

December 7 2020

The Hon. Sarah Mitchell MLC
Minister for Education and Early Childhood Learning

Dear Minister

The purpose of this letter is to express my concern about changes to the process/policy relating to the Accreditation of Courses for NSW teachers. In the first instance I was very surprised that the Professional Teachers Council of New South Wales (PTC NSW) was not listed as an authorised provider. It would appear to me that it would have been the most logical thing to do in the sense that PTC NSW has been acting on behalf of professional teaching associations in submitting courses to NESAs for accreditation.

Advantages of having PTC NSW as an authorised provider.

1. Streamlines the process

The Professional Association for Learning Support Inc (PALS) has been working through the Professional Learning Committee of the PTC NSW to apply for accreditation for our courses. This is a process that has worked very well. We submit the application and the professional learning committee decides if it meets the criteria of the standards. All the data entry etc is done by the PTC NSW. With the new changes we will have to apply to NESAs but in terms of submitting our data we will still have to work through the PTC NSW to submit the data to NESAs for teacher accreditation. The committee is made up of a team of very experienced teachers but we are unpaid volunteers. We still need the PTC NSW to enter the data.

2. Less cost to NESAs

Another concern is that NESAs will have to employ extra people to examine each submission. This is an extra cost to NESAs. At the moment this role is carried out by PTC NSW through the professional learning committee and the costs met by the Associations.

3 Experience and expertise of Member Associations.

The membership of many of the teaching associations especially the committees are often retired teachers and university lecturers. They are people who have devoted their life to being proactive with respect to providing the most relevant, research-based professional development for their members. This is another reason PTC NSW should be an authorised providerthey have access to many experienced and highly qualified teachers. The feedback that we received in our evaluations is related to the fact that we are teachers who know the role, who know what the membership needs. We respond to their needs and provide practical PD that leads to more effective teaching strategies. We are not a system developing PD that is possibly not relevant to the needs of the teachers in a specific role especially those relating to disability.

4 Work across all Sectors

Professional Associations offer a service that is open to all sectors. That has been one of the significant advantages of having an association that represents the teachers working in a specific area or subject area. These cross-section professional development activities bring together teachers from different systems who share with each other and bring new insights. The PTC NSW facilitates this interaction.

Disadvantages of not having PTC NSW as an authorised provider.

1. It devalues the role of the PTC NSW that has been a leader in providing PD in all priority areas. The structures that have been established will be dismantled e.g. the professional learning committee
2. The extra cost particularly with respect to time that it will mean for member associations.
3. The added cost to NESAs in having to employ staff that will be needed to do the assess the applications.....a role up till now has been efficiently carried out by the PTC NSW professional learning committee.

As a person who has devoted a quarter of a century to providing professional development particularly through the Professional Association of Learning Support (Inc) I have witnessed many changes to the process of running courses etc. The PTC NSW has been there to assist in all matters relating to the conduct of an Association with respect to a range of areas e.g. technology, governance, legislation and in particular the accreditation process. Any change in policy that undermines their role will be to the disadvantage of all member associations. Obviously this would lead to an undermining of the professional learning of NSW teachers not a strengthening as the changes in policy hope to achieve.

In conclusion I would encourage the addition of the PTC NSW to the list of authorised providers. I would even go so far to suggest that there be only two authorised providers....NESAs and PTC NSW.

Professional Association of Learning Support Inc (PALS)

