

Response to the release of the Department's Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2018-2022

December 18, 2018

On Monday 3 December 2018, 'International Day of People with a Disability', the Department of Education Secretary, Mark Scott emailed teachers to announce the release of the *Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2018-2022*.

The Federation was not informed about the release date of the new strategy. The Federation is extremely disappointed with some of the content of the *Diversity & Inclusion Strategy 2018-2022*. It is clear that the focus areas have changed from the 2012-2017 version with the removal of 'Young People' and the addition of 'Male Teachers'. The change in these focus areas is of serious concern and the Federation has contacted the Department requesting an urgent meeting.

In December 2017, when the previous strategy was due to expire, the Federation initiated a meeting with the Department to discuss the content for the next cycle. At this meeting the Federation was informed that the focus areas for the strategy would not change from those previously set (i.e. Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people; people with a disability; people whose first language was not English and members of racial, ethnic and ethno-religious minority groups; young people and women in senior leadership roles).

Whilst the 2018-2022 strategy lists women in 'senior leadership' as currently at 53% and sets a target of 60% by 2025 it does not define whether 'senior leadership' is at school level or above. It's important to note that according to the Department of Education Annual Report (2017) over 72% of the teaching workforce are women however only 63% of Primary School Principals and 46% of High School Principals are women.

In the new strategy focus area of 'Male Teachers' the subtitle is 'we challenge the status quo' and the phrase 'you can't be what you can't see' is written to explain the addition. The Federation considers the appropriation of the phrase to be highly insulting not only to women but to Aboriginal people, people with a disability, LGBTIQ+ colleagues and people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds (CALD) considering the origins of the term. Equally concerning is the listing in Priority 2.2 of the "development of a business case for male teacher scholarships" when the Department of Education Annual Report (2017) statistics show that within the smaller male cohort there is a higher percentage of men in promotions positions when compared to the cohort for women.

Furthermore, the brief sentence underneath the focus areas that reads "we recognise that diversity extends beyond the above areas" is inadequate and listing "age, carer responsibilities, marital status, LGBTIQ+, educational level, life experience and socio-economic background" as a dot point to 'foster an inclusive workplace culture' appears to devalue the experiences of these colleagues and ignore the continuing systemic barriers, especially in accessing leadership positions.



The Federation will continue to pursue the matter and seek the best possible teaching and learning conditions for the public education system, this includes an appropriate diversity and inclusion strategy and raising the salaries and status of the teaching profession.