

DEPA NSW Response to the PTC
Re: NSW Legislative Council Inquiry

David Browne
Chief Executive Officer
Professional Teachers' Council (PTC) NSW.

Dear David,

I am writing to you on behalf of the Dance Educators Professional Association (DEPA NSW) in regards to the PTC's call for responses to the *Inquiry into the review of the New South Wales School Curriculum being conducted by the NSW Legislative Council Portfolio Committee No. 3 - 'Education inquire into and report on the contents of and proposed changes to the NSW school curriculum'*.

While DEPA submitted a detailed response to the *NSW Curriculum Review* (a summary of which is attached for your reference and/or inclusion) it is not in a position to able to address the full scope of the *Inquiry* being undertaken by the *NSW Legislative Council Education Committee*. DEPA believes that the timing of the *Legislative Council Inquiry* is perhaps problematic in that Professional Organisations such as DEPA are still unpacking and evaluating Professor Masters' *Final Report* into his *Review of the NSW Curriculum*.

While Professor Masters makes particular reference to the wide consultation process that was undertaken following his *Interim Report*, what we do not see is where that consultation process has led to any changes in his recommendations. This raises the concern that Professor Masters had largely decided the outcomes before the consultation process had been undertaken.

Other matters of concern to DEPA that may contribute to the PTC's response to the *Legislative Council's Inquiry* are that:

- following Professor Masters' *Review of the NSW Curriculum* and the release of his *Final Report* there remains uncertainty as to the future of particular subjects and subject content. Clarity is essential here given the potential impact on students, teachers and schools;
- there remains an emphasis on reducing the time consuming pressure and onerous responsibility on teachers related to compliance which would release more time to facilitate an increased focus on teaching;
- attempting to merge 'vocational' and 'academic' subjects leads to philosophically and educationally inconsistent KLA's such as 'Visual and Performing Arts and Entertainment';
- statements that support the retention of 'mandated subjects' in the performing arts (Music and Visual Arts) leads to concerns for the place of Dance and Drama (which are not mandated);
- the role of Statutory Authorities (such as NESAs) should be investigated in regards to the requirements of compliance and the 'skewing' of HSC Examinations towards incongruous 'dot points' rather than the holistic study of subject content;
- there is an ongoing focus on STEM subjects (as opposed to STEAM) despite this focus failing to show any improvement in student outcomes, and it being a factor in student disengagement (seen in students' subject selection choices);
- while the *Review of the NSW Curriculum* advocates for an increased focus on 'Skills' as a component of knowledge, it fails to acknowledge subjects such as those in the Visual and Performing Arts KLA which already have a strong knowledge and skill base and therefore should be strongly supported;

- the ongoing integration of the *Australian Curriculum in the Arts F-10* remains problematic especially in regards to the study of Dance as a subject in NSW. DEPA NSW strongly contends that the current *Dance Strand* of the *Australian Curriculum* does not represent best practice philosophically or educationally. There are reports that components of the Australian Curriculum will undergo a review and it is to be hoped that the Arts is one such area. Should this not be the case DEPA urges that only those areas where the *Dance Strand* of the *National Curriculum* shows consistency with the NSW curriculum be incorporated. The Dance Syllabuses K-12 currently implemented in NSW remain best practice and should not be diluted for political expediency over educational outcomes.

Dr John Mullins

Vice President, Dance Educators Professional Association (NSW)