

Comprehensive State-Wide Senior Exams

Reason No. 4: They are Much Healthier than Continuous Assessment

Teachers', Parents' and Health Professionals' concerns with the **stress of QSA's continuous assessment**:

"I have experienced firsthand the stress of students in Year 11 and 12 and I can honestly attest to the fact that **the students in Queensland are far more stressed than those I taught in Victoria** and yet are still so far behind" ... #14¹

"**Assignment based assessment places constant stress** on year 12 students ... Assignments were originally introduced to take the pressure off students who perform badly under exam conditions, but they have become so wordy, open ended and arduous, that they now create more stress rather than reducing it, with less learning achieved." ... #27

"... Families are in distress and children are at their wits end – heaven help those who cannot afford tutors to help them through the maelstrom.... **Please, please can you return to an external exam...**" - General Practitioner and Parent ... #259

"By the end of term many teachers become ill because the excessive workload and lack of sleep results in them getting run down and unable to fight off infections. This also happens with students who are overworked...**Students became so tired some days they missed school because they had been up all night getting assignments done.** Some students were close to breakdown and several were on medication for stress. This is relatively common..." ... #94

"I am a clinical psychologist in private practice ... I have endeavoured to assist **the many students that continuous assessment fails.** This form of assessment, in my clinical opinion, not only fails students with chronic physical or mental health conditions, I believe it causes/exacerbates poor mental health and educational outcomes for a sector of the secondary school population. ... It is also clear how **assignments** and the sense of **constant pressure** factor in to the low mental health of a sector of our teenagers. ... #208

"As a parent: I have seen my children wade through extensive assignments... The time taken at home to complete these assignments is considerable and **the stress is constant as the stream of assignments in all subjects continues throughout the year....**" ...#107

"Students rush from one assignment to the next just trying to keep ahead of the assessment. There is no time for thinking about the work taught that day. They are just trying to survive and **many are stressed and dropping out.**" ... #171

"My final observation ... is that **humans work well under intermittent periods of stress but not under continual stress.** Yes, examinations in a short period of time result in some stress but can be accommodated by most students as they occur in a finite period and have finite times for doing the task." ... #123

see over page

¹ See http://www.platoqld.com/?page_id=1706 for the complete list of 288 submissions to this Parliamentary Inquiry, 2012. Although not included in this inquiry's terms of reference, the following submissions specifically addressed **stress on students**: 14, 25, 27, 35, 44, 55, 59, 60, 61, 62, 65, 67, 68, 72, 73, 88, 89, 94, 97, 104, 115, 118, 119, 121, 123, 140, 143, 150, 159, 160, 164, 166, 171, 179, 180, 185, 188, 196, 201, 204, 207, 208, 215, 218, 219, 222, 249, 254, 255, 259, 262, 263, 264, 268, 277, 283 and 284. For comments on the **stress on teachers**, see also: 8, 17, 20, 34, 36, 37, 44, 53, 55, 59, 60, 61, 62, 67, 72, 73, 88, 93, 94, 97, 107, 115, 118, 119, 121, 126, 137, 143, 159, 164, 166, 178, 180, 184, 185, 196, 199, 204, 207, 232, 236, 240, 245, 254, 255, 268, 277, 279, 281, 284.

"... our **prescribed internal assessment system**: ... Years 11 and 12 seem to me to be **a two-year-long assessment** because of the **never ending** tests and assignments ... I have dealt with and known of a substantial number of students who have become very stressed, stayed up late doing tasks, and had depression and other medical conditions as a result of the unreasonable demands placed on them. The expectations placed on the students is unreasonable and counterproductive. It does not have to be like this..." ... #254

"My four older children completed their senior years at a private school and were, I believe **over assessed**, particularly in years 11 and 12. Three of those children have now completed tertiary study and have often commented that Uni was easy after the huge workloads at the secondary level. Surely the workloads of senior students should not exceed the demands of tertiary education, but this seemed to be the case for all of them."

"Many of my friends have made similar comments about the **huge stress** that their children were under during the latter years of their secondary education. My best friend's daughter who attended a state high school was completely exhausted and depressed at the end of year 12, and took several years to recover...." ... #249

"Strangely, one of the main objections to external examinations is that they place unnecessary stress on students, but my view would be that **current QSA assessment strategies are much better at producing such stress within our students.**" ... #207

"I have been teaching Chemistry for many years. I feel gravely concerned about the QSA and their approach to assessment. The **workload is horrendous**. The effect of this is that my preparation and student contact time is limited, and my stress levels are dangerously high and affecting my health." ... #200

"... alarming stress levels for all students of these subjects.... Students and teachers are very hard pressed, to exhausting levels, in order to get good outcomes for all the students ...very high incidence of student and teacher illness and absenteeism. Some students suffer breakdowns of health and mental resilience. These are stressful times for students, and sadly, while they might generate a substantial printed document, the outcome of all this effort is that they too often don't learn very much real, useful knowledge..." ...#104

...I conclude that **this system should be abandoned as soon as possible in favour of valid statewide common exams that need only be at the end of year (or at the end of Year 12 in the least).**

-Registered Teacher, Registered Psychologist

... #283

"In summary, the External Senior Examinations were a valuable part of my son's education. If he only had access to assignments my son would have left school early and have never continued on to further studies. He now studies externally and is happy to undertake examinations and my son's future is looking positive because examinations cause him less stress than assignments. I know that the results my son gained through him undertaking examinations genuinely reflected his academic ability and the data was not skewed by unreliable and invalid assessment techniques." ... #140

