



# **Submission in Relation to the Review of the BOSTES**

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of New South Wales

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P&C Federation is pleased to make a submission in response to the review of the BOSTES (The Board of Studies, Teaching, and Educational Standards) announced on 10 March 2016 by the NSW Minister for Education.

P&C Federation supports the periodic review of government organisations to assess practices and efficiencies. P&C Federation has been involved with the BOSTES as a stakeholder in relation to curriculum development prior to the current Board appointments in January this year. The P&C Federation recently had its representation restored on the BOSTES after a period of nearly two years. Our absence coincided approximately with the formation of the BOSTES; this was called to the attention of the review panel during our meeting on 13 April.

In broad terms in relation to curriculum, assessment and teaching standards the P&C Federation supports;

1. Any actions that will strengthen the NSW curriculum and support better outcomes for students,
2. A National Education Framework that encourages a consistent and high standard of curriculum, assessment and teaching standards. However, a national standard must not be developed and applied at the expense of the internationally and locally respected NSW curriculum, assessment or teaching standards,
3. Direct, appropriate and proportional representation of stakeholders on the BOSTES. In particular, appropriate parent representation at all levels,
4. The continuation and strengthening of the HSC as a valued credential,
5. Strong, meaningful and accessible teaching accreditation standards,
6. Accreditation and regulation of schools against an equitable state-based school standard.

## **SPECIFIC RESPONSES TO THE ISSUES PAPER OF 31 MARCH 2016**

### **1. Have the opportunities of the amalgamation been fully realised?**

The NSW Government's goal in merging Board of Studies and the Institute of Teachers was to bring together the education cornerstones of curriculum, teaching, assessment and regulation. The goal being to create a single authority with accountability for driving improvements in these areas. By merging these organisations, the government has created a unique entity with the potential to achieve significant improvements. P&C Federation believes that BOSTES is working hard towards this end.

The strategic goals of BOSTES demonstrate solid strategies and processes that support curriculum, teaching, assessment and regulation. This clear direction ensures BOSTES continues to be a national and international authority in educational standards. Notably, some of these areas, particularly government school regulation, are still in the developmental stage. As such, further consultation with key stakeholders is needed to meet BOSTES agreed objectives.

P&C Federation recognises the need for a closer link between curriculum development and teaching standards and accreditation. Such synergy will work towards fully realising the potential of the merger. At present, this appears somewhat siloed. This is because The Quality Teaching Council (QTC), which is tasked with developing quality teaching initiatives and accreditation policy, operates solely with teaching membership and no other stakeholder representation; the only exception is the Board's

supervision. P&C Federation sees this as an area that should be brought into alignment with the BOSTES curriculum and assessment committees which have stakeholder participation.

A more balanced approach to the development of teaching initiatives and accreditation should be developed with parental representation (on the QTC and on its various sub committees). This would offer a more balanced approach to the development of teaching initiatives and accreditation. Parent and community engagement are fundamental to development of any initiative or standards to ensure appropriate practice and strategies are being delivered to our children to attain higher educational outcomes.

Advancing the status and standing of the teaching profession was one of the Institute of Teachers' original goals. P&C Federation asserts that this has yet to be significantly achieved - even after more than a decade of the Institute's existence. Admittedly, it is no easy task. Even so, P&C Federation deems that raising the teaching profession's status will have significant positive outcomes by further increasing the quality of NSW's teaching. Which in turn leads to increased quality delivery of the syllabus and, most importantly, better student outcomes.

There must be significant cooperation between key stakeholders to drive the status and standards of the profession forward to achieve major changes in this area. BOSTES is now uniquely positioned to be able to drive this. However, whether there is the political will or courage from the government to follow through with the necessary changes is questionable.

On a minor point P&C Federation notes separate website for BOSTES [www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/](http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/) and teacher accreditation [www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/](http://www.nswteachers.nsw.edu.au/) . We question why the accreditation site is still separate from the primary BOSTES website two years after the merger?

## **2. Are roles and responsibilities clear and appropriate?**

The Board of Studies and the Institute of Teachers were national leaders prior to the formation of BOSTES. As a newly formed organisation BOSTES continues to be a national leader in curriculum, assessment and standards. P&C Federation recognises that BOSTES sets the benchmark for other states and territories and must continue to do so.

P&C Federation encourages state and federal agencies to work effectively and cooperatively to ensure that the high standards of educational outcomes for our children are being delivered cohesively and collaboratively. Until such time as NSW hands over its constitutional rights to the Federal government, P&C Federation believes that BOSTES should remain the sole authority for curriculum, assessment and standards within NSW. The creation of ACARA (Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority) and the development of the Australian curriculum has resulted in areas of duplication or overlap between the state and federal levels. However, BOSTES is the only government organization with jurisdiction in setting curriculum, teaching standards and assessment in NSW. As such, the importance of their overarching role cannot be overstated.

The work undertaken on the national framework is important and P&C Federation can see the obvious benefits in providing consistency in what is taught across each state and territory. However, we consider the Australian curriculum to be the lowest common denominator and support BOSTES in implementing a more rigorous and in depth curriculum for NSW. The national framework has not overtaken and is unlikely to overtake what is being done in NSW. P&C Federation would be opposed to any backward step in the NSW curriculum, assessment or standards to meet the goals of a national agenda.

We would note that the BOSTES has only been operational as a merged organization for two years. As such, it is very difficult to evaluate areas of internal overlap or blurred responsibility at this stage because of the merger's complexity.

### **3. Are processes and practices as effective and efficient as possible?**

P&C Federation would strongly recommend that the ability to have all key stakeholders in one place at one time to review, debate and decide on key issues works effectively and must remain untouched. In the opinion of P&C Federation, BOSTES has a comprehensive set of processes in place that promote solid curriculum and assessment standards. BOSTES has demonstrated its ability to work collaboratively with stakeholders and has a culture of inclusiveness often missing in other government organisations. BOSTES builds stakeholder's confidence that their issues will be listened to and their concerns will be investigated. This quality of BOSTES cannot be understated.

Further, the most effective aspect of the BOSTES is the board itself. The Board's large size is its strength. It is the diversity it brings that gives a voice and feedback to stakeholders which are of immeasurable value.

There are clearly more demands being placed on teachers and in particular Principals. Some of these are the result of changes to curriculum and teaching accreditation. However, most are due to reforms and policies implemented by the Department of Education that produce significant amounts of extra workload without significantly adding to student outcomes. These changes and their impacts lie mostly outside of the remit of the BOSTES but nonetheless is something the BOSTES have to try to deal with. Closer cooperation with the Department of Education will mitigate some of the issues but until the Department of Education is operated on a similar basis to the BOSTES reforms will continue to pose issues.

P&C Federation argues that generally the expectations of parents in NSW are fundamentally the same as they have always been. That is, parents continue to seek the best possible education for their children. There are groups of parents that have exceptionally high expectations for their children but by and large the majority of parents simply expect quality education.

The opportunities available to BOSTES are only limited by the vision of its President, its employees and its stakeholders. Despite having only been appointed to the BOSTES in February 2016, after nearly two years without representation, P&C Federation doubts that all of the available opportunities have been explored following the creation of the BOSTES. We believe that our appointment will help to support further avenues for functionality and direction and foster the exploration further business opportunities to ensure continuous improvement in the delivery of quality educational outcomes and teaching standards.

The BOSTES syllabus development process provides a solid basis for syllabus development, revision and amendments. In addition to the development processes and structures for Vocational Education and Training (VET). Recent participation in the review of the HSC syllabus also indicates that BOSTES is taking steps to ensure that curriculum and assessment practices are current and relevant to our student's educational needs and that reviews will take place at regular intervals.

Currently, the changes facing VET in schools (due to significant changes that have occurred in this sector) means the BOSTES have been re-developing, revising and amending courses to meet and improve delivery of Board endorsed courses for students wanting to study VET. The VTAC (Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre) is only recently formed. As such, it is clear the BOSTES must be proactive in its approach to improving curriculum development and assessment processes in this area as well.

In addition, BOSTES has implemented and delivered changes to the K-10 syllabuses, aligned with the Australian curriculum in English, Mathematics, Science, History and Geography and are working on the delivery of the remaining areas in 2016/17.

P&C Federation is represented on the SERC (Similar and Equivalent Requirements Committee) and is actively providing input. SERC had its first meeting in February 2016 so it is too early at this stage to comment in detail on school registration and accreditation processes. However, our initial position is that the process would be more robust by reviewing a greater number of schools across the state. Another concern is that the review process is only verifying compliance against the Department of Education own policies. We believe there should be a consistent state-based standard against which the Department's policies can be assessed to ensure they are sufficient and appropriate.

Achieving high standards of education in NSW also requires an independent method for accrediting teachers. Although a principal has a definite role in the accreditation process, we question whether it is appropriate for a principal to act as a Teacher Accreditation Authority. Especially in consideration of the workload already in place we see the need for experienced independent accreditors reducing the need for additional accreditation layers.

#### **4. Are effective governance arrangements in place?**

Bringing together experience across all sectors of the educational sphere is a goal that the current Board structure already meets. From the P&C Federation perspective the NSW Education Act 1990 No 8, states that one important aspect of a Parent and Citizen Association is "to encourage parent and community participation in curriculum and other education issues in schools". As the peak body representing over eighteen hundred P&C Associations across NSW it is essential that our place on the BOSTES remain. Our members have a right, under legislation, to participate in decision making as a way of reaching positive outcomes for all our children. We seek to ensure that the dialog between government agencies and parents remains aligned.

As per the Board of Studies, Teaching and Educational Standards Act 2013 No 89 the principal objective of the Board is;

*'to ensure that the school curriculum, forms of assessment and teaching and regulatory standards under the education and teaching legislation are developed, applied and monitored in a way that improves student learning while maintaining flexibility across the entire school education and teaching sector.'*

P&C Federation believes that the current Board structure is more than adequate in meeting the requirements of the BOSTES Act, not just in its principle objective but in its particular functions as detailed in Part 2 Section 6 (3). In line with the Best Practice Guide to Public Sector Governance, as far as P&C Federation has seen, BOSTES effectively meets the two fundamental requirements of good governance being performance and accountability.

According to the Australian Institute of Company Directors 2014/15 Governance for Directors ensuring a diversity of skills, experience and backgrounds on a board can enhance board effectiveness. It also provides a better perspective on the different customer and stakeholder groups served by the board. The current BOSTES structure demonstrates this diversification of stakeholders and the vast wealth of experience that it can deliver.

P&C Federation, only being recent appointees to the BOSTES, have yet to come across Board involvement in strategy formulations for the organisation. Initial indications are that this seems to be primarily driven by the organisation internally, or in response to Ministerial directives rather than by

the Board itself. This however may well be the result of our relatively short exposure to the organisation.

