

Public Statement regarding NESA Endorsed Professional Learning

The Science Teachers Association NSW express our concern regarding the recent outcomes of the review of NESA endorsed professional learning and have requested further clarification from the Minister of Education, the NESA Board and the CEO of NESA regarding the review and final outcomes, along with a request for consideration for a reversal of the decision to deregister us as an accredited provider.

The Science Teachers Association NSW (STA NSW) recognise that high quality professional learning is essential for the professional development of teachers and necessary for improving outcomes for students. We understand the intent of the recent review of professional development undertaken by NESA and recognise the essential value in the delivery of 'best practice' professional learning designed to improve teacher practices and deliver better outcomes for students. However, we are concerned that the decision to de-register our authority to assess and accredit courses will have a negative impact on the professional development of science teachers across the state.

The Science Teachers Association of NSW (STA NSW) represents 2374 members who are science teachers K-12 across all education sectors, pre-service science teachers and education academics. The Association is governed by a Council and is supported by an Executive Officer and three administrative staff. The first goal in our strategic plan and our primary purpose of business is to support excellence in science education through the delivery of high-quality professional learning, we do this for the benefit of our members and the broader science teaching community, with each Professional Learning (PL) activity being carefully planned and accredited with NESA using the Professional Teaching Standards. This year, despite the challenges posed by COVID we delivered 106 accredited sessions with 2852 registrations.

Earlier this year, with intent of ensuring that our Professional Learning Program is 'best practice' we undertook a review of the evidence-base underpinning best practice professional learning that drives positive teacher and student outcomes. This work has informed a Logic Model for delivery of our professional learning program for 2021. This process identifies the long, medium and short-term desired outcomes for professional learning and identified the required outputs, activities and inputs that would enable effective delivery of the outcomes. We have worked to ensure the delivery of our professional learning is aligned to the syllabus and the needs of teachers across the year and is evaluated and monitored based on expected outcomes with a commitment to continuous improvement.

Given the level of professionalism and rigor in the delivery of professional learning that we adhere to, the news of cancelling our authority to accredit courses and conferences has come as a shock to our not-for-profit organisation. We are disappointed that there has been no consultation with us regarding the process by which we develop, deliver and assess the quality of our professional learning as either part of the review nor prior to the announcement of this decision.

There appears to be several consequences that are of concern to the Science Teachers Association NSW that will impact NSW science teachers' access to high quality professional learning, notably:

- Increased turnaround time for individual courses to be accredited will
 - Reduce the number of registrations to our professional learning activities, as teachers are likely to only engage in external professional learning if it is accredited. This will therefore impact our ability to support teachers across the education sectors at a price point that ensures accessibility and will reduce the quantity of availability of NESA accredited courses.
 - Reduce our ability to be responsive to the needs of teachers, as was possible this year when COVID struck and we were able to develop and deliver an Online Teaching Series to support teachers to teach online.
- Reducing the capacity of our Association will have a negative impact on teachers being able to access cross-sectoral learning. Cross sectoral learning is an enormous advantage to the teaching

profession as it allows the sharing of ideas and a break-down of the “silos” that potentially could exist between teachers who are working in each of the school sectors. It provides a fertile environment for innovation.

- Reducing teachers access to learn from external organisations such as Universities, Australian Academy of Science, CSIRO, research groups and industry which might not be able to be accessed through individual schools. The importance of linking teachers and therefore students to post-school options and real-world scientific practice cannot be underestimated.
- An additional administrative burden for acquiring accreditation for individual courses may be difficult to sustain by the Association and may require a significant restructure of both our business model and fee structure that currently is based on ensuring equity and accessibility to science teachers across the state.
- Science teachers across NSW rely on us for ongoing support, resources and communities of practice beyond our professional learning events. Increased barriers to access accreditation for our professional learning events are likely to reduce our income and therefore our ability to support science teachers in this capacity.

We recognise that the detail of the policy is not yet complete and time is required for NESA to develop the benchmarks to support the accreditation assessment processes and the criteria by which accreditation will be assessed. We have significant questions regarding how NESA is intending to manage this increased workload of assessing and accrediting individual courses, which alone from Teacher Associations would be significant.

We have offered the Minister of Education, the NESA Board and the CEO of NESA the opportunity to see some of our experiences this year that have delivered high quality professional learning to teachers and have requested to discuss the implications of the NESA *Accreditation of Professional Development Courses Policy* and how we can address or mitigate the negative impact on Teacher Associations and our ability to support teachers.

We will keep you informed as these discussions progress.

Should you have any questions or wish to discuss further please do not hesitate to contact Jane Powles our Executive Officer via eo@stansw.asn.au