



Praise for overhaul of schools' marking



A PHYSICS professor has approved the Newman Government's response to the state's maths and science inquiry, saying parents will finally be able to understand their children's reports.

The Government has backed the recommendations of the parliamentary Education and Innovation Committee's inquiry into the way maths, chemistry and physics are assessed in schools.

It has supported a "back to basics" approach, which will include a greater emphasis on numerical marking and a review of students' written assignments.

The LNP asked for the inquiry after complaints from parents, teachers and academics about the current system.

James Cook University's head of the physics department, Professor Peter Ridd, was delighted by the Govern-

ment's response, saying a change to the Queensland Studies Authority's (QSA) assessment system was a long time coming.

He said the current system banned the use of marks, and was unreliable, complicated, and difficult to understand.

"We've been going down this path for about 10 to 15 years where we've eliminated the use of marks," he said.

"Teachers are not allowed to use marks at all. We're just about the only state in the world that has this system.

"It's going to be a breath of fresh air, and a much smaller amount of work for teachers."

The Government has also supported a recommendation to limit the role of inquiry-based assessment in determining overall achievement in maths, chemistry and physics subjects.

Prof Ridd said for the first

time, parents would be able to understand their children's reports and how their children were assessed.

"It's the first step, but a very important step in the right direction, so I welcome it," he said.

Education Minister John-Paul Langbroek has expressed support for an external, HSC-style exam worth about half of a student's overall mark in maths, chemistry and physics.

All of the assessment is currently school-based.

He has asked the independent inquiry into the OP system to consider the move. It is due to report back by July.

Under the plan, senior heads of maths and science departments from about 400 schools will be compelled to attend workshops early next year to address "challenges and confusions" identified in the parliamentary inquiry.

The workshops are being convened by the QSA.

Prof Ridd did not expect significant changes to assessment until at least 2016, but was wary about the QSA being tasked with overseeing immediate changes to the system.

"This is like asking the communists to tell the people how to run a free enterprise system," he said.

"They're the mob responsible for it."

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PROFESSOR PETER RIDD