

Hearings continue on day two of Inquiry

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Curriculum

Teachers shoulder extra responsibilities in era of cost-cutting

Teachers and principals are attending to constant curriculum change without the professional support they could once access, the “Valuing the teaching profession — an independent inquiry” heard on day two of hearings.

Appearing before the panel, Chair of the NSW Educational Standards Authority Curriculum Committee and board member Denis Fitzgerald drew attention to some of the most significant changes experienced by the profession since 2004 in the areas of curriculum, assessment and reporting.

Mr Fitzgerald said that Departmental devolution agendas had led to the removal of non-school based positions that supported teachers and principals in schools, leaving individual teachers and principals without critical and necessary support.

“Every part of the curriculum has been subject to constant change but support from the formerly responsible authorities has evaporated,” he said.

Mr Fitzgerald also drew the panel’s attention the changing scale of teachers’ work, pointing out the skill, pedagogies and professionalism required to implement the many number of syllabuses on offer in NSW public schools.

The panel also heard matters relating to the recent NAPLAN and curriculum review as well as a number of the profession’s concerns relating to the *MySchool* website.

Social matters

Put teaching and learning at the centre of policies

The afternoon hearings into the changing nature and value of teachers’ work featured evidence from Professor Emerita, University of Sydney Raewyn Connell who provided insight into the nature of teaching and the circumstances of teachers' work and lives.

Professor Connell said it was important for education that policies and procedures foster teachers’ creativity and capacity to learn about their students rather than constrain it.



"I feel quite a number of the techniques of surveillance, testing, accountability, management and so forth that we have seen develop in the last generation have actually been retrograde," she said. "They've tended to constrain rather than enable the daily creativity of the teaching workforce," she added.

Joining the inquiry via video-link, Professor Connell provided expert opinion and analysis on the constructs of work/life balance, citing it as being too often positioned as a dilemma for women. This is something Professor Connell believes the teaching profession is not immune from.

"[Schools should be] sites for gender cooperation and not gender division...there's work to be done..." she said.

The inquiry panel also heard teachers and schools can make a creative response to the issues thrown at them by social inequality, if they are provided with the resources. Professor Connell referred to the Disadvantaged Schools Program, where projects were funded to address circumstances at an individual school .

"We got some fantastic and fascinating innovation in curriculum, in teaching methods, in assessment methods and so forth," Prof Connell said.

Hearings will continue on day three.