particularly. I think the Australian Curriculum, as committee members have probably heard through previous inquiries, is quite similar to existing QSA syllabuses in years P-10. In terms of the independent sector, our schools have been implementing English, maths, science and history. Yes, it is always a difficult task to cope with change with everything else that goes on in schools—and Janelle might be able to comment further—but generally schools are quite comfortable in implementing the Australian Curriculum.

Mrs SCOTT: I must admit, I am not quite across all of this at this time, but I have an independent school which has a very vast distance education section.

Mr Robertson: That would be Groves Christian College?

Mrs SCOTT: Yes, it is. I am just wondering about the particular issues that they might face within this.

Dr Wills: We have been working with Groves and supporting them in terms of Australian Curriculum implementation. No particular issues are standing out.

Mrs SCOTT: That is fine. It is a very extensive network that they have, and sometimes they face things, I guess, that a school set in a campus there might not.

Dr Wills: It is similar to where David was talking about the need to have their programs and what they are working on accredited, as all non-state schools go through. That is just part of the process.

Mrs SCOTT: That is fine. Thank you.

CHAIR: I think we have fairly well exhausted our questions. We certainly do thank you for coming this morning. You have provided us with some good comments and good insight into this. Thank you for your time this morning.

Dr Wills: Thank you.

MERTENS, Ms Leah, Research Officer, Queensland Teachers Union

**SCHMIDT, Ms Adele, Research Officer, Independent Education Union of Australia,
Queensland and Northern Territory Branch**

CHAIR: I thank both unions for your joint submission to our inquiry. Would you each like to make a brief opening statement?

Ms Mertens: Thank you, Madam Chair. Adele and I have decided that I will just make a quick introductory commentary and then we will hand it over to you for questions.

The Queensland Studies Authority, as you have heard, has been supporting teachers and school leaders with the implementation of curriculum since its inception. The new authority—the Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority—should continue to provide equally high-quality curriculum support to the 60,000 members of the teaching profession in Queensland. The Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority, ACARA, is the organisation established to produce the National Curriculum that is taught in classrooms, as we have heard, across the country. The development of the Australian Curriculum involves, firstly, the drafting of a shape paper and then the drafting of the curriculum, but it is important to note that ACARA has no role to play in providing professional development that accompanies the National Curriculum. It is the responsibility of each state and territory to determine the professional development that goes with introducing such curriculum.

Since 2008, as the previous speaker has indicated, teachers in schools in Queensland have in fact implemented English, maths, science and history. We are the only state to have implemented all four areas of the National Curriculum to date. Our schools are in the process of implementing the fifth learning area, which is geography. During this time the workload has been particularly heavy on primary teachers in particular, who have had to introduce new curriculum with limited time to plan and implement it. It has been particularly difficult having three all at once.

The QSA should be proud, because they produced quality professional development opportunities to support teachers in implementing this curriculum. Recently they have run 27 workshops across the state in Australian geography which have been very well attended. This PD has been produced to teachers free of charge. That, I guess, leads to one of our concerns in our joint submission regarding the commercialisation of QCAA products and services.

Whilst currently teachers are able to attend QSA PD either free of charge or on a cost-recovery basis, and then afterwards the materials are put online, we are quite worried that if the bill retains that capacity for the commercialisation in fact teachers in state schools—equally so in non-state schools—will have to cough up quite a large amount of money to send their teachers to PD once this rolls out. Obviously, specific curriculum focused PD will be required to accompany the remaining subjects. It is not over. There are still arts, languages, health and PE, technologies, civics and citizenship, economics and business to come as ACARA releases them, once they are endorsed by education ministers. So it is essential that the new body, the QCAA, provides high-quality, low-cost professional development opportunities for schools and teachers.

The minister stated when introducing the bill that he would generally expect that ongoing support would be provided on a user-pays basis. The term ‘user-pays’ has drastic implications for schools and school budgets. At the same time as expectations of the new authority are increased, the budget and staffing of the authority have been greatly reduced. Where, for example, 15 writers were previously employed to do QCATs and write items for the QSA Assessment Bank, which have both ceased, there are now only a handful of people left at QSA with the knowledge and expertise to write support materials. This is in stark contrast to the Department of Education, Training and Employment, who employ up to 30 writers to write their C2C materials—their Curriculum to Classroom materials, which I am sure you have heard of previously. So there is a mismatch in terms of resources and expectations. The bill will allow QCAA to meet the statement of expectations, but the statement of expectations has to be realistic. It cannot contain unachievable goals and priorities, particularly when you look at the resources—human and otherwise—that are available within the existing authority.

Most importantly, though, from our perspective, the new body must retain the committee structure, because this is where a range of stakeholders—not just unions but also parents, teachers and principals—will have the opportunity to provide valuable feedback to the new governing body. Obviously, we are opposed to the change from a representative structure—a representative governing body—to an expert advisory panel. That is probably not news to you; that is in our submission. So we would like some assurances that, despite the new expert advisory body actually

taking into consideration the views from the range of committees that are currently there at the QSA—committees such as the learning area reference committee. There is a LARC for each subject—English, maths, science et cetera. The QTU and I think QIEU probably has representatives on those committees as well. They are the experts in their field. They are the teachers who are having to teach the curriculum in the classrooms every day and can provide valuable feedback to the governing body. There is also an assessment moderation and certification committee. There is an equity committee. There is a finance committee. All of these committees should be retained in the new structure. It is vital, as the previous speaker has said, that the views from these committees are taken into consideration when the new board—the new advisory committee—is determining the way forward for the new authority. I think I will leave it there, Madam Chair.

CHAIR: Thank you for that. That is excellent. Could I just go back to where you mentioned your concerns about user-pays. What is the current situation with respect to paying for professional development? What proportion would come from the school's budget?

Ms Mertens: All of it. So if a school wants to send a teacher on professional development, schools have a budget—I think it is 10 per cent, but I would have to check. Generally 10 per cent of a school's budget is dedicated to professional development for teachers and the school leader, and the school determines, through a consultative process, who will attend that PD once it is available. There is a range of PD opportunities available through QSA. The Queensland College of Teachers provides excellent PD as well. That is all on their website. The education department themselves provide some opportunities in the Learning Place, particularly online. Adele may have more information as she has been in the classroom a bit more recently than I have.

Ms Schmidt: PD can come from numerous different sources. I think the point we are trying to make is that the QSA PD in particular has been very important for teachers. It is a fundamental thing because it is directly relevant to the teaching practice. So QSA PD is seen very positively by teachers. It is considered very useful and very relevant, whereas a lot of PD can give teachers the impression that it is not directly relevant to their work. The point we are trying to make is that the QSA PD is particularly good PD.

CHAIR: That is a good comment. Just for further clarification, currently the schools are paying the QSA for the professional development? So I guess from a perspective there is user-pays there. It is the school as the user and they are paying the QSA currently?

Ms Mertens: Where the QSA does charge, it is on a cost-recovery basis; they are not in it to make a profit. So once you have a range of private providers able to provide curriculum—you would be aware that all state schools are required to have a pedagogical framework. So, for example, a school may have a set way that they are going to be teaching students in classrooms. For example, they may choose to have the Art and Science of Teaching, ASoT, which is very popular in schools. It costs \$600 a day to attend the PD that accompanies ASoT. That is run by the Marzano Institute. You are looking at two teachers, two days, \$1,200. It is quite expensive. You do get a discount after you send five. It is very definitely a money-making scenario. QSA's PD was so good because it was so cheap and of such high quality. But with a move to commercialisation they may well be obliged to increase their fees and that cost will be passed onto schools.

Mr SYMES: Do you share the concerns expressed by the Together Union in its submission that there will be user-pays approaches for syllabus development and implementation support and that will lead to commercialisation of the state education system. If so, what is the QTU's justification of that statement?

Ms Mertens: Yes, we do share Together's views in that respect. The minister himself has stated that whilst syllabus documents will not be at a charge to schools, it is the accompanying materials that you need when you are implementing a syllabus. That will be, as the minister has stated, in the form of ongoing support that would be user-pays—so, all of the supplementary tools that teachers are provided with. The QSA provides a starter kit for teachers and really, apart from the PD, not much else because their staff is quite limited. With a view to commercialisation, if the new authority develops these fabulous packages, firstly they would have to be resourced to do that with an increase in their budget and staffing to write the materials and we have a concern that if teachers are brought in to write that material that is, I guess, their intellectual property that is then being put up for sale and not just here but also overseas. When you start to get competition, not just domestically but internationally, it does become quite tempting to increase the price to make the authority somewhat of a money spinner for the government. And that is not at all how we would view the education of our children in this state. We would like to have teachers accessing materials at a reasonable price because, after all, it is the government itself that has to provide a budget to

schools to send teachers to PD or to buy the resources. So really all they are doing is, I guess, putting the price up for everyone and increasing costs to schools and a lot of those costs in state schools are borne by the government as the employer themselves.

Mr LATTER: I refer to claims in your submission that the bill will make provisions for assessment of year 11 and 12 students by external exams, pre-empting the ACER review. I have not been able to identify where it is that the bill will do anything different in respect of year 11 and 12 assessment from what is possible under the current Act. Could you explain further how this bill pre-empts the ACER inquiry?

Ms Mertens: It is actually in relation to the regulations that were accompanying the bill in the first draft that was sent out to us for comment. There were regulations that were accompanying the bill. If you just bear with me I will source the specific section.

CHAIR: The committee has not had access to the draft regulations.

Ms Mertens: In that case you are probably wondering why that is in there. We were provided with a copy by the Department of Education, Training and Employment to provide comment. The bill that was sent over had regulations accompanying it. In the regulations there was the additional clause which allowed the inclusion of external examinations for year 11 and 12. Perhaps you could investigate whether the regulations are still remaining. I assumed that this committee would be examining the regulations that accompanied the bill, but clearly you have not seen them yet so I am sorry about that.

CHAIR: I see where you are coming from, although external examinations have been occurring from certain teaching areas historically.

Ms Mertens: That is right.

CHAIR: That has been happening.

Ms Mertens: At Hubbard's and so on, yes.

CHAIR: Yes, absolutely.

Ms Mertens: It is clause 13 in the regulations: 'The new body will have a single function that empowers it to administer tests prescribed under regulation and common national tests'. So, tests prescribed under regulation are those that were alluded to earlier which was the external examinations for year 11 and 12. Given that the bill has coincided with the report that your committee was also involved in following the chemistry and math inquiry, which has come up with recommendations which we understand have been referred by the minister to the ACER review, we just thought it was quite peculiar that the bill had taken the opportunity to insert in the regulations the capacity for external examinations at some point when the outcome of the ACER review had not yet been finalised and consultation for that is still undergoing and we are certainly being consulted in that respect.

Mr BENNETT: I do not want to go back to the PD issue because obviously it has some strong concerns from your group, of course, and your representation, but I suppose we are hearing, and within the public document that the Queensland Audit Office has just put out, about the supply of specialist teachers in particular and their access to curriculum outcomes. I am just wondering why we are making a lot of assumptions about cost in that space about what the Queensland Studies Authority is providing in PD and I am curious about some revitalisation of something that is obviously not quite as good as it could be and would not be something that we would at least trial or have something around or do some more research on perhaps particularly about the assumption that you quite strongly put—an automatic assumption—that it will increase costs.

Ms Mertens: I am aware that the report on the supply of specialist teachers, and one of the recommendations in there back to the education department, is that they provide more professional development opportunities for teachers who are teaching out of their subject area and so certainly there is scope for some new things to happen in this space and we would welcome some new opportunities for teachers to access professional development. I guess our major worry is the cost impact that inevitably happens when you start to produce materials that are for profit.

Mr BENNETT: Possible cost impact.

Ms Mertens: Possible costs, yes, but I guess inevitably if it is out there on the market and it is competing with NAPLAN marking test guides and all of those sorts of commercial products that are available—

Ms Schmidt: I just want to add that as the independent school sector we are concerned because our members do not have access to things like Curriculum into the Classroom and it is a

potential additional impact for us, which is why we also raise in the submission—it is a side point but I would just like to make it while I have the opportunity—the P-10 syllabus. There is no syllabus for P-10, there is this assumption that the C2C materials cover the need for a syllabus so that they negate the need for a syllabus to some extent. But for our members in particular that is not necessarily true because we do not have access to C2C. That is just one thing that we wanted to raise.

Mrs SCOTT: I wonder if you would like to outline to us the issues around offering OP rankings to overseas students and the ramifications on our domestic students.

Ms Schmidt: I think our main concern with the OP is that although it states in the bill that there should not be competition, or there is a statement somewhere that there should not be competition with domestic students, that there will inevitably be some competition with domestic students because if you are applying for an OP then the implication is that you want to study in a university in Australia, at least preferably Queensland, so there seems to be some sort of conflict there.

Mrs SCOTT: You know that that is going to take place?

Ms Schmidt: No, we do not know.

Mrs SCOTT: So it is a conjecture at this stage?

Ms Schmidt: Yes, it is.

CHAIR: Thank you very much for your submissions. You have raised a number of issues that we appreciate being brought forward. I believe we are running out of time. Are there any other comments you wish to make in the few minutes that do we do have left?

Ms Mertens: No, thank you, Madam Chair. It has been great to have the opportunity to expand on our submission. I thank you and the members of the committee very much.

CHAIR: Could I thank you again for your contribution this morning. We will be taking it into account as we deliberate and prepare our report back to the parliament. This brings to a close this public hearing of the Education (Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority Bill) 2013. I would like to thank everybody who has appeared before us and assisted in our examination of the bill. Your contributions have sincerely been most valuable and have helped us gain a deeper understanding of a number of those issues. I urge those with an interest in the work of the Education and Innovation Committee to subscribe to the committee's email subscriptions list via the Queensland Parliament website. I now declare this hearing closed and thank you.

Committee adjourned at 11.56 am