

14 February 2012

Our Ref: 11-650

Education and Training Workforce: Schools Productivity Commission
Locked Bag 2, Collins Street East
Melbourne Vic 8003

Dear Secretariat,

**QUEENSLAND COUNCIL OF PARENTS AND CITIZENS' ASSOCIATIONS (QCPCA) FINAL SUBMISSION-
EDUCATION AND TRAINING WORKFORCE: SCHOOLS**

QCPCA welcome the opportunity to participate in this process and would like to thank the Australian Government's Productivity Commission for the opportunity to provide further input. We would like to make comment on some of the key points raised.

QCPCA would contend that there are currently gaps in coverage in the schools workforce creating tensions and inconsistency. Identifying priority areas should form the way forward in addressing these.

1. Data

As a good starting point, we would suggest that further thought needs to be given to data collection methods and the assumptions that these are based on, especially in relation to performance pay. There are other examples across Australia where this has been instigated and QCPCA believe that these should be evaluated and included in the commission's consideration. Another example that often carries underlying assumptions is teacher workload and teacher/student ratios. These ratios do not take into account changes to the curriculum, planning, finding resources, reporting, assessment, and following new directives from state governments and their regional offices. Workloads are increasing, not decreasing.

Student outcomes are paramount and need to be closely considered and indicators reviewed. A definition should be provided as to what is meant by student outcomes. We also need to be forward looking and consider what a teacher and classroom will be moving into the future. The role of the school community including teachers has changed and is often undervalued.

The My School website is a good example of an overuse of particular types of data, much of this being only part of the picture of the outcomes of our students. We would suggest that further data sources are needed to provide a picture of what makes a successful school.

2. Staffing

Current pre service training is inadequate. The amount of content required for the preparation of teachers currently leaves an inadequate amount of time. The effectiveness of screening is important to enable efficient teacher training ie identifying appropriate candidates.

Pre-service teacher practicum's need to be extended and standardised. There should be a formal term long internship, with additional incentives for students in rural and remote areas. Incentives could include offers of employment. These practicums cannot be treated in isolation and there is a clear need to be consistent in the levels of support provided by the University and in the evaluation. It is of concern that the number of students qualifying is disproportionate to the number employed and certainly suggests that there is a need for consistency in approach.

To improve teacher performance we need to ensure that teachers feel engaged and not undervalued. There is currently no systemic approach taken on career development. This includes improvement of methods in dealing with underperforming teachers. The implementation of teacher coaches which is one of the most effective strategies in improving teacher performance is a must.

QCPCA back the notion that mentors must be of a high quality, but they also require further professional development and support. Teachers require ongoing supervision and wraparound support for performance management.

This investment then needs to be made at all levels in the teaching profession. A holistic approach is a necessity. There are many issues that aren't related to salary that need to be addressed. Full consideration needs to be given to the different types of remuneration and incentive.

Parents do not feel that they have much of control over the poor performance of teachers. QCPCA would suggest that the principal should in their capacity provide support around keeping in place (or setting in place) what is a necessarily time intensive relationship.

It should be recognised that there needs to be similar measures in place to provide a system of career development for support staff which provides greater recognition of the skills and expertise.

3. Community engagement

As correctly pointed out, improved parent communication, support and engagement will benefit those who are educationally disadvantaged. This is also the case across the board. All schools would benefit from this engagement and facilitation of such processes would be best conducted through the P&C.

In summary, QCPCA believe that Australia's school workforce needs to remain contemporary to address the needs of our students. Flexibility to deal with societal shifts would enable our schools to adapt. Engagement of school communities is essential in managing this approach. We thank you once again for the opportunity to provide further input and if you have any questions then please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours faithfully,

Margaret Leary, QCPCA State President