

**High standards in ACT school education:
A discussion paper for an ACT School Standards Authority**

Community response form

The purpose of this discussion paper is to seek your views on how standards in ACT education might be maintained and improved.

Firstly, the Government seeks responses on the concept of expanding the functions of the ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) to form a new school standards authority, with specific responsibilities across the public and non-government school sectors, from preschool to year 12.

Secondly, the Government is interested in your views about the functions such a school standards authority should manage and how the work might be undertaken.

You may download this form from <http://www.det.act.gov.au/>. Responses need to be submitted by 14 March 2008.

Please indicate your personal or professional role and the sector in which you work or have a particular interest. You may tick more than one box.

	Role	Public schools	Catholic	Independent
Teacher				
Principal				
Parent / carer				
School Board member				
Parent committee member				
Educational administrator				
Union representative	Secretary	Yes		
Member of the public				
Other stakeholder (please specify)				

The following information is **optional** for personal submissions:

Name	
Phone contact	
Postcode	

If you have completed this response on behalf of an organisation (e.g. school, committee, board, professional association), please complete the details below:

Name	Clive Haggar
Position	Secretary
Organisation	AEUACT
Contact details	62727900 chaggar@aeuact.asn.au

An ACT School Standards Authority

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements below.

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Having an ACT School Standards Authority is a good idea.			Agree	
The ACT Board of Senior Secondary Studies (BSSS) could be expanded and restructured to form such a school standards authority with responsibilities for preschool to year 12.	Strongly disagree			
<p>Comment</p> <p>The agreement for having an ACT School Standards Authority is conditional on the new authority not having the function of Teacher Registration. If it includes that function then the AEUACT strongly disagrees with this proposal.</p> <p>With regard to each of the remaining functions, it is critical that the BSSS is not simply expanded to take on the additional roles but rather that a new authority is created, which integrates the total functions appropriately.</p>				

Functions of an ACT School Standards Authority

Please indicate whether you agree or disagree with the statements below.

The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Teacher registration	Strongly disagree			
<p>Comment</p> <p>For the promotion of standard based teaching professionalism to be successful it is essential that the Teacher registration/standards process is a stand alone function.</p> <p>The unanimous decision of the Reference Group on Teacher Registration in the ACT was to establish an independent teacher registration board. At no point during the lengthy consultative process undertaken by the Reference Group was it envisaged that this function would form part of an expanded authority. Indeed for such a proposal to come forward at this late stage severely undermines the extensive work and goodwill created within the education community to this point.</p> <p>The suggestion that a single Authority to undertake all the proposed functions would be cost efficient is illusory. There is no efficiency in creating a body that does not have the full support of the profession for which it must serve. Its life would be short and its work frustratingly ineffective. Equally the expertise required to perform the work of a teacher registration board does not currently exist within the ACT education departments and would require the expenditure of additional funds to secure it.</p> <p>If the ACT government is sincere in its desire to promote teaching professionalism then it must not create a standards authority which includes a teacher registration/standards process.</p>				
The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Curriculum framework maintenance and review (P-12)			agree	
<p>Comment</p> <p>Given the movement to nationally consistent curriculum it is appropriate that this function be centralized for P-12. However, as the ACT Curriculum Framework Taskforce and Consultative Committee that led to the development of resources this is an area of responsibility that must be adequately supported if a new authority was to take over the role.</p>				
The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

National Assessment Program administration and reporting of student achievement			Agree	
Comment				
<p>Provided that the ACT's school based assessment processes are not compromised in any way and there are strict ACT regulations on the use of the data collected (i.e. the production of school league tables is prohibited), then it is appropriate for the management of the National Assessment Program to be centralised as part of the functions of a new authority.</p>				

The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Managing the Year 10 Certificate process			Agree	
Comment				
<p>As this function is currently performed by DET, it would be a matter of transferring the existing resources to the new Authority.</p>				
The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Registration of non-government schools			Agree	
Comment				
<p>Provided that the Minister continues to be the approving officer, then it is agreed that this function could be transferred to the new authority. However it is suggested that the criteria for registration be reviewed before this occurs.</p>				
The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree

Registration of students for home education			Agree	
Comment It is not accepted that the issue of “perceptions of conflict of interest” is one of any substance. However there is logic in the function being performed by the new authority				
The new school standards authority (built on the foundation of the BSSS) could manage the following functions:	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly agree
Reporting on schooling standards generally			Agree in principle	
Comment The content and role of any performance indicators for school effectiveness could be the source of considerable contention. These performance indicators would need to be negotiated and agreed by all affected stakeholders prior to implementation. The new body, if properly resourced could provide authoritative advice to stakeholders, conduct research and thus be seen as a credible voice on such issues.				

Suggestions for the operations of an ACT School Standards Authority

If you agree that the BSSS could be expanded and restructured to undertake some or all of the functions listed above, do you have suggestions for how this could work effectively?

Function	Suggestions
Teacher registration	This function should not be included in any new standards authority.
Curriculum framework maintenance and review	Additional staff will need to be provided to enable the new authority to effectively maintain and review curricula frameworks.
Managing and reporting on the National Assessment Program	Relevant parties will need to agree on regulations applying for the use of the data by the new Authority. Existing DET resources would need to be transferred across to the new Authority.
Managing the Year 10 Certificate process	Existing DET resources would need to be transferred across to the new Authority.
Registration of non-government schools	A review of existing registration criteria should be undertaken. Existing DET resources would need to be transferred across to the new Authority.
Registration of students for home education	Existing DET resources would need to be transferred across to the new Authority.
Reporting on standards of schools generally	Prior to this function being undertaken by the new Authority, all affected parties should negotiate a set of agreed performance indicators for school effectiveness and the role these indicators will play in the life of a school community. The level of additional resources needed to then perform this function will need to be identified and funded.

Your conclusions

Having considered the questions in this response form, you may wish to make a final comment on the issues raised in the discussion paper. You may also wish to raise other issues and priorities that you think should be addressed in any ongoing consultation process.

Additional comments, questions or issues

The BSSS is an under-resourced body responsible for a narrow range of functions in the senior years. It is not the body to simply be enlarged to expanded list of functions.

The AEU believes that any attempt to subsume a Teachers Registration Board and its functions into an expanded new authority would fail to win support of the profession.

A new Standards Authority incorporating the listed school and curriculum responsibilities could be supported if it was sufficiently representative and resourced.

When you have completed the form, please submit it:

By post to:

Tim Kinder
ACT School Standards Authority Proposal
ACT Department of Education and Training
GPO Box 158 CANBERRA ACT 2601

Or by email to:

schoolstandards@act.gov.au

Or by fax to:

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ACT School Standards Authority Proposal
Fax: (02) 6205 9139