

10 December 2012

The Director
Queensland Studies Authority
PO Box 307
Spring Hill
QLD 4004

Dear Sir

I write to you as a retiring state panellist with over 17 years of service on the Visual Art State Review Panel. Prior to this I have also acted as District Panel Chair and as District Panellist continuously since 1989. As a Visual Art teacher and Mathematics teacher I have previously believed very strongly in the Queensland system of assessment. Unfortunately I resign very disillusioned with the system I once fervently supported.

Over the last 10 or so years I have witnessed a once rigorous system unravel to a point where I believe the QSA is delivering almost unbelievable injustices to our exiting senior students. The system has become open to manipulation by schools from the time that submissions are compiled, through to the time when SAI's are calculated.

It is my strong belief that the QSA has allowed compromises of recent times that have undermined the integrity of school based externally moderated assessment. I shall attempt to summarize these in this letter.

One of the most fundamental problems lies with the adjustment of individual student samples at verification. The inability of the QSA to insist that students placed on similar position on the R6 be adjusted accordingly makes it completely unjust for the sample student as well as making a mockery of the verification system. I understand the legal issues that the QSA may face in adjusting unseen work however when this compromise took place the system was completely undermined.

I am also very concerned with advice from QSA that has instructed panels to support the school whenever possible. Statements such as "Can you live with this school decision", "only move the sample if it is at least one third of a band out" I believe have disempowered panels and have created a culture of unhealthy compromise. The sterilization of advice on the R6 has made it very difficult for real communication between panels and schools to take place.

Recent changes to the writing of exit standards across all subjects where standards have gone from minimum to typical have also made the awarding of achievement levels even more difficult. In the situation of Maths, I have never been more confused. I feel enormous frustration when assessing student work especially when I know that very few students or parents are able to understand how their results have been formulated.

Visual Art is a subject which by its nature does often involve discussion and some disagreement when it comes to awarding standards. There has, and always will be a certain degree of static around some decisions however in recent years this has become far from acceptable. At the recent

comparability meeting I was stunned to see the absolute incomparability that existed in the awarding of the threshold VHA levels which was part of my duty on these two days. The majority of districts supplied samples that were not VHA. In fact it was the opinion of the state panel that in some cases the samples were more indicative of SA. In one case I felt the work was not even at that level. Never before have I seen district samples so inappropriately matched to the standards.

The state panel was so concerned about this trend that our Panel chair made time to discuss and list a series of actions to help rectify this problem. Unfortunately nothing can be done about the substantial injustices already being delivered to this year's cohort.

I wish to point out that no way are these comments an indictment of the work of individual panels or their chairs. I have enormous respect for these people who do at times very unrewarding and difficult work. It is my experience that each and every panellist I have worked with has completed their tasks in a very professional way and to the best of their ability in the very limited time they have available.

The most disturbing part of our assessment process comes when schools award SAI scores. In the thirst for a healthy number of OP 1s, inappropriate manipulation appears to have become a common practice. I have had countless conversations with teachers and panellists from many subjects and many schools that describe the pressure from administrations to award SAI scores that favour a number of students at the expense of others. I understand the schools are under increasing pressure to perform and I fully comprehend the reasoning behind SAI adjustments to the R6 at exit but the chance for inappropriate manipulation should never exist at any point in an assessment system .

It can be argued that many of these situations I have discussed have been in place for many years but I suggest the problems are becoming more and more prevalent to the point where I feel our system is broken. When asked by you as our director at conference this year to advocate for a QSA that is under attack from sections of the community I knew I could no longer fulfil this request or continue to work for the organisation.

I hope that at the upcoming review the leaders at the QSA can fully consider whether school based assessment can continue in the current environment. With the looming clouds of performance based pay, we require a system beyond reproach. I would welcome the chance to make my experiences heard at this review.

Yours Faithfully

Tony Druery

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