



MEDIA RELEASE

Upper House inquiry sends school curriculum back to basics

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

19 April 2021

The Legislative Council's Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education has today tabled its report on Professor Geoff Masters' review of the NSW school curriculum. The report provides a detailed critique of the key conclusions and recommendations of the Masters review, and makes 33 of its own recommendations to the NSW Government to improve learning outcomes in the state's schools through best practice teaching and evidence-based syllabus reform.

The Committee Chair, the Hon Mark Latham MLC stated, 'This Portfolio Committee No. 3 - Education report is the second instalment of the committee's work in trying to reverse the slide in NSW school and student outcomes. Our first report (on school performance, measurement and outcome-based budgeting) has been influential in improving government policy. It made the crucial point that everything about schools and classroom practice has been studied and measured across the world, many times. We know what works in schools and what doesn't work, especially from Professor John Hattie's thorough systemisation of the international data.'

Mr Latham continued, 'The task of lifting school performance is quite straightforward: follow the evidence base; eliminate fads and experimental practices; do the things that are known to work. In recent decades, the NSW education system has deviated from the evidence base, triggering an alarming decline in student academic outcomes.'

'Similarly, the school curriculum has suffered. New South Wales used to have one of the best English syllabuses in the world. Today it's a Petri dish for the mindless fads of identity politics, gender studies and post-modernism. Political content has also colonised other subjects, from history to PDHPE. Too many teachers have become quasi-politicians, pushing an ideological worldview instead of developing in their students a world of knowledge.'

'The NSW curriculum needs to return to an evidence base of core content, basic skills development and the use of learning materials proven for the way in which they lift student results. None of this is difficult, but during 30 years of failure, the NSW education system has piled political and other superfluous content into classrooms, overloading teachers and students with a spaghetti bowl of unusable syllabuses', Mr Latham observed.

The committee's report recommends a series of solutions. 'In many respects, this committee has done the detailed work the Masters review failed to do, with a deep dive into the NSW syllabuses and their shortcomings. We trust that the Premier, Minister and the NSW Education Standards Authority will find our work valuable, filling the gaps in curriculum reform', Mr Latham said.

He added, 'I am proud to chair Portfolio Committee No. 3 – Education, the most thoughtful and successful in the NSW Parliament. I thank the committee members and each of the educationalists who made submissions and appeared at the public hearings.'

"The committee is dedicated to returning the NSW schools system to best practice, leading the world instead of lagging behind. We will monitor the implementation of this report and its predecessor during the course of 2022, and will continue to work hard and constructively for the very best educational opportunities for young people in New South Wales."

Information about the inquiry is available on the committee's [website](#).

-ENDS-

For further information please contact Committee Chair, the Hon Mark Latham MLC, on 9230 3682.

