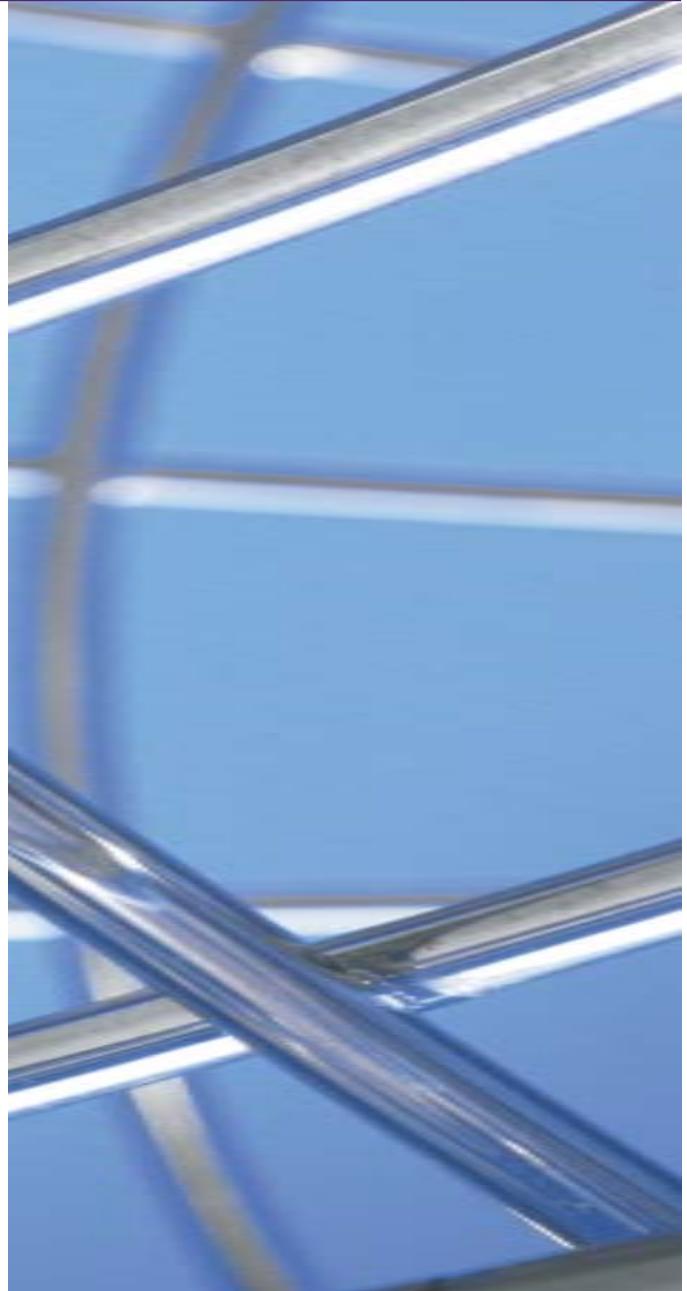


The Report of the Assessment and Reporting Taskforce



Foreword

I am pleased to release the *Report of the Assessment and Reporting Taskforce*, which was presented to me by the Chair of the Taskforce in November 2001. The *Years 1–10 Curriculum Framework for Education Queensland Schools* (June 2001) announced the creation of a taskforce, with expert and stakeholder representation, to produce a robust assessment and reporting framework that would build on the curriculum framework, respond to the emerging national agenda, and be agreeable to stakeholders. This is the report of that taskforce.

While acknowledging that there is a well-established assessment culture in Years 11 and 12, the report concludes that no such culture is evident in Years 1–10. The *Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study* reached a similar conclusion and recommended that Education Queensland encourage the development of teachers' 'assessment literacy', particularly in relation to the middle years of schooling. I can assure you that I am firmly committed to growing an assessment culture in our schools. To that end, I am pleased to announce the formulation of a staged implementation plan.

What many educators might have expected from the taskforce was a report card formula (this is about *reporting*) and a commitment to the provision of state-of-the-art computer software (this is about *recording*). However, it transpired that what really needs attention is how teachers attend to *assessment*; that is, designing criteria sheets, matching student work to statements of standards, and combining results from different assessments for reporting purposes.

The report provides timely advice to schools during this time of curriculum reform, which includes initiatives such as the implementation of outcomes-based syllabuses for the Key Learning Areas, the trial of the New Basics Framework, and the development of School Curriculum Plans. Education Queensland has taken into account the strategies presented in the report by establishing strong links to learning and development programs already in place, especially Productive Pedagogies, thus ensuring that schools are supported in integrating their approach to curriculum, pedagogy and assessment.

I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate and thank publicly all members of the expert and respondent panels for sharing the vision and maintaining the focus and dedication required to produce this vital component of Education Queensland's curriculum renewal processes.

Although this report presents considerable challenges to us, I am confident and encouraged by the excellent work that I have already observed in our schools.



Jim Varghese
Director-General of Education

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Preamble

The Assessment and Reporting Taskforce was established to:

- develop a conceptual framework for assessment and reporting in the Queensland context for Years 1–10;
- consider the tools for schools and central office directorates necessary to translate the framework into practice;
- advise on appropriate professional development for teachers and administrators relating to assessment and reporting.

The taskforce was constituted by an expert panel that prepared this report through several stages of consultation with a respondent panel from 1 to 5 October 2001.

The taskforce recognised that the Queensland education community has produced a vast array of resources to inform curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting. The taskforce affirmed the view that curriculum, pedagogy and assessment are closely interrelated and interdependent.

The taskforce focused its energies on the relationship between assessment practices, the recording of assessment, and reporting to different audiences. The view taken was that any or all assessment practices could inform the assessment result to be reported. That is, reported assessments could be aggregations, selections or summaries from the wide range of assessments that teachers use.

The Assessment and Reporting Framework described here is intended to be comprehensive, embracing the two key curriculum initiatives in place in Education Queensland schools: the Queensland School Curriculum Council Key Learning Area syllabuses and the New Basics Framework. Both curricula anticipated that judgments about learning would be referenced against agreed denotations of standards — that is, Core Learning Outcomes (CLOs) in the case of the Key Learning Area (KLA) syllabuses, and desirable features in Rich Task performance in the case of the New Basics.

The taskforce encountered considerable uncertainty about Education Queensland policy and practice with respect to curriculum, assessment and reporting. The uncertainty appeared due to several factors:

1. uncertainty among senior staff about what the policies were;

2. poor communication of policies that were adopted;
3. conflict among policies, structures and usage of terms.

These uncertainties hindered the work of the taskforce and will continue to hinder the work of teachers. There is a need for much better collaboration and coordination between Education Queensland and the respective authorities in order that Education Queensland policy development and implementation can unambiguously support the work of schools.

The taskforce affirmed the importance of professional judgment in assessment and reporting and made properly researched professional development for teachers a key strategy in improving practice. Further, it believed that a continuing dialogue between teachers was necessary to ensure consistency of standards, the improvement of assessment, and the improvement of pedagogy and curriculum.

The expert panel compiled this report in sections:

- Principles
- Assessment
- Recording and reporting
- Strategies

The Principles provide the basis for the Assessment and Reporting Framework. Some of the key concepts for the Assessment and Reporting Framework are developed in the next sections. These sections do not attempt to revisit the literatures of assessment and reporting, or existing Queensland documents, but to outline fundamental concepts to move practice forward in the Education Queensland system and schools. In particular, these sections build upon the *Years 1–10 Curriculum Framework for Education Queensland Schools: Policy and Guidelines*.

The Strategies constitute the elements of an action plan to:

1. implement the Assessment and Reporting Framework;
2. create the opportunity for professionals and the community to learn from the experience;
3. support the development of enhanced assessment, reporting, pedagogy and curriculum.

Principles

The Assessment and Reporting Framework for Years 1–10 within the Queensland context must:

1. recognise curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as interrelated and interdependent;
2. recognise planning for curriculum, pedagogy and assessment as a collegial and corporate activity at school and system level;
3. recognise assessment as an ongoing and integral part of the teaching and learning process;
4. assert that assessment is a key element of professional practice;
5. recognise that informed teacher judgment is at the heart of assessment;
6. attend to learning outcomes that are agreed to be common across schools and students as well as those that are agreed to by schools in association with their communities;
7. support assessment and reporting practices that are responsive to difference;
8. recognise that assessment provides evidence to inform decisions at both school and system level;
9. support standards-referenced judgments about student learning outcomes;
10. ensure that reported judgments of student achievement are defensible and comparable, based on sound evidence and a shared understanding of standards;
11. enable readily interpretable reports to parents/carers about individual student learning outcomes;
12. enable readily interpretable reports to the community about the learning outcomes of groups of students;
13. support thoughtful and informed initiatives, and not hinder innovation; be practicable and sustainable.

Assessment

Assessment is a key aspect of the teaching and learning process. Assessment builds from the curriculum: assessment tasks come from, or are embedded in, curriculum tasks.

The taskforce recognised that good, high-quality assessment involves:

- a range of task formats;
- a range of response modes (providing opportunities for learners to show what they know, understand and can do in different ways — an equity issue);
- clear criteria for assessment which are shared with the learner;
- constructive (and realistic) feedback to the learner.

Not all assessment is for reporting, or even recording. Where assessment is for reporting, however, there needs to be both a sound evidential base and comparability of judgment (across teachers and schools) to ensure confidence in the judgment.

The process of assessment has five elements:

1. the assessment task (derived from the curriculum);
2. student performance (which is not always written);
3. a judgment of the performance with reference to a standard;
4. feedback to the learner and the teacher/curriculum;
5. moderation.

The relative emphases of elements 4 and 5 depend on whether the assessment is primarily *assessment for learning* or *assessment for reporting*. Assessment for learning can build to (or sum up to) assessment for reporting and, in that case, it is the reported assessment which needs to be moderated.

The CLOs are a device for structuring the syllabus, for planning teaching and for planning assessment. They are not in

themselves assessment criteria and may need to be further unpacked to enable consistent judgments to be made.

With the exception of the New Basics trial schools, the indicators of standards are the CLOs. For the New Basics schools, the indicators are expressed as desirable features.

In developing teachers' assessment literacy, attention needs to be paid to all elements of the process of assessment outlined above. It may be that, for some teachers and schools, the design of assessment tasks needs more attention while, for others, an emphasis on moderation as a professional development device may be more appropriate. It is recognised that upper secondary schoolteachers in Queensland do have significant expertise in moderation processes. Moderation is to be encouraged as a professional development activity, as conversations about judgments also lead to conversations about teaching and learning, and curriculum.

Moderation of judgments requires:

- assessment criteria;
- samples of work;
- groups of teachers (however small).

Where schools are very small and/or isolated, Education Queensland is urged to develop and support electronic clusters in addition to physical meetings.

There is considerable expertise in Queensland on assessment and there is good material in the Queensland School Curriculum Council (QSCC) guidelines and support documentation. What is needed now is a strategic plan to harness this expertise and share it with teachers in a systematic way. Designing and overseeing the rollout of this plan should be the responsibility of one key individual in Education Queensland reporting to the Deputy Director-General of Education (Curriculum).

Recording and reporting

Good assessment has to occur before good reporting can take place. The student record sits between assessment and reporting.

The record consists of detailed information relating to student attributes and learning outcomes. Some elements of this record need to be common across all schools to ensure consistency and comparability. The common elements are the CLOs.¹ Additional elements will include information on the other planned learning outcomes of the school curriculum plan. Where appropriate, information should be included on the progress of language proficiency of students who speak English as a second language, and the progress of students with special needs, including gifted and talented students.

In addition to teachers and learners themselves, there are three main groups who use information about student learning outcomes: parents/carers, the school and wider community, and the system. For the information to be useful across these end-users, it needs to be consistent and comparable.

Reporting to parents/carers draws on the individual student records, supplemented by other evidence such as that recorded by the teacher and/or contained in a student portfolio. Reporting to the school community draws on data relating to the school as a whole.

At the system level, Education Queensland would need to be able to access the denotations of standards (usually the CLOs).

In reporting to parents:

- schools negotiate with their own communities regarding content and format of the formal semester report to develop a report that is clear and concise;
- there are likely to be other forms of teacher–parent/carer interaction about student progress;
- reports are based on the student progress record compiled over time by the teacher and supported by more detailed evidence.

¹ Schools in the New Basics Trial are not required to record CLOs nor report against CLOs. The common elements are the denotations of standards associated with the Rich Tasks.

1. Coherence of policy making

For the enactment and implementation of a coherent curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and reporting policy across Years 1–12 in Education Queensland schools the following elements are needed:

- one statutory body that is responsible for the development of curriculum and for broad policy for assessment and reporting (we understand that such a body is in the process of development);
- clarification of the relationship between any new statutory authority and Education Queensland;
- one area within Education Queensland that takes responsibility for the implementation of curriculum and assessment and reporting practice, as well as pedagogy;
- clarification of the roles, responsibilities and communication links for all parties and better communication within Education Queensland, between elements of the new statutory authority and Education Queensland, and between Education Queensland and existing authorities until they are replaced;
- a spirit of collaboration among policy-making groups: the current inconsistency in policy is confusing for external and internal audiences alike; it is inefficient and runs the danger of hindering strategic development.

These are necessary conditions for the exercise of the strategic leadership which will be crucial to achieve the goals of Queensland State Education — 2010.

The nettle of strategic leadership needs to be grasped if Education Queensland is to move forward: the taskforce sensed the feelings of frustration from teachers, school principals, curriculum developers and Education Queensland officials at the current situation.

2. Synthesis and dissemination of a coherent strategic plan

The existing policies, guidelines and curriculum frameworks are sound and worthy. There exists within the State of Queensland significant, world-class expertise on curriculum and assessment. What is needed now is *not* the development of new documents and policies, or external help, but a synthesis of the existing documents (guided by the taskforce framework) into a coherent strategic plan. This plan, together with existing and planned priorities, needs to be disseminated to the education community; principals are key actors here. Schools need to be encouraged and supported to continue with (or start) their curriculum plans and not to wait.

The development of a dissemination policy needs to go hand in hand with the development of a staged implementation plan.

3. Staged implementation plan

For the Assessment and Reporting Framework to be robust, it is necessary to develop and publish an implementation plan. For the framework to become strongly embedded in the system by 2010, the implementation must occur in stages. A staged implementation would emphasise the growing of an assessment culture rather than the grafting of assessment on

to an educational community that, according to a recent longitudinal study, is ‘assessment illiterate’. There is no expectation that a consolidated framework exist in the immediate future but rather that school communities and the system engage in consolidation as appropriate capacity levels are developed. The hard-edged accountabilities will first attain significance in 2003 when student outcomes in Science and Health and Physical Education are to be recorded.

The implementation plan should include a clear statement of accountabilities and responsibilities, with special reference to senior staff of Education Queensland, district directors, education advisors, schools, principals, teachers, and the new statutory authority. It should complement the Learning and Development Plan for Productive Pedagogies (Deputy Director General’s memorandum, 21 November 2001), not replicate strategies already developed, and it should draw on developmental work from the New Basics Project insofar as it relates to assessment and reporting.

Ideally, the implementation plan should be communicated to the total workforce in such a way that its intent and scope are clearly understood.

4. Accelerated KLA syllabus rollout

Speeding up the rate at which the KLA syllabuses are developed and implemented is a necessary precursor to the effective and efficient implementation of the Assessment and Reporting Framework.

Implementation of the KLA syllabuses developed by the QSCC is mandatory for state schools. Education Queensland’s implementation schedule for the eight QSCC syllabuses states that English and Mathematics will not be finalised by QSCC until January 2003 and then implemented in Education Queensland schools over three years (which means by the end of 2006). It should be noted that these are the last syllabuses to be rolled out. By this time, New Basics schools in Phase I of the trial will already have reported to parents and the system on student performance on Rich Tasks in a common reporting format, results having been through a moderation process.

It is acknowledged that drafts of syllabuses are posted on Education Queensland’s website. Nevertheless, to overlay the penultimate versions of syllabuses with an assessment and reporting framework could lead to charges that assessment is driving curriculum.

It is not the role of this taskforce to enter into debate about resourcing QSCC or about industrial relations with the Queensland Teachers’ Union. The taskforce, nevertheless, considers that lengthy cycles for syllabus development and implementation cannot be justified. In particular, the existing cycle has the potential to paralyse the system as schools observe the emerging assessment and reporting practices of New Basics schools and as practices in other schools overtake the enactment of syllabuses.

5. Professional development

A systematic and ongoing program of learning and development for teachers and school leaders is necessary to

support other components of this framework. It is the responsibility of Education Queensland to develop such a plan. This program must be integrated with the strategy for overall curriculum renewal. It should also facilitate the development and growth of teacher professional learning communities.

The program should be directed at ensuring that teachers and school leaders have clear understandings of:

- existing policies, principles, frameworks and guidelines concerning curriculum, pedagogy, assessment, recording and reporting;
- the terminology and concepts associated with these policies, principles, frameworks and guidelines;
- assumptions underlying these policies, principles, frameworks and guidelines;
- implications of these policies, principles, frameworks and guidelines for professional practice;
- the fundamentals of assessment theory and practice.

Urgent action is needed on initiation of this aspect of the program to ensure that the school community is fully informed about current policies and principles. For the future, the program should be directed at making sure that there is regular updating. The program also needs to encompass the informing of parents/carers and other members of the community as well as teachers and administrators and should also take into consideration the special needs of beginning, returning and arriving teachers.

The program should also give teachers and school leaders ongoing access to:

- useful plans, materials and innovative practice;
- any assessment, recording and reporting materials produced by Education Queensland;
- relevant curriculum and assessment materials produced by QSCC;
- supplementary sources of relevant ideas and models;
- networks of teachers, teacher groups and schools;
- examples of student work and accompanying teacher judgments;
- exemplars of standards and opportunities to discuss these.

The program should be based on the principle of continuous improvement in professional practice through informed participation and sharing.

The program should involve a variety of mechanisms and media. These may include but are not restricted to:

- holding seminars, workshops and conferences on assessment, recording and reporting;
- building on and extending existing structures for development and dissemination of exemplary ideas, materials and practices. These structures include staff colleges, associated networks, pilot schools and centres of excellence (that is, Learning and Development Centres for Literacy; Maths, Science and Technology; and Gifted and Talented);
- utilising the curriculum framework website for providing access to ideas, plans, materials and examples of assessment and reporting, connecting schools to other helpful websites and enabling sharing among teachers and schools.

6. Quality assessment practices

The Assessment and Reporting Framework affirmed the importance of quality assessment. To take this beyond a statement of principle, assessment should be integrated into professional, collegial and corporate planning with the following roles and responsibilities.

Teachers:

- include plans for assessment in their plans for learning experiences.

Principals:

- allocate resources to school-wide planning for assessment;
- allocate resources to review, school-wide, the outputs and outcomes of the school's assessment practices;
- facilitate groups of schools to collaborate in the development of shared understandings of standards and exemplary assessment and reporting practices.

Education Queensland:

- develops processes for supporting, encouraging, and recognising exemplary assessment practices and reporting practices developed by teachers and schools;
- develops models for school and system management structures that recognise the importance of leadership in assessment and reporting as a key element of curriculum, assessment and pedagogy;
- gives priority to learning and development programs for teachers targeted at the development of skills in assessment;
- endorses the use of the current draft QSCC syllabuses as providing interim CLOs in the KLAs for which syllabuses are not finalised.

7. Consistency and comparability of teacher judgments

The taskforce recognised that there was uncertainty about the ways in which, for example, student work could be assessed against the CLOs. While it is easy to say that student work is assessed using the CLOs, it is not obvious *how* this should be done or that there is a common view about how this should be done. Education Queensland should establish an expert working party to develop a program for exploring the ways in which teachers make judgments with the denotations of standards in order to formulate policy about how these judgments ought to be made.

The framework recognises the central place of informed teacher judgments in assessment. Making informed judgments requires skill and knowledge. Without knowledge of the standards used by others, teacher judgments will not be consistent and comparable. Education Queensland should put into place processes to develop consistency and comparability of teacher judgments:

- across clusters of schools at local and district level;
- in terms of the CLOs (or other standards denotations) recorded by teachers;
- using the evidence of student work;
- through teacher discussions focused on the exemplification of standards in student work;

- by supporting with information technology, where appropriate, the exchange of student work and teacher discussions;
 - by having such teacher discussions within each school at least twice a year across groups of teachers within the school;
- by establishing, by 2006, annual discussions between local groups of schools.

8. Promulgating standards

The Assessment and Reporting Framework is comprehensive in providing for diversity and flexibility — for example, KLAs and their CLOs, and New Basics Rich Tasks with their desirable features. Understanding the relationships between the different sets of standards is part of making reports about student attainment interpretable across Queensland. Education Queensland should develop processes for comparative mapping of the sets of standards developed in practice within groups of schools, that is, across districts with schools using the same standards denotations (for example, KLA CLOs) and across groups of schools using different standards denotations (for example, KLAs and New Basics).

Developing and applying standards in a professional context helps to make teacher judgments consistent and comparable. These standards and their application to students' work represent a significant part of education's aspirations and its performance — what it hopes students will achieve and what they do achieve. To build community confidence in these aspirations and performances:

- schools should share examples of their judgments of standards with parents and community;

- Education Queensland should seek feedback from the broader community about the standards attained by Queensland students.

9. Reporting

The Assessment and Reporting Framework requires that parents and the community receive readily interpretable reports about student outcomes. Some schools have, with careful consideration of parents' views, developed excellent reporting practices. Consultative development and evaluation of reporting practices should be widespread and exemplary practices should be encouraged, supported and disseminated, with the following roles and responsibilities.

Schools:

- develop, in consultation with their particular parent community, the content and format of the reports they provide;
- obtain systematic feedback from parents about the interpretability, clarity and usefulness of the reports they provide on individual student attainment;
- obtain systematic feedback from the community about the interpretability, clarity and usefulness of the reports it provides about the attainment of groups of students.

Education Queensland:

- consults the broader community about the interpretability, clarity and usefulness of the reports it provides about the attainments of students in Queensland schools;
- develops processes for supporting, encouraging and recognising exemplary processes used by schools for obtaining systematic feedback from parents and the community about reports.

Appendix

Membership of the Assessment and Reporting Taskforce (as at 24 September 2001)

The Assessment and Reporting Taskforce was constituted in September 2001. The taskforce comprised two groups: an expert panel and a respondent panel. Expert consultants to the taskforce were Professor Robin McTaggart, Pro-Vice-Chancellor Staff Development and Student Affairs of James Cook University in Townsville, and Professor Caroline Gipps, Deputy Vice-Chancellor of Kingston University in the United Kingdom.

Key stakeholder groups, both within and external to Education Queensland, were invited to nominate persons to make up the membership of the expert panel and the respondent panel.

Expert panel

Nominee of stakeholders	
Mr Paul Albert	Chief Executive Officer, Curriculum Council of Western Australia
Dr Reg Allen	Deputy Director (Testing and Analyses), Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies
Dr Gabrielle Matters	Director, New Basics Branch, Education Queensland
Dr Graham Maxwell	Senior Lecturer, School of Education, University of Queensland
Professor Marilyn McMeniman	Professor, School of Cognition, Language and Special Education, Griffith University
Professor Sue Willis	Dean, Faculty of Education, Monash University

Respondent panel

Nominee of stakeholders	Position/Organisation
Paul Bannister	Teacher, Atherton State High School
Michael Brett	Principal, Goodna Special School
Gerry Buwalda	Principal, Geebung Special School
Michael Byrne	Principal Advisor, Performance Measurement and Review Branch, Education Queensland
Tracey Chappell	Principal, Aitkenvale Special School (Association of Special Education Administrators in Queensland)
Garry Cislowski	President, Queensland Council of Parents and Citizens' Associations
Jo Diessel	Director, Teaching and Learning Branch, Education Queensland
Lynne Foley	District Director, Rockhampton, Education Queensland
Jeanette Gentle	Project Officer, Statutory Authority Project, Education Queensland
Donna George	District Director, Stafford, Education Queensland
Kevan Goodworth	A/Assistant Director-General (Education Services), Education Queensland
Jo McCulloch	Teacher, Berserker Street State School
Julie-Ann McCullough	President, Queensland Teachers' Union
John O'Brien	Assistant Director (Moderation), Queensland Board of Senior Secondary School Studies
Dr Bernadette O'Rourke	Principal, Corinda State High School (President, Queensland Secondary Principals' Association)
Vicki Raynor	Principal, Capricornia School of Distance Education (Australian Association of Distance Education Schools)
Lyn Ruttley	Principal, Albany Creek State High School
Joy Schloss	Project Officer, Education Inclusion Programs, Education Queensland
Andrew Seaton	Education Advisor, Logan-Beaudesert District, Education Queensland
Robin St John	Principal, Inglewood State School (Queensland State P-10/12 Administrators' Association)
Jim Tunstall	Director, Queensland School Curriculum Council
Denise Turnbull	Project Officer, Education Inclusion Programs, Education Queensland
John Wessel	Principal, Fitzgerald State School (Queensland Association of State School Principals)

Special advisors

Professor Roger Slee	Deputy Director-General (Curriculum), Education Queensland
Mr Peter Luxton	Principal Executive Officer, Curriculum Implementation, Education Queensland
Dr Janet Reynolds	Senior Education Officer (Technology), Teaching and Learning Branch, Education Queensland

Secretariat support

Sonya Booth	Executive Support Officer, Teaching and Learning Branch, Education Queensland
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