

Inquiry into the effect of red tape on private education

Submission to the Select Committee on Red Tape (Commonwealth)

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Prepared by: Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations
of New South Wales

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Introduction

Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales (P&C Federation) is thankful to the Select Committee on Red Tape for this opportunity to contribute feedback into this inquiry into effect of red tape on private education. P&C Federation supports the position of individual educational and developmental needs met by a range of differential services expressed through appropriate and well-planned curricula, programs and environments conducted by sensitive and well-trained personnel in conjunction with parents¹ and families.

The core belief of P&C Federation is that the education of our children and youth is the most fundamental means of ensuring individual and collective success and, as a result, our greatest national resource.

P&C Federation Response

P&C Federation represents Parent and Citizens (P&C) Associations of New South Wales government schools, and we acknowledge that this inquiry relates to red tape in private education specifically. While we intend to submit our more detailed views on red tape in government schools to the upcoming inquiry into policy and process to limit and reduce red tape, we would like to register our surprise that the Red Tape Committee has not established an equivalent inquiry into the effect of red tape in public education. The government school sector represents 65.6% of students in Australia, and despite government schools being largely States' responsibility, we would have hoped that the effective operations of schools that most Australian students attend would be of interest to the Commonwealth.

Our primary concern with this inquiry is that efforts to reduce red tape for private schools will benefit private schools at the expense of the government school sector. In many ways, the operations of private schools are already less restrictive than those of government schools. For instance, educators in New South Wales government schools have faced enormous increases in menial administrative duties due to ever growing demands from the Department of Education for more data collection and reporting. While educators in private schools have also faced increases in administrative work, private schools have more autonomy than government schools in establishing their own administrative and reporting requirements, which means private schools are freer than government schools to dedicate their resources to authentic teaching and learning. We are concerned that reducing red tape for private schools will widen this inequity.

This is also the case with capital works in schools. Government schools in New South Wales face more restrictions for capital works than private schools due to the red tape stemming from Asset Management Unit. We hear of numerous cases of unexplained delays and other road blocks, whereas the greater autonomy of private schools allows them more ability to

¹ "Parent" refers to anyone with legal care of a child, such as a parent, carer or legal guardian

develop capital works with far less bureaucratic obstacles. Highlighting this disparity is the fact that the latest figures suggest total capital expenditure in non-government schools is 59% higher than in government schools.² We also note that a recent survey of educators found 47% of government school educators believe the level of infrastructure at their school is either inadequate or non-existent, compared to 24% of private school educators.³ We are concerned that reducing red tape for only private schools will widen these gaps and give private schools an undue advantage.

We therefore urge the Committee to not countenance policies that would benefit private schools at the expense of government schools. If any proposals to reduce red tape for private education would result in less red tape for private schools than for government schools, we urge the Commonwealth Government to either reject the proposals or to take equivalent steps to reduce red tape for all schools.

² Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority (ACARA). *School income and capital expenditure for government and non-government schools (2016)*

³ ASG-ACE. *Teachers Report Card 2017. Teachers' perceptions of education and their profession.*