

**SUBMISSION TO THE REVIEW OF THE
BOARD OF STUDIES, TEACHING AND EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS
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This submission to the Review of the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards (BOSTES) will focus briefly on three issues:

1. the independence of the states and territories under a national system;
2. the relationship between curriculum and the capabilities required of teachers; and
3. the governance of BOSTES.

1. State and Territory Independence

Under the Federation of the Commonwealth of Australia, each state and territory has a responsibility to provide education for those of school age living within their borders.

At present, this is achieved through funding arrangements which require contributions from both the state and territory governments and the Commonwealth government to resource schools, government and non-government. These arrangements also recognise the inherent differences between the provision of education in each state or territory, given total school population, geographical, socio-economic and demographic factors existing in each.

These arrangements are also fundamental to past funding relationships, the Gonski model and funding principles mooted by the current Commonwealth government.

Ideally a nationally administered education system should be able to provide for the differences between each state and territory. The reality though is that each state and territory government, and the Commonwealth government, has different priorities whether budgetary, political or educationally.

State and territory based agencies such as BOSTES have a critical responsibility for the development and delivery of curriculum, and the development and delivery of the standards to which teachers are trained and under which their professional performance is monitored and developed. The abrogation of this responsibility to a Commonwealth agency is not something which can be contemplated.

There will always be a need to interpret nationally designed curriculum, teaching standards and other factors inherent in the delivery of education and customise them to the state or territory context, producing appropriate syllabus and associated support documents for that local context.

The maintenance of state and territory base agencies such as BOSTES is essential in this respect.

While the role of BOSTES may need to be tailored somewhat to accommodate changing national circumstances, its existence is essential to the efficient development and implementation of curriculum and teaching standards sensitive to the New South Wales context, under a national umbrella.

2. Curriculum and Teaching Standards

The consolidation of the Office of the Board of Studies and the NSW Institute of Teachers allowed for the development and implementation of curriculum and teaching standards under the one umbrella organisation, recognising an important association between the two. Whether that has occurred effectively is not an issue for discussion in this submission.

Curriculum forms the most basic elements of the core business of the teacher. As such it should and does feed into the development of the standards required of teachers during their training and at all stages of their teaching careers.

The development and implementation of curriculum by BOSTES, within the context of the national curriculum, tailoring it to the needs of New South Wales schools is an essential role which BOSTES must maintain and utilise in the development and implementation of teaching standards, again within the context of the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*.

The implementation of *Great Teaching Inspired Learning* in New South Wales in recent years has been an excellent example of a state based initiative which highlights this important link, across all school sectors and universities, and one which has set a bar higher than that required by some other states and territories.

The New South Wales context in both curriculum and teaching standards is something which can only be achieved through a state based agency such as BOSTES.

3. Governance

The current Board of BOSTES comprises three ex-officio members nominated by the Secretary of the New South Wales Department of Education and 19 members appointed by the Minister.

While it is clear that the Board is intended to be representative of a range of interest groups and key stakeholders, it is of an unwieldy dimension. With the possible exception of university senates and councils, there would be few educational governance bodies which would be as large.

Any consensus reached with a board of this size must surely dilute the strategic influence which the Board would have over any aspect of their core business. This would be essentially due to attempting to accommodate the views of the individuals, and their constituent members, within such a large and diverse group.

While condensing the size of the Board would attract significant reaction from any of those groups whose representation is reduced or eliminated, it would, however, deliver far more practical corporate governance and increase the likelihood of setting a more strategic agenda. Representation of these groups could ideally continue through a more efficient structure of reference committees providing advice to the Board.

A reduced Board of BOSTES should still feature representation from:

- a) the NSW Department of Education and the Catholic Education Commission as the two major deliverers of education in New South Wales;
- b) the NSW Teachers Federation as the major teacher union;
- c) Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people through the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group;
- d) principals, one secondary principal and one primary principal, through the relevant principal organisations; and
- e) parents of school students through the relevant parent organisations.

The above members should not be nominated by the New South Wales Minister for Education but appointed on nomination after selection or election by their respective constituent bases.

The President of the Board should be appointed by the Governor on the recommendation of the New South Wales Minister for Education.

The board would then comprise:

- 1 X President (Statutory appointment)
- 1 X representative of New South Wales Department of Education
- 1 X representative of the Catholic Education Commission
- 1 X representative of the NSW Teachers Federation
- 1 X representative of the AECG
- 1 X primary principal
- 1 X secondary principal
- 1 X parent of a current school student

The Board should have the capacity to access expertise from any organisation or individual with an interest in education. These organisations or individuals should provide advice only, with no right to vote or determine decisions of the Board.

The combination of the role of a president or chairperson of a board and the role of chief executive, as a consolidated role, is not common place in the corporate world. It provides conflict between the president's or chairperson's imperative to lead the board in its strategic directions and policy formulation and the chief executive's day to day obligations to manage the business of the organisation.

The role of president and chief executive should be separate roles, undertaken by separate individuals. This not only allows for the necessary separation of the roles but also for the development of the important chairperson and chief executive relationship which is evident in many successful businesses, organisations and agencies.

In the case of BOSTES, this would also place the President of the Board, and the Board, at arms length from the senior managers of BOSTES, with the chief executive as the conduit between the senior managers and the Board. This structure would be more reflective of the corporate world.

Conclusion

BOSTES, and its predecessor agencies, the Office of the Board of Studies and the NSW Institute of Teachers, have performed valuable roles delivering high quality curricula and high quality standards for teaching across New South Wales schools, government and non-government, within the context of the relevant national frameworks.

With the continued implementation of the national curriculum and the *Australian Professional Standards for Teachers*, including the accreditation of all New South Wales teachers by 2018, the importance of the BOSTES role will only increase.

This value of this role cannot be understated and cannot be diminished, if the quality of education in New South Wales schools is to be maintained or enhanced.

It is important to note that this submission has not dealt with other functions of BOSTES such as the important regulatory function. This is not to suggest that these roles are of less importance. They should also be maintained by an agency such as BOSTES which is independent of any government or non-government school education provider.

It is evident that BOSTES needs to be maintained as a critical component of education in New South Wales. This is something which cannot be abrogated to Commonwealth agencies such as the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA) or the Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership (AITSL), each of which does not have the capacity, the resources or the funding to deliver the functions which need to be delivered by BOSTES.