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## Summary

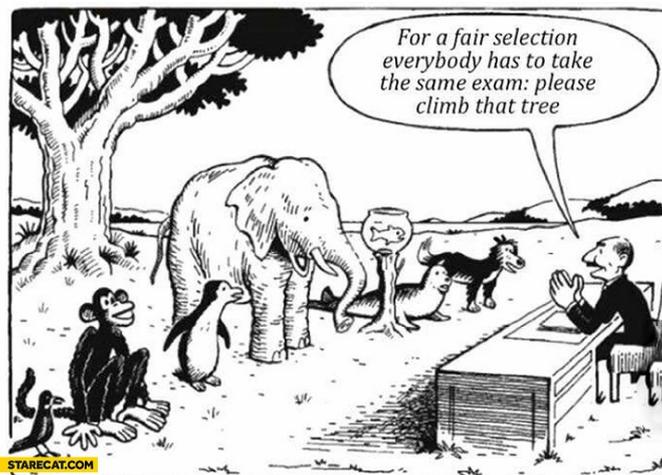
**Time and other constraints have conspired so that this submission is a series of cobbled together documents with additions. This summary is the short form of our position, which is broader than the Terms of Reference for the BOSTES Review.**

The functions of BOSTES form an important sub-system which is part of the total system that delivers education to our children.

Reform of BOSTES should therefore be planned and implemented in the light of the future vision for education and a comprehensive short, medium and long term strategy and implementation plans.

Our slipping performance compared to other nations is a concern for our economic future, and is letting our children down. The wide variation between the performance of schools and within schools is an equity issue. This variation is present between schools in similar SES circumstances, and in schools in differing SES circumstances.

The One-Size-Fits-All approach <http://tinyurl.com/jx79rzd>, identified formally in a landmark Department of Education report in 2005 is still in place. It is a system which worked very well in the past and put us amongst the world's best performers. The problem with being a best performer is that there is often a reluctance to change until it is too late. One-Size-Fits-All is system and employee focussed, not student focussed, and it is now disadvantaging our children. The best thing that the government and our education providers can do is to be upfront about this and get on with an effective change program.



### Our "one-size-fits-all" Education System

*"Everybody is a genius. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its whole life believing that it is stupid."* - Albert Einstein



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We have been advocating for a strong, determined program to implement 21<sup>st</sup> Century schooling taking advantage of contemporary research and technology. The Department's Lindfield School of the Future proposal is one example of 21<sup>st</sup> Century schooling, but there are others, some examples of which are mentioned below.

Our education institutions are like large ships with a lot of momentum, and are naturally resistant to change. This natural resistance is evident in the current reform efforts in NSW. These efforts have been relatively ineffectual, and have barely changed the status quo. The reforms are not particularly future focused and have not provided a best practice Platform for the Future.

There has been a conspicuous lack of effective, portfolio-wide Program Management for the long term change program which is needed. This is not surprising as program and project management is not core business for the government bodies involved. The Department of Education, for example, is having serious problems with the implementation of its new business system LMBR which has diverted significant funds away from the education of the children due to avoidable cost over-runs.

The education strategy should be developed with the assistance of a comprehensive ongoing consultation plan to appropriately engage all the stakeholders including the profession, parents, governments and the broader community.

As mentioned above, the BOSTES functions form part of the education "production" system, and it is an important part. From the outside, it seems that there has been no material change in the performance of these functions since its formation by the amalgamation of the Board of Studies and the Institute of Teachers. We would have liked to have seen a concerted move for real change from these bodies before amalgamation in any case.

One way to hasten change is to restructure the organisations involved, changing role descriptions and bringing in some fresh blood in senior leadership roles and in roles in other levels also. The fresh blood needs to be people who are completely outside the existing vested interests.

There are some functions that could and should be hived off to the Commonwealth or a COAG "owned" body. This would reduce duplication and reduce the "railway-gauge-style" inefficiencies caused by artificial state boundaries. These functions are generally regulatory roles, or roles that set frameworks such as the production of curriculum.

BOSTES is a mix of regulatory and implementation functions, and this is contrary to COAG's general concept of separating these functions. There are some cases where there is some advantage in having some of these functions together, and the Review will no doubt consider this in more detail.

Teaching standards and accreditation, and school accreditation moving to the Commonwealth makes sense. High level implementation strategies to improve teacher performance could be co-ordinated in NSW by a body like BOSTES for the three sectors in NSW (public, Catholic, and independent) but on-the-ground implementation should be in the schools supported by the school system. In the Department of Education, policies and processes are perverse, and support poor teachers at the expense of the students.



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The work being done to improve teacher performance tends to be bureaucratic in nature and sometimes unnecessarily burdensome. It is unclear whether these strategies will make a difference.

In any case, the role of the teacher changes considerably under 21<sup>st</sup> Century approaches. The question needs to be asked as to whether the current initiatives, informed by old paradigms, is worth the effort.

The NSW HSC is a highly polished and highly cherished institution, but it is already starting to lose its fitness for purpose. Under 21<sup>st</sup> Century student-focussed conditions, students will move seamlessly through their years of schooling based on their level of achievement and their interests. This includes movement between school, TAFE and university with on-going accreditation rather than on the big bang at the end of Year 12. The abolition of the School Certificate and its replacement with ROSA recognises changes to the operating environment. There are emerging institutional examples, both here and overseas of hybrid school/TAFE/university organisations (Federation University, Ballarat) and Year9-Year14 technology schools (P-Tech [ptechnyc.org](http://ptechnyc.org)).

In the interim, there is no reason why there couldn't be on school leaving credential for Australia to reduce duplication. Claims are sometimes made that there is too much variation across Australia for initiatives such as this, but there is just as much variation across Sydney and NSW. The International Baccalaureate is able to operate effectively across countries, not just states of one country.

**We have been advocating changes to governance arrangements for some years now, and this is a necessary pre-requisite for change.** The current system of CEO's reporting to a Minister only works when no change is needed. We recommend that two State-Owned Corporations be set up as detailed below, to strengthen the ability of governments to implement much-needed change.

Our school system, although highly valued in the past, is beginning to fall behind the expectations of the community and governments, and the needs of the economy. This review is therefore a great opportunity to contribute to the reduction in waste of the potential of our children.

## Introductory Remarks

The Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations is concerned that our children are not getting contemporary best practice education and Australia is losing ground to our competitors. The fact that STEM in particular is going backwards is of great concern in these times, and the problem is mentioned frequently in the media by many people. We are failing to take advantage of the community languages that we have in Australia, with the actual speaking other languages mainly scheduled for high school when it is really too late. We are also failing to take best advantage of the children who are best suited to hands-on subjects, many of whom get turned off by subjects which don't interest them in the context of the curriculum, school organisation and teaching methods.

We have provided some relatively brief and informal notes against the Review's Terms of Reference, as the time available for more detail has been insufficient for our volunteer organisation. However, we have also included the views that we have been developing over a long period on moving into 21<sup>st</sup> Century schooling towards the end of the document to provide context.

The BOSTES functions are sub-processes in the overall process of delivering education, and its reform needs to be seen and planned in that total context.



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BOSTES is an old-fashioned bureaucracy which fails national competition policy objectives by mixing regulation and implementation activities, and suffers from the lack of an overall, future focussed vision, governance framework and implementation plan for education in NSW and Australia.

All the institutional arrangements in NSW education are, in general, inadequate to meet the contemporary challenges recognised in this Review's Issues paper and more broadly. They all need structural change to change the cultures and inject new vigour and innovation.

Our education system contains inefficient processes and strategies which are wasteful and cost the government, the taxpayer and the community, year after year, in terms of uncompetitive outcomes for both the students and the economy.

Our education system is somewhat akin to a motor car factory that was a top performer, but that hasn't been upgraded to meet the outcomes of its competition which has a modern plant.

Despite the fact that our system has been included amongst the best international performers in the past, we are beginning to slip to the detriment of our students and our economy. History tells us that it is not unusual for a high performing outfit to resist change, only to be overtaken by its competitors.

The BOSTES functions are an integral part of our total education system, and without an excellent, unifying whole-of-system strategy which we now lack, any changes to BOSTES might not produce the positive outcomes that are well within reach.

The unifying change strategy needs to be guided by contemporary business drivers, it needs to be flexible to meet ongoing changes, it needs to be developed and implemented on an ongoing basis using best practice methodology, and it needs to encompass all facets of education including:

- All stages and all pathways from early childhood through primary, secondary and tertiary stages
- All regulatory and implementing activities, including those undertaken by the Commonwealth, BOSTES, the Department of Education and TAFE.

**We understand that our education system has done great things in the past, but basking in past glories is just not satisfactory.**

## Comments on the rationale and the Terms of Reference

### BOSTES Review - Rationale

*The "Rationale" of the Terms of Reference begins with the statement "The last 5 years of evidence-based reform in NSW has laid the foundation for a high-performing education system which will improve student results".*

In general terms, we have been disappointed at the progress made over the last 5 and more years. Despite the rhetoric, we believe NSW has been treading water and deferring to vested interests at a time when a best practice *Platform for the Future* should have been put in place and substantial gains should have been made in performance.



*The “Rationale” further states “The key to achieving this goal is ensuring excellence in quality teaching, a focus on literacy & numeracy in the early years of school, needs-based funding reform and greater school authority in the public school system. From this strong base it is now timely to ensure the State’s educational architecture complements recent reform and will drive continued improvements in student results”.*

As we have stated just above, we don’t believe that very much real progress has been made through any of the inputs mentioned in these words from the Rationale. There has been little emphasis on putting the education of the students first – which is a high level objective of the COAG partners meant to encourage a strong focus on performance against the key objectives.

Although the matters immediately above are not directly part of the BOSTES Review, we would like to have the efficacy of the current reform programs in NSW tested by an independent review as an input to the process of designing and implementing a new, ongoing change strategy referred to above.

## **BOSTES Review –Terms of Reference**

The comments below are presented from the perspective that BOSTES should be playing a leading role in transitioning our education system into a world’s best practice 21<sup>st</sup> Century system, and thus retaining our position amongst the best.

### **1. The objectives, role, functions and responsibilities of the Board.**

The current “Board” considers mainly technical matters, and does not oversee the functions of the Office of BOSTES, or higher level strategic matters. It consists of nominees of the various interests in education, and, as such, is somewhat of a closed shop. There is, however, a place for the oversight of technical and some operational matters by such a body.

The CEO of BOSTES reports directly to the Minister, which in our view is a formula best suited to business-as-usual rather than change.

The BOSTES website states “Advancing student achievement is at the heart of everything we do” [www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/about](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/about) . However, there is an apparent decline or flat-lining in some areas as demonstrated by OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) data and other sources such as NAPLAN and HSC results. There is also considerable variances between “like” schools and classrooms which indicates a lack of consistency in delivery which needs to be attacked in a high level strategy. New strategies and structures need to be implemented to arrest the decline and variability and keep up with other nations.

The BOSTES Annual Report mentions its strategic and operational plans, which are not, interestingly, on its website. Key priorities, strategic activities and responsibilities are listed but this information is passive rather than active.

One of the advantages argued for the amalgamation of the Board of Studies and the Institute of Teachers is that this arrangement would promote synergies. We are not in a position to judge whether there has been benefits in this change, but we are particularly interested in strategic leadership that



could be provided by such a mix of functions. We are concerned that there has simply been business-as-usual. We would like to see an objective assessment of any benefits that could not have been achieved by the two separate organisations.

BOSTES has a mixture of regulatory and implementation functions. COAG competition objectives call for separation of such functions, but that doesn't mean that there cannot be exceptions.

There appears to be no good reason that some functions, such as development of curriculum, teacher accreditation, setting of a final school exam (like the HSC or the International Baccalaureate); registration and accreditation of schools; and approval of schools to provide courses to overseas students could not be standardised across Australia in a national body or bodies. This would avoid duplication and result in cost savings, and have the advantages of uniformity across Australia.

Areas such as the operational running of the final school exam and NAPLAN could be undertaken by state or regional bodies.

Areas such as teacher and school performance could be the responsibility of the schools or school systems, but accountable to a national Regulator. NSW public schools do not have a good record in this area, when measured against the objective of putting students at the centre of decision making.

There are arguments against national bodies, such as that their size makes them cumbersome and unresponsive to change; and that things across Australia are different in different states. The same could also be said of the size and diversity in NSW for example.

The approach of central bodies to regulation and service provision has an impact on decisions of structure and responsibility.

NSW has relatively heavy handed regulation on Curriculum, for example. It marches students through the system based on their age, not their stage of development, it tends to restrict pathways, and reduces the opportunity to learn higher order skills through a curriculum over-weighted on content. A light handed curriculum that focuses on the basic skills and then provides variety of choice for higher order skills such as problem solving, team work, interpersonal skills, etc would be better in allowing for the variety we see across NSW and Australia than can be experienced under the current NSW Curriculum.

On "Teacher Quality", NSW has recently introduced minimum academic standards for entry to the profession. <http://nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/future-returning-teachers/become-a-teacher/raising-university-entry-standards/> This initiative is a blunt instrument. It would be better if a more nuanced approach was taken – including demonstrated aptitude and enthusiasm for either the subject matter or the area of teaching. Prospective teachers in maths and science or English and history should have studied and performed well in those subjects at school, and should study appropriate subjects as undergraduates. Prospective teachers in hands on industrial technology need to have an aptitude and a love of the materials and processes, etc.

**The HSC is a major function of BOSTES, but its future is limited despite the fact that BOSTES fiercely defends it. As our education systems in Australia become student-focussed, students will learn by their stage of development (not their age or BOSTES-determined educational stages).** Students will experience flexible and seamless movement up and across educational institutions similar perhaps to the way the Australian Qualifications Framework now partly allows. This includes studying different subjects at different levels to match the student's level of attainment. Students will experience much



more freedom about the content that they study – given that skills like problem solving and innovation will be much more important than being able to compliant behaviour so as to be able to reproduce material at the HSC that pleases the examining rules.

## 2. The most appropriate governance arrangements for BOSTES

### *Strategy, Governance and Management*

For some years the Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations has been advocating the strengthening of the strategic planning capability, and the governance and management structures of NSW Government bodies associated with education. The present arrangements are essentially only adequate for no-change, business as usual activities. The current *Strategy, Governance and Management* arrangements represent a disabling weakness in the NSW Education Minister's armoury to effect the changes required for contemporary performance.

The CEO of the Department of Education and the President of BOSTES report directly to the Minister. In practical terms, this means that the Minister has no alternative way of receiving advice on enacting strategies except via the long-established interests within the departments and the industrial bodies. The Minister receives political advice from within his office, but this is tactical politics which tends to provide short term damage control and of photo opportunities, rather than making a difference.

Below we advocate the bundling of all phases of the lifecycle of education from early childhood to university be placed under one Lead Minister. This arrangement did not work well in the current Government's first term, and was abandoned in the second term.

However, part of the problem in the first term was the direct reporting by CEO's to the Minister. This meant that the Minister had no alternative sources of advice and had to depend on the heads of Department for this complex task. We are advocating for the setting up of two skills-based State Owned Corporation-style Boards to help drive change.

#### **Our District Council of P&Cs advocates that:**

- A skills-based State Owned Corporation-style Board be set up to assist a NSW Lead Minister in overseeing and producing business strategies for the \$15billion p.a. (plus) total education business, with assisting Ministers as appropriate for (say) schools, TAFE, early childhood and universities.
- A skills-based State Owned Corporation-style Board be set up under the assistant-Ministers in managing the large businesses – schools and TAFE.
- BOSTES, Early Childhood and Community Languages could report to the Lead Minister's Board.
- The CEO of each Department or body should be selected on the basis of the full suite of professional business skills and capabilities needed for that role in such a business.



- The Boards should include skills from the broader community and have independence from the vested interests.
- More external recruitment be undertaken across all levels and organisations.
- A special State Owned Corporation (SOC), under a different Minister, should be set up to manage the predominantly indigenous Connected Communities Schools. Despite money being thrown at these schools, the initiative has largely failed and these schools are a blot on our society. This special SOC should have a limited life, and should be seen as a major project. It would not be weighed down by Departmental one-size-fits-all paraphernalia, and decisions would be made on a best-for-project basis. Its goal would be to hand back these schools to the Department, or some other operating body, in tip top shape.

Apart from the Boards, we believe all the Departments and organisations mentioned above need strategic structural reform based on future-based business objectives and the recruitment of the best qualified people in the marketplace to a mix of the key senior roles.

### **3. The nature and scope of the BOSTES role and functions in establishing, promoting, monitoring and assuring rigorous regulatory requirements for schools and teachers and the processes for dealing with failure to meet regulatory requirements.**

Whether the regulatory functions reside in NSW or the Commonwealth, there are two broad aspects to regulation, both of which should be utilised for effective regulation:

- Regulation on outputs or results

Monitoring of performance against KPIs benchmarked against other schools and school systems, and monitoring of trends. Adverse numbers should be acted upon early to avoid things getting out of hand. Action should be supported by legislation for both public and private sectors.

- Regulation on the quality of inputs

Input or process benchmarking can provide some comfort that processes support the required level of performance, but are not adequate without output-based performance measurement. Input benchmarking can be used to identify and scope priority improvement projects and promote an improvement culture in a school. It can also be used to systematically promote improvements across groups of schools.

There is more discussion on input or process benchmarking later in this paper.

- 4. The optimum processes for formulating and assuring high educational standards for curriculum, for assessment, for schools, and for the accreditation of teachers.**
- 5. The most appropriate organisational structure for supporting the functions of the Board.**
- 6. The implementation of recommendations including identifying legislative or other necessary changes.**

**We do not have sufficient time or information to comment on 4, 5 and 6.**



## Further Information

Drawn from previous publications of the Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations.

## DOCUMENT 1

### Some History

In 2008, the Melbourne Declaration 2008 (Preamble, page 5) had the following to say about Australia's advanced status in education in these terms:

"Australia has developed a high quality, world-class schooling system, which performs strongly against other countries of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). In international benchmarking of educational outcomes for 15-year-olds in the **2006 OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)**, Australia ranked among the top 10 countries across all three education domains assessed. **Over the next decade Australia should aspire to improve outcomes for all young Australians to become second to none amongst the world's best school systems**".

The Melbourne Declaration's 7-point Commitment to Action has appeared in various programs since, but sadly significant real change hasn't resulted.

In 2016, a decade after the 2006 PISA rankings mentioned in the Melbourne Declaration, Andreas Schleicher, the education director of the OECD, has criticised the Australian education system for falling behind global standards.

SMH [www.smh.com.au/national/education/oecd-education-chief-andreas-schleicher-blasts-australias-education-system-20160313-gnhz6t.html](http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/oecd-education-chief-andreas-schleicher-blasts-australias-education-system-20160313-gnhz6t.html)

Mr Schleicher is quoted as saying that "Australia had a very significant drop in the results of students at the top of the PISA testing rankings in the past year". This is something that we shouldn't be proud of.

At the COAG level, the need for improved education to keep Australia competitive by improving economic and social participation, including in areas of educational disadvantage, has been recognised for many years e.g Themes 1 & 5 of the current Reform Agenda

[www.coag.gov.au/reform\\_agenda](http://www.coag.gov.au/reform_agenda)

Our District Council has been advocating reforms to our school education system for over 10 years. We provided input to the Department of Education's Futures Report (attached) which was published way back in November, 2005. It was subtitled "**One size doesn't fit all**" (the attached Einstein diagram seems to say it all).

The Report had some impact initially, but faded over time. There have been some changes, but really not enough to prevent us slipping against other economies

Part of our input was the attached "Teacher Performance Perspectives" – unfortunately we have not had any need to alter this diagram in all that time.



## No comprehensive change strategy

In NSW, there is an absence of a comprehensive, across-the-board change strategy capable of building a *Platform for the Future* and progressively implementing beneficial changes required to position NSW (and Australia) amongst the leading education nations, let alone “second to none”. This has significant implications for both the education of our children and the economy. Ideally, there would have been leadership from the education industry in putting together an initial vision for what is often called 21<sup>st</sup> Century learning as applied to NSW. This initial vision should have started with the change of government five years ago, given the rhetoric at the time. The initial vision would have informed an ongoing dialogue within the profession and the broader community which by now should have seen some real progress. Instead, the reality is that we are treading water and thus falling behind other competing economies.

Michael Fullan, a Canadian consultant to the Department of Education wrote an article recently [www.smh.com.au/comment/nsw-educators-wanting-to-improve-public-school-system-could-learn-from-ontario-20141103-11fzdb.html](http://www.smh.com.au/comment/nsw-educators-wanting-to-improve-public-school-system-could-learn-from-ontario-20141103-11fzdb.html) in which he said:

“Starting from the top, you need a compelling vision and a coherent direction. And when you implement it, you need to engage schools and communities in a strong two-way partnership.

This vision must permeate all levels of the system. You need to create the expectations and belief that all students can achieve, regardless of postcode. You need to develop agreement and alignment of practices in schools, along with the capacity of leaders and peer teachers to give constructive feedback to each other”.

## BOSTES

NSW has spent a lot of effort in “implementing” the COAG / “Students First” program (which is aging and needs an overhaul), with two of the four pillars having direct applicability to BOSTES - namely [Teacher Quality](#) and [Strengthening the Curriculum](#).

Although BOSTES has recently seen change through the amalgamation of the Board of Studies and the NSW Institute of Teachers little has really changed. It is still a bureaucratic body with a standardised, out-dated system-focussed approach, rather than an approach based on the best interests of the student or national well-being.

The Australian Curriculum has been an exercise in standardising curriculum across Australia, which is a worthy objective. However, the Curriculum is, in many cases, the old NSW Curriculum rearranged and rebadged. It is not a body of work which focusses on every student getting the most out of school – its focus is on pushing kids through a system largely based on age. Paired with a teaching and learning system in schools which has perverse structures and methods, we have a system that is falling behind.



The Teacher Quality system does not guarantee performance, and it is based on the hope that the teaching standards will result in better teachers in the future. The teacher quality processes hardly affect existing teachers, hence a sigh of relief from some in the profession, including some in leadership roles averse to upsetting the apple cart. The processes are largely bureaucratic and their future success is not assured, particularly when paired with existing cultures and policies. The Government has promised changes to deal with the vexed problem, for the students and fellow teachers, of poor teachers – but nothing has changed in public schools.

The attached diagram “Teacher Performance Perspectives” was provided by us to the Futures Report project (November, 2005) – attached.

It would be interesting for the Review Panel to see the figures for teacher dismissals based on performance (as distinct from Code of Conduct).

#### Roles of BOSTES:

- The two generic roles of BOSTES – regulation and operations. Ideally the regulation activities would be separate from the operational activities, unless there were compelling reasons.
- Accreditation of teachers and schools, including approval to deliver courses to overseas students, is a regulatory role which perhaps should be undertaken on a national basis.
- Development of Curriculum is notionally handed over to ACARA, but the development of supporting material, such as the syllabus, could be regarded as a (non-mandatory) service to the educational service providers (schools).
- Development and conduct of the HSC is a service, which could be provided as determined by a regulator, much the same as the Administration of NAPLAN.

**The HSC is a major function of BOSTES, but its future is limited. As our education systems in Australia become student-focussed, students will learn by their stage of development (not their age or BOSTES-determined educational stages).** Students will experience flexible and seamless movement up and across educational institutions similar perhaps to the way the Australian Qualifications Framework now partly allows. This includes studying different subjects at different levels to match the student’s level of attainment. Students will experience much more freedom about the content that they study – given that skills like problem solving and innovation will be much more important than being able to compliant behaviour so as to be able to reproduce material at the HSC that pleases the examining rules.

The structures in our schools have remained frozen-in-time, but the way to the future of seamless movement is perhaps demonstrated in Ballarat’s Federation University. This type of approach has massive implications for the status quo because it will eventually mean the phasing out of the HSC and major changes to our educational institutions in both the human and bricks & mortar sense.

The changes across the education sector, driven by research outcomes, technology and the market place, will be massive. That is the main reason why we are so concerned about the NSW Government’s inaction across the whole sector of which BOSTES forms a part.



## DOCUMENT 2

### What are the main problems?

Australian schooling has been developed using 20<sup>th</sup> Century approaches and has delivered close to best 20<sup>th</sup> Century practice by international standards. However, It has been refined to a point where improvements are now returning only limited benefits, which in some cases aren't keeping up with our competitors.

The Northern Sydney Council of P&Cs has supported reform for at least ten years, as we have watched a general decline in public school performance, relative to other nations, and in some cases such as the STEM subjects, relative to what was achieved in the past in our own NSW schools. Languages has also been disappointing, given the advantage we have here with our multicultural community, and the big advantages in bi-lingual learning at an early age. There is much value in having a second language, including a broader understanding of the world for each individual and in the health of the economy from the nation's point of view.

The Australian Curriculum is mainly an expensive exercise to bring some sort of uniformity across the nation, rather than improving the product. Some uniformity is probably a good idea in some ways, but the student-centred future of education will need to see changes to the traditional approach to curriculum, the nature and the timing of pathways that students take, and perhaps to the existence of traditional exams such as the NSW HSC.

Local Schools, Local Decisions in NSW has not really taken off as the concept is not served well by existing policies, processes and systems. Many Principals and teachers seem to be privately disillusioned because they can't really change anything much. This is particularly so in budgetary decisions and staffing matters – both in recruitment and in design of roles.

As many have pointed out, including the Federal Government, we need to change to a 21<sup>st</sup> Century approach to give our children the best educational opportunities by world standards, and to ensure Australia's future prosperity.

Although educators know, in general terms, what a 21<sup>st</sup> Century education system looks like, organisations such as the NSW Department of Education have inflexible systems which have prevented the necessary changes from being implemented.

Way back in 2005, an internal NSW Department Futures Report, subtitled "One size doesn't fit all" (attached or at [https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/37804046/NSW\\_Education\\_futuresreport2005.pdf](https://dl.dropboxusercontent.com/u/37804046/NSW_Education_futuresreport2005.pdf)) pointed out the problems with the Department's inflexible policies, processes, school organisational structures and the whole general approach and culture. The report gave rise to some limited changes, but not a sustained and sustainable long term change strategy.



The NSW Department knows what is needed in response to COAG education strategies, but really has no comprehensive plans to move forward across the whole system. The culture inside the Department is that of accepting current policy and processes as God-given. Some Principals and leaders nevertheless rise a bit above this and implement some 21<sup>st</sup> Century strategies in their schools. However, many go with the flow, and this is why you see differential performance across schools and across classrooms within schools.

Another factor is the vested interests who are threatened by change. This includes some in the leadership of unions, Principals Councils, and employees in powerful positions within the government agencies.

Vested interests are often quite good at taking an issue, say the COAG *Student's First* agenda, and making it appear that substantial change has occurred when it hasn't, in the fine tradition of Yes!Minister.

## What is 21<sup>st</sup> Century Schooling?

Educators do actually know what 21<sup>st</sup> Century schooling looks like, and the Department of Education has made some tentative steps towards this goal. But the implementation of serious, long term change is not generally a strength in Australian school systems.

You would be familiar with "School of the Future" concepts. Broadly it involves **the "system" meeting the student** - often called personalised learning - rather than the student being dished up a standardised, age-based, inflexible curriculum driven learning environment which is what happens now. In the NSW Department the concept of "personalised learning" has been dumbed down to represent a little extra attention to kids who struggle, but within the same inflexible, age-based framework. Kids who get left behind generally stay well behind for their whole school life whilst the classroom offering forges ahead irrespective. Kids who are quick learners get bored. So do many kids in the middle. You expressed one of the reasons (uninspiring teachers) in the SMH article. And there are kids who are good at some subjects and bad at others ... .. The bottom line is that the kids suffer, and we produce adults who tend to lack the where-with-all to be innovators, problem solvers and leading participants in the emerging world economy. **The current approach is such an unproductive, but avoidable, waste.**

The proposed **Lindfield "School of the Future"** on the UTS site at Lindfield on Sydney's North Shore (to be opened in 2019, perhaps 2018) is one of the five new schools and seven substantially upsized schools proposed by the NSW Government as a result of thousands of volunteer hours research and lobbying by the Northern Sydney District Council of P&Cs after the Department had advised the Government that no new school places were needed. This advice was based on seriously flawed internal demographic and planning studies – this points to another issue regarding the capability of large educational authorities managing complex internal support businesses. But enough of that for now.



**Lindfield** incorporates concepts such as Stage-not-Age, project-based learning, team teaching, and kids-learning-from-kids as a way of engaging kids and improving productivity in schools that was not possible until technology and learning research reached current levels.

Here is a link to the proposed [model](http://tinyurl.com/Lindfield-Future-School) <http://tinyurl.com/Lindfield-Future-School> and an [SMH article](#) .

[“Flipped” learning](#) is a concept which makes far better use of the technology than traditional classrooms (A “Flipped learning” video features Michael Fullan whom the Department has used as a consultant

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCvwtiOH0co](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GCvwtiOH0co) plus video on school reform

[www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLX0NwaFaQQ](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FLX0NwaFaQQ) ). The Curriculum is a problem for 21<sup>st</sup> Century schools, as it is so prescriptive that it presents barriers to kids engaging. It tends to encourage conformity rather than innovation and problem solving. The “new” Australian Curriculum is really Stage 1, being largely a rewrite of existing curriculums (mainly from NSW) to unify curriculum across Australia – a worthy objective. Stage 2 is urgent and it needs to support “School of the Future” concepts. The problem is that our Curriculum Authorities are much happier building Stage 1, which keeps people busy for years, but leaves Australia behind other countries. Another factor is that the HSC, being age-based, will not be fit for purpose, in its current form, for 21<sup>st</sup> Century approaches to life-long learning.

At **Lindfield**, our fear is that the Department’s culture and current policies and processes will strangle the “School of the Future” initiative, and we won’t end up with the leap forward that this opportunity offers.

## Options for change

**Our District Council has lamented the fact that the Department of Education has a structure and approach which really only suits business-as-usual, but is entirely unsuited to successfully implementing business improvement programs and taking advantages of the opportunities such as the “School of the Future” initiative and the COAG reforms.**

The Department of Education is a big business, being a massive \$13 billion/annum enterprise, and yet has a very weak governance and management structure, with a CEO reporting directly to a Minister. The CEO of Education Departments in all states needs to be just that, a person with the broad skills needed by a CEO of such a large business, and not just a technical specialist.

In such a government monopoly business, both the CEO and the Minister need to be supported in some major way – for example, by an independent skills-based Board for driving business strategy, overseeing performance, managing short and long term business risk, and taking advantage of opportunities.

There is also a need for a surrogate for the market or customer, such as a Regulator.



The Regulator for the core business of education could be a light-handed version of Ofwat, to oversee the educational performance and the capability and strategies of the education agencies, and the appropriateness of their structures, to meet future broad government objectives. The Business Support Function within the Department needs a separate Regulator, such as IPART NSW which oversees a number of State Owned Corporations with similar diverse functions, such as Financial, HR/IR, IT and Asset Management.

State-Owned Corporations in Australia generally have variations on this theme.

The Government also needs some type of independent, multi-skilled capability (an independent Board, perhaps) to develop and co-ordinate educational strategies to optimise outcomes over the pathways for students from pre-school through school, TAFE, University and beyond. This body would also oversee functions of related bodies such as BOSTES and the Community Languages Board.

The Department, whilst currently reporting to the Government in its Annual Report and other documentation, lacks effective, best practice, written instruments on its performance in contemporary circumstances – a Statement of Corporate Intent signed with the government; published operational and business improvement performance targets; systems such as process benchmarking to assist in identifying best appropriate practice, prioritise business improvement programs and assure government that processes support a sustainable future; and workforce planning to ensure skills are appropriate.

## Process Benchmarking

In Australia process (or input) benchmarking began to be developed in the 1980's as part of the ongoing reform of water authorities.

The Water Services Association of Australia (WSAA) is a co-operative of the large water companies around Australia. It has developed a process benchmarking tool which is used by independent auditors to assess the capability of important processes right across the business. Results are not made public, but are used by Regulators in their task of determining whether best appropriate processes are in place so that Governments have confidence that the business is predicting and planning for future issues, and positioning itself for sustainable best practice futures. The Regulator also looks at past performance (outputs) in reporting publicly and to Government.

This Input Benchmarking system has now gone international, under the auspices of the International Water Association.

The reforms were facilitated by the recruitment of outsiders across all ranks from CEO down. New CEO's were more business savvy than the traditional CEO's who were usually lifers promoted internally. The outsiders were also recruited from a broader list of occupations, such as economists, customer service specialists, etc. The new CEO's took the lead in conceiving new business models, convincing governments and implementing change.



These days, officers at different levels through each member organisation of WSAA tend to hunt as a pack and work together on solutions. Educators do a lot of collaboration and discuss all the latest ideas, but the frameworks in their industry **don't seem to encourage the systematic implementation of innovation** – at least not enough to see transformation to 21<sup>st</sup> Century organisations.

The water industry is a much more efficient, productive and externally focussed industry because of the changes. Education needs this too.

## A few words on Teacher Performance (Teacher Quality)

The concept of Quality is used in COAG and *Students First* reform jargon. But “quality” in this context is an input that doesn't necessarily lead to improved teaching performance and learning outcomes.

Attached is a normal distribution diagram that illustrates, in concept, the experience of the students with the performance of teachers, compared to the Department's practice. The Department's practice sees about 99% of teachers as at least satisfactory, and less than 1% that are in some need of serious performance management. This, of course, is utterly unrealistic, particularly given the policy, processes and cultural disincentives for Principals and school executives to manage teacher other employee performance. The curve needs to move considerably to the right and be much narrower! (The same diagram could apply to the differences in performance between schools).

The policies, processes and culture ensure that only a small handful of teachers are ever acted against for incompetence – removal of teachers is usually as a result of conduct issues. Although there were changes to this system of removing bad teachers about two years ago virtually nothing has changed in reality. Putting a bad teacher in front of a class day-in, day-out over a year is absolutely the opposite to “students first”, and is a deplorable situation. It is also unnecessary given the high number of unemployed teachers looking for a satisfying career.

The “quality” teaching approach is, it seems us, a bureaucratic euphemism that is not intended to place too much pressure on those who aren't performing, and is somewhat of a box-ticking exercise. It is also something that will take years to have any practical effect, if it is not watered down over time.

The quickest way to get improved performance across the system is to replace at least the very lowest performing teachers who fall well below the “best for the student” test - replacing them with the cream of the 40,000 or so teachers that a newspaper report claims are looking for a job.

Another way the “performance” and productivity of teachers could be improved is by having teachers work in teams, and by using the concept of kids-learning-from kids and by using the



technology and educational research better – thus leveraging all the strengths of the group, including the students, and providing choice for the students in terms of who they relate to.

**Teaching is probably the only profession where an individual is so alone in their work – it's a hard ask and the structure of schools needs to change.**

## DOCUMENT 3

Summary of some of the issues that have led to a regrettable loss of opportunity over the last 5 years in NSW.

**1. Silos remain:** In the NSW Government's first term, the Department of Education and Communities was formed under the one Minister, Adrian Piccoli. He also had responsibility for the areas now covered by the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards. This provided an ideal opportunity to strategically align the pathway choices for students from Early Childhood through school and TAFE-type opportunities. This was an important initiative of the new government because it theoretically allowed the Minister to optimise the outcomes for all students and the economy. Unfortunately, the silos remained, reforms in TAFE (which were needed) were badly designed and implemented, and there was little in the way of improvements in the early childhood and schools silos.

In the second term, the NSW Government unfortunately abandoned this strategic idea, presumably because of the lack of outcomes in the first term. One of the impacts in this second term is that many kids who would do well doing some subjects through TAFE are being denied the opportunity as the dysfunctional silos have become even more dominant under recent changes.

**2. No high level vision or strategy for effective change:** The Minister and his Departments did not have and still do not have a broad-based change strategy to implement 21<sup>st</sup> Century pre-schooling, schooling and TAFEing across the whole system to tertiary level and beyond. What is happening is faux-implementation of the separate parts of the COAG agenda – which has become aged and is in need of a big rethink anyway. The necessary change needs to be done with a range of inputs from the broader community, not just educators who are used to the 20<sup>th</sup> Century rules-based approach which is no longer adequate in a competitive world.

**3. Program and Project Management:** The level of expertise in this area is mostly not satisfactory for the needs of the business. This is perhaps one of the reasons why the Department is so frozen in time. Any business improvement or change program needs a good strategy and plan if it is to be successful, or even to get going in the first place. There is little difference, in purely project management terms, in designing and building a multistorey building versus designing and implementing a substantial business improvement program.

**4. Inadequate Governance and Management Structures:** The CEO of the Department of Education reports directly to the Minister. In practical terms, this means that



the Minister has no alternative way of receiving advice or enacting strategies except via the long-established vested interests within the Department and the industrial bodies. The Minister receives political advice from within his office, but this is tactical politics which merely provides short term damage control and lots of photo opportunities. Our District Council of P&Cs has advocated that:

- A skills-based Board be set up to assist the NSW Minister in managing the \$13billion p.a. business. The CEO of the Department should be selected on the basis of the full suite of professional skills and capabilities needed for that role in such a business.
- An Advisory Board be set up to advise the NSW Minister on educational strategies. This Board should include skills from the broader community and have independence from the vested interests.
- A special State Owned Corporation (SOC), under a different Minister, should be set up to manage the predominantly indigenous Connected Communities Schools. Despite money being thrown at these schools, the initiative has largely failed and these schools are a blot on our society. This special SOC should have a limited life, and should be seen as a major project. It would not be weighed down by Departmental one-size-fits-all paraphernalia, and decisions would be made on a best-for-project basis. Its goal would be to hand back these schools to the Department, or some other operating body, in tip top shape.

In the NSW Department of Education, the recruitment of senior staff from long-term employees has bred a business-as-usual culture. This, along with the absence of a Board, goes a long way to explaining the business-as-usual approach to teaching and learning, and the unsatisfactory performance in the business services area.

## **5. Failure to innovate and focus on the student, rather than the service**

**providers:** There is a claim on the Minister's website that "students in NSW are placed at the centre of all decision making" [www.adrianpiccoli.com.au/content/policy](http://www.adrianpiccoli.com.au/content/policy)

This is a point of view that we don't share – particularly in the failure in the "early action" area of replacing bad teachers who affect the education and prospects of kids day after day (see attached bell curve diagram) – the system and the teachers usually come before the kids.

Progress against international benchmarks has been largely stagnant or going backwards. This is particularly so in the STEM and languages subjects – which, as the Federal Government has pointed out, are integral to Australia's future prosperity. Some influential people in the industry adhere to the ludicrous idea that languages should be learnt in high school, when it is much too late. The 21<sup>st</sup> Century ideas we have mentioned elsewhere have barely rated a mention in NSW. Structures in schools have remained frozen, but the way to the future is perhaps demonstrated in Ballarat's Federation University, which various politicians have visited, and in the proposed Lindfield School of the Future in NSW. One of the keys is progressing students by their stage of development – not their age or the BOSTES



definition of “Stage”. This type of approach has massive implications for the status quo because it will eventually mean the phasing out of the HSC; and seamless movement up through and across educational institutions similar perhaps to the way the Australian Qualifications Framework now allows.

Examples of opportunities for innovation include having maths and physics taught as the same subject and having students who are good with their hands “accidentally” learning maths and literacy through cleverer learning strategies. Subjects such as maths are more amenable to students shooting ahead at very young ages, whereas other subjects such as English and History where understanding is more aligned with maturity would see different learning and advancement patterns.

**6. Local Schools, Local Decisions:** The Minister keeps stating that Principals now have 70% of the budget for their school compared to 10%. What has actually happened, in our view, is that the 70% has been transferred into the school accounts, but schools are still hog-tied by the same inflexible policies that were previously in place, some of which have been tightened. It is still almost impossible to remove bad teachers from class rooms as mentioned above, and many central contracts, often over-priced and beset with high overheads, are mandatory. The raising of money by P&Cs to build minor items such as shade structures is discouraged by excessive central control, the performance of which impacts on time, cost and quality. The failure of LMBR to be delivered on time and to the necessary specification is also causing Principals a lot of grief, and consequently to shun the initiative.

**7. Gonski:** We support the implementation of the Gonski recommendations, but funding needs to be contingent upon best practice performance across the Department of Education and other government bodies involved in supporting kids and families, and affordability based on appropriate future-focussed government priorities.

**8. Failure to exhibit best practice in business support services:** The implementation of the as-yet incomplete **LMBR**, a business management system based on the well-known SAP software, has been shambolic, and has received critical assessments from the NSW Auditor’s office. The LMBR program features a large number of standard sites (which is a big plus in terms of cost), and was supposed to be delivered for less than \$ ½ billion. It now looks like costing **double** that amount, and/or losing large parts of its planned functionality. The best practice ways to deliver SAP are well-known in Australia and world-wide and this debacle shouldn’t have happened. There seemed to be very little appreciation of risk management for such a project, which may have been inevitable given the weak governance structure and the failure to bring in fresh, externally experienced blood, at senior levels. Other issues with IT include systems in schools includes slow response times which result in students not finishing online assessments and being marked down.

**Asset Planning** has also been a serious weakness. Our District Council volunteers spent literally thousands of hours on a campaign covering about 30 schools to demonstrate to the Minister that the Department was woefully wrong in its demographics and was blind to the impact of government urban consolidation policies. Nobody in the senior ranks seems to have been held accountable. Skilled community volunteers should not have been forced to allocate large chunks of their time to actually mirror the investigatory and planning work of



# Northern Sydney District Council

## of Parents & Citizens Associations

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paid officers who were not sufficiently skilled or knowledgeable for the tasks at hand in times of surging population growth. The Minister went from telling us and the then-Premier O'Farrell that no new schools were needed in Northern Sydney to announcing five new schools and seven major upgrades to existing schools. The Department's Asset Management efforts have improved since then, but we still have Councils telling us that the Education Department's performance in working with Councils is well behind that of other Government Departments.

Much **policy** in the Department (HR, IT, financial and asset management) comes from the business services area, and much of this is inflexible and/or perverse and tends to hinder best-for-business outcomes, rather than being a productivity enhancer.

### ABOUT

The **Northern Sydney District Council of P&C Associations** consists of delegates from P&C Associations in the Northern Sydney region, an area broadly north of Sydney Harbour from the coast to the Hills. This area is covered by two of the P&C Federation's Electorates – North Sydney and North West Sydney. We support and work with the NW Sydney Group of P&Cs which provides an effective and independent forum for P&Cs in the North West Sydney Federation electorate.

We are an independent voice for public school P&Cs in our area, and we are independent of the NSW P&C Federation. Our P&C Association members are also independent organisations and the District Council has no powers over members.

We are inclusive and welcome representatives from any P&Cs in our general area of coverage, irrespective of ties they may have to other groups.

We promote and advocate for public education in our region, work with Government bodies and like-minded organisations, and we provide a forum for P&Cs to help each other and generally exchange information.

We provide experienced P&C volunteers to give you guidance if requested. Our District Council's culture is one of inclusion and collaboration. We are all volunteers.

# Traditional Views of Teacher Performance - Conceptual

Normal Distribution or Bell Curve showing gap between DET staffing policy assessment and parent/student assessment

