

QUEENSLAND TREASURY'S COMMENTS ON DR LAMB'S REPORT ON POST-COMPULSORY SCHOOL ENROLMENTS

-----Original Message-----

From: Peter Johnson

Sent: Friday, 17 April 2009 12:08 PM

To: Dermot Doherty; Nina Savolainen; Anthony Nichols

Subject: 2010R - Schools Assessment - Post Compulsory adjustment

Dear Dermot,

Queensland is concerned with Dr. Lamb's modelling of post-compulsory school enrolments for the Schools Education assessment, and does not believe that the proposed methodology is appropriate for use in the 2010 Review as it does not reflect what States do, because:

- the methodology used by Dr Lamb models the situation that existed in 2006, rather than the post-compulsory education policies that exist now and will apply for the period 2010 to 2015; and,
- even if the current policies were modelled, the age ranges being used by Dr Lamb (15-19 years and 15-24 years for Indigenous students) are too broad.

In relation to the rationale for Dr Lamb's modelling, Commission staff advised Queensland that:

- the age range 15-19 years (and 15-24 years for Indigenous students) is being used to calculate the post-compulsory adjustment because Statistical Sub-Divisions (SSDs) are being used rather than Statistical Local Areas (SLAs); and,
- 2006 State policies on post-compulsory participation rates are being used to determine the post-compulsory adjustment because 2006 Census data is being used.

It is not clear that the choice of statistical geography should be the driver of age range used in modelling of participation rates. Queensland notes that in the 1999 and 2004 Reviews, the post-compulsory adjustment was determined using an age range of 15 to 17 years.

As the broad indicator for the schools assessment is the population aged 5 to 17 years, it is not clear that it is appropriate to make an adjustment using participation rates determined with broader age ranges. Queensland also notes that the average school leaving age in Australia is now effectively 17 years.

Queensland's comments above relate to the initial report by Dr Lamb and we understand that since the release of his report, Dr Lamb is undertaking further work to analyse post-compulsory school enrolments using individual age year ranges. Once this research is complete and provided to states, Queensland will provide any additional comments on Dr Lamb's work.

In relation to 'what states do', state education policies have changed from a 'retention' focus to an 'attainment' basis, with COAG encouraging states to adopt 'learning or earning' policies. By 2010 all states, with the exception of Victoria and the Northern Territory, will require young people to be in school, education or training, or full-time work until age 17. Effectively, the compulsory leaving age will now be 17 years, regardless of any 'legal' leaving age.

Queensland is concerned that Commission staff still need to answer the fundamental question of how this average "learning or earning" policy will affect its methodology, and in particular the validity of a post compulsory adjustment. It will be difficult to disentangle the causes of participation under the new policy, but they may not be material with only 17 year olds regarded as post compulsory students.

Queensland seeks clarification from the Commission about how it considers the 'earning or learning' policy will affect participation in education, how it will affect the schools assessment methodology, and whether a post-compulsory adjustment is required at all.

If you would like to discuss these comments, please contact Julia Johnstone or myself.

regards

Peter Johnson
Fiscal and Inter-Governmental Relations
Queensland Treasury