

Tuesday, 20 April 2010

## Teachers and principals to continue campaign against My School

The Queensland Teachers' Union has vowed to continue to campaign against the Federal Government's damaging My School website.

The Queensland Industrial Relations Commission today issued a direction that the QTU lift its moratorium on delivering this year's NAPLAN tests. The QTU has yet to consider the statement issued and its response.

QTU President Steve Ryan said the QTU's Executive, in consultation with members, would consider a wide range of campaign activities over the next week, including targeting Queensland Federal MPs' offices in public protests and setting up a prototype alternative website to give parents real and valuable information about schools.

Mr Ryan said the QTU's 44,000 teacher and principal members had voted overwhelmingly earlier this year to place a moratorium on implementing the 2010 NAPLAN tests until Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard introduced measures to protect students and schools against the misuse of NAPLAN data on the My School website.

"More than 95 per cent of ballots returned supported the necessary changes to the My School website, and 85 per cent supported non-cooperation with NAPLAN testing due on 11, 12 and 13 May," Mr Ryan said.

"Ms Gillard is the one with the power and responsibility to resolve this issue, but she has demonstrated nothing so far except an extreme degree of stubbornness and an unwillingness to listen to teachers' and principals' professional concerns.

"QTU members did not vote to ban NAPLAN per se, but were motivated to take a strong stand against how the test results were being inappropriately used on My School to rate schools' overall "performance".

"For a number of years, the QTU and other Australian teacher unions have warned the current and previous federal governments that overseas experience shows 'high-stakes' testing – where the entire reputation of a school rests on tests of a limited cohort of students that assess a limited part of their learning at a single point in time – destroys the richness of school communities and severely restricts the educational experience."

Mr Ryan said My School gave undue prominence to NAPLAN data, while ignoring other key information that parents need, such as extra-curricular activities, Year 12 outcomes and parental involvement in the school.

“All of this information and more has been available on school websites for years, yet most of it has been omitted from My School – the problem with My School is that it reduces the people who make up school communities to a set of numbers, presumably for the convenience of data entry,” Mr Ryan said.

“The website is also plagued with inaccuracies and nonsensical comparisons of allegedly “like schools”, based on broad demographic data in a so-called “Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage”.

“Some of the demographic characteristics used to give communities a socio-economic label is, quite frankly, repugnant. For example, My School seems to assume one-parent families are somehow ‘worth less’ than two-parent families, as are households without broadband internet access – this is irrelevant in many parts of Queensland, including outer city suburbs, where broadband is simply not available.”

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