

## Local Schools, Local Decisions: eight years of policy failure



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While the professional voice of teachers is often ignored under Local Schools, Local Decisions, the views of Federation members will be amplified in the union's submission to the Department's evaluation of the policy.

Local Schools, Local Decisions has proven to be an unmitigated disaster that has failed to produce any significant improvements in either student or school outcomes — surely the most important measure of any departmental policy or government reform — and heavily weighed on teacher workload.

The policy was foisted upon public schools in 2012. Originally flagged in a NSW Treasury report, *DET [Department of Education and Training] School-based employee related costs Review*, in December 2009, a far more detailed analysis was reported to the government by the Boston Consulting Group in January 2010.



This report, *Expenditure Review of the Department of Education and Training (DET)*, outlined how cost savings could be achieved and identified major areas for reform and implementation within the then-Department of Education and Training. Unsurprisingly, a reform designed to cut costs went down like a lead balloon in schools.

While attempting to mislead the education community with terms such as “local choice”, “school autonomy” and “local decision making”, Local Schools, Local Decisions has been a damaging and divisive policy that has sought to shift blame from the centre to local public schools.

Local Schools, Local Decisions has resulted in rising, excessive workloads for teachers and principals — brought on by managerial obsessions with compliance regimes and data collection without systems support — which is taking them from the core business of teaching and learning.

More than 97 per cent of 18,000-plus Federation members reported an increase in administrative duties over the past five years, *Understanding Work in Schools — The Foundation of Teaching and Learning* reported. This highlighted: “There has been significant growth in overall hours, with 87 per cent of survey respondents reporting an increase over the past five years since the implementation of devolved schooling through the Local Schools, Local Decisions policy. Classroom teachers most commonly report working upwards of 50 hours per week, which places teachers' work in the category of ‘very long’ working hours.”

The Department's evaluation seeks to conflate funds secured for schools nationally under the original Gonski agreement with the implementation of the Resource Allocation Model (RAM) and success, or lack thereof, of Local Schools, Local Decisions.

This is a dishonest premise that ignores the fact Local Schools, Local Decisions gutted central support by the Department for schools in areas such as curriculum, arts, multicultural, staffing and many others. These responsibilities were pushed onto schools in this devolved model of school autonomy.

Aside from the effect on teachers, there has been no significant improvement in either student or school outcomes since the flawed implementation of Local Schools, Local Decisions, which surely must be the most important measure of any departmental policy or government reform.

Federation notes the recent decision by the Minister to wind back Local Schools, Local Decisions and awaits further details on how this will provide support to schools.