



BOSTES Review

This submission is written on behalf of members of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council (SPC). The SPC is the professional association for principals of NSW government schools with secondary enrolments. It is the largest of its kind in Australia.

1. The announcement of the review came as a great surprise to the members of the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (SPC). Since the foundation of the Board of Studies the SPC has been very satisfied with the traditional roles of the Board, which included curriculum development, assessment and credentialing.

This has been particularly the case in recent years as the development of the national curriculum unfolded. The SPC believes the Australian Curriculum has been incorporated into the NSW Curriculum in a manner, which has allowed the NSW syllabuses to retain rigour and be accessible for all students. Pleasingly, and very significantly, this process left the country's best-recognised and most highly regarded curriculum intact.

During the development of the national curriculum the SPC was very concerned about the less than adequate quality of the early offerings from ACARA and was very supportive of both the BOSTES and NSW Minister of Education's strong stance on the need for improved curriculum documents from ACARA before NSW considered incorporating these into the NSW curriculum.

The relatively new roles of the now BOSTES i.e. since 2013, in the area of teacher quality including the implementation of "Great teaching, inspired learning" has been roundly applauded with a strong view that the incorporation of the Institute of Teachers into the BOSTES has led to streamlining of work and improvement in processes associated with teacher accreditation.

Further the SPC is of the view the work the BOSTES is currently undertaking will ultimately improve teacher quality for the students of NSW.

Given the positive manner in which the work of the BOSTES is viewed by the SPC, and indeed the entire NSW educational community, it seems most odd that the review was initiated. This is particularly so when the rationale includes strong references to the, "new national architecture" of ACARA, AITSL and ESA, all bodies that are viewed by the SPC as providing inferior products and services to those of the BOSTES. This concern has become even more relevant following the recent COAG meetings where it became clear that the current federal government wishes to remove itself from responsibility for school education.

2. Given the above context the SPC is concerned the reasons for the review may be entirely politically and economically motivated particularly when viewed in the light of the



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Treasurer's recently stated aim to have, "a dramatic reduction in the number of government departments, agencies, state owned corporations, boards, committees and trusts in a new efficiency drive".

3. Timeliness: The SPC is most concerned that responses to the review will be very limited and not truly representative of the NSW educational community given the review was announced on 10 March 2016 with relatively little publicity and the issues paper only published on 31 March with final date for submissions being 21 April. Interestingly, public school holidays commenced on Saturday 9 April and concluded on Monday 25 April. The latter part of March also included the Easter break.
4. The terms of reference for the review and the issues paper with attached questions seem to be based on the premise that the workings of the BOSTES is failing the educational community and the BOSTES has failed to take advantage of the amalgamation of the Board of Studies and Institute of Teachers. The SPC is of the view that the framing of the review terms of reference and associated Issues Paper and the questions it poses are biased and only invite negative comments.
5. The SPC has concerns with the composition of the expert review panel. No one on the expert review panel has recent secondary experience or recency of experience with the NSW education system. Consequently, it seems doubtful that the panel has a deep understanding of the work of the BOSTES, the way this work is appreciated by the NSW educational community and such things as the value of the HSC as an exit credential (accepted and valued by all major universities around the world) nor the important role that collaborative curriculum development has played in NSW education i.e. being consultative, written by practising experts and with a deep rigour.

Specific comments in relation to the terms of reference:

SPC has confidence that the current role of BOSTES, its functions, structure and membership is best serving the community of NSW now and into the future. It continues to set high and consistent educational standards, aims to build the best quality teaching workforce and improve outcomes for all students. BOSTES demonstrates a very clear mission and strategic focus to achieve these objectives.

Objectives, role, functions and responsibilities of the BOSTES

- Whilst it may be perceived by some observers that overlap and duplication exist in areas of the BOSTES with bodies such as ACARA and AITSL, it is important to remember that the NSW BOSTES provides the national benchmark in terms of quality. Any diminution of these roles in curriculum, assessment and credentialing would be a backward step for the state's young people and not at all helpful in improving student outcomes.

The NSW BOSTES has a rich and very successful history of engaging with all sectors of the educational community in the development of high quality curriculum, assessment and credentialing. This history has led to the BOSTES being deeply trusted and their work supported by the educational community; this trust is particularly important as NSW



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moves down the pathway of full implementation of teacher accreditation and increased focus on educational standards.

The NSW HSC is internationally recognised for its high quality and BOSTES is currently researching and undertaking consultation to further enhance and maintain its international regard and maintain its relevance for the future. The quality of the BOSTES curriculum development and assessment protocols that are foundation stones of the BOSTES must be enabled into the future, to continue to ensure the calibre of the NSW HSC.

Most appropriate governance arrangements

- At the present moment whilst the Board is large and consequently may be perceived by external observers to be expensive and unwieldy, it functions remarkably successfully and does genuinely represent the interests of all stakeholders. The various groups involved in the education of young people believe they have a voice and indeed they do; this is vital in terms of the ongoing, supported development of improved educational outcomes in NSW.
- Board members take on a variety of roles beyond the regular BOSTES demands. Many of these roles are crucial e.g. chairing of and representation on Board Committees. The various stakeholders value the different backgrounds and genuine areas of expertise of the BOSTES members. Change to another model, for example appointing, “experts” risks losing the many truly expert views to say nothing of the confidence and the support of the various stakeholders.
- Consultative arrangements, particularly for syllabus development may be seen by external observers to be quite drawn out. However, there is strong support for all curriculum initiatives given the extensive and thorough consultative processes the BOSTES undertakes and the knowledge that an expert, inclusive body has completed the work. Evidence for this may be seen in the absence of controversy as new syllabuses are rolled out.

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.

- Regulatory responsibilities are a vital part of ensuring quality education is provided to all students in NSW both with schools and teachers. Given the size of the NSW student body, the enormous numbers of teachers in the systems, the geography and range of government and non-government schools the expertise built within the BOSTES has proven to be outstanding in completing this registration process and is regularly acknowledged by all members of the educational community.

The current transition to registration of government schools has been well thought out by the BOSTES and has been respectful of the role the Department of Education plays in educating the vast majority of students in NSW, including the most disadvantaged as well



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as the greatest number of very high achieving students. The SPC would be concerned if the processes of school and / or teacher registration were transferred to a different body.

The optimum processes for formulating and assuring high educational standards for curriculum, for assessment, for schools, and for the accreditation of teachers.

- At the present moment the NSW curriculum, assessment procedures and credentialing is seen as an exemplar both nationally and internationally. The BOSTES is constantly evaluating and looking at ways to advance and improve upon these and has recently forwarded very solid suggestions for further improvement in both curriculum and assessment, most particularly the HSC, to the NSW Minister of Education for approval.
- The accreditation of teachers is a work in progress as is the government schools registration BUT these are built on great expertise and rely on already established goodwill and trustworthiness.

The most appropriate organisational structure for supporting the functions of the Board.

- Given the enormous range of roles the BOSTES undertakes the current organisational structure and decision-making works very well. One of the great positives of the BOSTES is it is very self-reflective and doesn't rest on its laurels.

Any other matters considered relevant to achieving the outcomes of the Review.

- The success of the BOSTES and all it has accomplished over the past 26 years relative to all other similar instrumentalities both nationally and internationally cannot be ignored particularly when reviewing where NSW students rank internationally and in comparison to the other national jurisdictions. This positive contribution to education should be applauded and celebrated.

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