



NSW INSTITUTE OF SENIOR EDUCATIONAL ADMINISTRATORS

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AT LAST THE JULY 2006 ANSWERS!

Members will recall that on the 26 July 2006 representatives of the ISEA met with the Director-General and other senior DET staff to discuss matters of mutual interest and of concern to the ISEA.

At the conclusion of the meeting the ISEA left the DET with a series of questions or requests for information which the D-G said would be responded to without undue delay. After waiting for the best part of 4 months, during which time virtually no answers were received, the ISEA wrote to the D-G again posing the original questions and requests.

On the 16 January 2007, almost 6 months after the questions and requests were tabled, the ISEA received a response addressing each of the items.

Below are the questions or requests for information posed by the ISEA, followed by the responses provided by the DET and finally the ISEA's comments on the DET's responses.

Apart from noting the protracted delay in responding to the ISEA's questions and requests, members may care to reflect on the adequacy of the DET's answers and the attitudes conveyed.

No 1 ISEA Question/Request for Information

The ISEA would welcome the D-G's views as to how the ISEA might best support and promote the policies and achievements of the DET.

DET's Response

As a registered industrial organisation, I appreciate the Institute will act constructively in the interests of its members. I anticipate the Department will work cooperatively to enhance the standing of public education in NSW, although I recognise that at times there will be differences of opinion on particular issues.

The Department encourages the Institute to continue to use its publications and seminars to support the Department's policies and strategies to continuously improve the NSW public education system.

ISEA's Comments

This question was a genuine attempt by the ISEA to offer assistance to the DET in its huge task of conducting, promoting and defending public schooling in this State.

The response does not recognise the extensive professional expertise that the ISEA offers for the good of public education.

No 2 ISEA Question/Request for Information

To further this discussion, the ISEA would welcome:

- (a) a copy of the most recent organisational chart/s from the Department of senior staff in the state office at the level of Chief Education Officer/SNO 1 and above, and*
- (b) figures on the proportion of the staff occupying these positions who have teaching qualifications and experience.*
- (c) The ISEA also seeks a commitment from the DET that the ISEA will be consulted prior to the advertisement of CEO positions where extensive school experience and post-graduate studies in education are deemed to be not necessary.*

DET's Response

The Department does not maintain a centralised record of the information you have requested.

The Department does not propose to consult with the Institute prior to the advertisement of CEO positions that do not require extensive school experience or post-graduate studies in education. The criteria for appointment will continue to reflect the skills and attributes necessary to successfully meet the requirements of the position.

ISEA's Comments

- (a) It is astonishing that the DET is unable or unwilling to provide a chart of the organisation and its senior staff. This should certainly be public information.
- (b) It does not surprise the ISEA that the DET does not have much idea of the numbers or proportion of senior staff with teaching experience and qualifications. The DET's answer to question 3 below confirms the ISEA's view that such criteria are of diminishing importance and this is in a Department whose prime business is teaching and learning.
- (c) The ISEA request is based on a commitment given by a previous DET administration that the ISEA would be consulted before CEO positions were advertised without the requirement of extensive school experience and post-graduate studies in education.

Without consulting the ISEA the DET has advertised several positions in recent years where extensive teaching experience and post-graduate studies in an appropriate education field were clearly needed, but none asked for.

This is not to say that all CEO positions require such criteria but schools, students, teachers, parents and the DET itself, will not be properly supported if under-qualified staff are appointed to specialist positions which require a school education background.

No 3 ISEA Question/Request for Information

(a) *To further this discussion, the ISEA would welcome:*

- All CEO positions established or disestablished since 1 Jan 2004
- All SNO positions established or disestablished since 1 Jan 2004
- All CEO positions vacant as of today's date
- All established CEO positions as of today's date.

(b) *The ISEA seeks a full disclosure by the DET of its intentions in regard the unfilled CEO positions and to the future of the CEO classification as a whole.*

DET's Response

Additional information as requested is attached.

Attachment A* shows the number of CEO positions created and deleted between 1 January 2004 and 31 August 2006. As advised by the General Manager, Human Resources in her email to you dated 19 October 2006, the number of CEO positions decreased by 26.

Over the same period, there was an increase of 82 Senior Officer positions. It should be noted that over 50% of these positions were established as a result of the changes in classification of School Education Director positions from SES to senior officer. Attachment B* lists the senior officer positions that were created.

The Institute has suggested that the Department may have a “private plan” to replace the CEO classification with senior officers. The department has no such plan. The Department reviews the classification of positions periodically. This most often, but not necessarily, occurs when a position becomes vacant. If the position is a non-school based position, the classification of the position will be considered in accordance with the Procedures for Non School Based Teaching Service Positions. The provisions of Clause 1.2 of the Procedures are applicable. As a consequence of this process, a number of positions previously classified as CEO have been redesignated as senior officer positions.

ISEA's Comments

The increase by 82 in Senior Officer (Public Service) positions while CEO positions have decreased by 26 confirms the ISEA belief that the DET is intent on diminishing the influence that experienced, well qualified educators have on the policies, procedures and programs of the system. This devaluing of educational expertise will be to the detriment of a quality public education system and support provided to schools.

Even the 50% of the “new” Senior Officers, who are School Education Directors, were not required to have had “extensive school experience nor post-graduate qualifications in education” although most would. There remains another 40 or so senior positions where at best tertiary qualifications and a knowledge of education issues may be required.

The Senior Officer positions draw a salary equal to or better than that paid to high school principals and that may be deservedly so given the complex, demanding and specialised nature of many of the positions. Nonetheless it should be recalled that the DET opposed the retention of the nexus between CEO and high school principals salaries at a time when it was busy creating 82 positions with salaries surpassing those charged with running large secondary schools.

*The Attachments referred to by the DET are available to ISEA members upon request to the Executive Officer.

No 4 ISEA Question/Request for Information

The ISEA seeks the opportunity to peruse all advertisements for CEO positions before they are placed in publications

DET's Response

The Department does not agree with the Institute's proposal. All staffing areas with responsibility for approving CEO position advertisements have been reminded of the relevant provisions of the Procedures for Non School Based Teaching Service positions. It remains open to the Institute to raise any questions about particular advertisements with the Department.

.ISEA's Comments

The ISEA sought to peruse the advertisements for CEO positions because of the very evident inconsistent application of "permanent" or "temporary" status to these positions by the DET. In the last 18 months the ISEA has drawn the DET's notice to advertisements for 7 positions where the negotiated criteria for the determination of status has been overlooked or misunderstood. In some cases the advertisements have been withdrawn and revised correctly. In others the ISEA was informed that although an error had been detected it was too late to take any action and the correction would be made, "in 3 years time." In a number of instances this has been severely detrimental to the career path progress of well qualified and dedicated teachers who have occupied these positions.

This demonstrates how important it is that the ISEA sees advertisements for CEO positions before they are published.

The ISEA is not seeking the right to veto the determination of the status for CEO positions, just to ensure the process is carried out in a more consistent and fair manner.

No 5 ISEA Question/Request for Information

- (a) The ISEA again seeks a commitment to the professional development of CEOs and asks that a clear and specific indication be given of how that commitment will be honoured.*
- (b) The ISEA seeks the views of the D-G on the opportunities for senior staff to take part in international study tours.*
- (d) The ISEA seeks an undertaking that the applications for support from officers taking part in the 2006 ISEA Study Tour will be considered on their merits.*

DET's Response

Chief Education Officers have access to a range of professional development opportunities. These are detailed on the DET website at www.det.edu.au/proflearn. The Director of Professional Learning has confirmed that a CEO induction program will be run on an annual basis when a sufficient cohort is available. Of course induction also occurs at the workplace.

I understand that the Institute conducts regular study tours. From information provided by you, I understand that the participants find the tours valuable. As previously discussed, any application for overseas travel needs to be considered in accordance with the Department's Travel on Official Business Policy.

ISEA's Comments

Professional learning

Not all DET senior officers surveyed by the ISEA believe they have access to an appropriate range of professional development opportunities and certainly few opportunities where officers can exercise their own choice of attending an activity of particular value to their own professional development that would otherwise not be available to attend.

The induction program situation for CEOs is far from adequate. In the 4 years since it was agreed that there would be a comprehensive induction program for CEOs there has only been one single day offered with no follow-up since. Over the period there have been many CEOs (including several long-term acting or relieving CEOs) who have endeavoured to come to terms with their new, complicated and often politically sensitive roles without adequate briefing and support from the DET.

There is no doubt that as the DET says, induction also occurs at the workplace, but that does not relieve the State Office of the DET of the responsibility for providing planned and systematic support over the crucial first year or more of an appointment, regardless of the numbers, and then on-going support throughout an appointment..

Over seas Travel

The DET is in danger of isolating itself from the knowledge, innovation and influence to be gained by well planned and focused overseas experiences.

The ISEA would be delighted if applications for overseas travel were considered in accordance with the Department's *Travel on Official Business Policy*. That is what we have been expecting.

The experience to date has been that most senior officers seeking support from the DET to proceed on either of the ISEA Study-Tours (UK and Germany 2005 and USA and Canada 2007) have had either no response or a cursory denial on the basis that the "activity was not on the Region's list". Others have received "transfer of duties" and some have received modest financial support. The inconsistencies in the application of the Department's policy in this regard are bewildering.

No 6 ISEA Question/Request for Information

The ISEA seeks a firm commitment from the DET that a policy for the Career progression of CEOs will be developed in consultation with the ISEA and that immediate opportunities will be identified for CEO career progression

DET's Response

Chief Education Officers have the opportunity to discuss their career goals and career development needs as part of the Performance Management Scheme for CEOs. This is clearly set out as one of the objectives of the scheme.

It is appropriate that this existing scheme continue to be the mechanism through which CEOs can discuss their career aspirations and plans with their supervisor and, in consultation with their supervisor, develop strategies that will achieve their career goals.

As you are aware, the CEO classification covers a range of positions requiring a variety of skills and attributes. There are no guaranteed career progression positions for any classification. Progression is based on the filling of vacant positions through a merit selection process.

ISEA's Comments

The ISEA would welcome the full implementation of the DET's Performance Management Scheme as it was negotiated between the ISEA and the DET and signed off in an Award.

In fact the scheme has been implemented very inconsistently across the DET and the ISEA has had to intervene on behalf of some CEOs to ensure that the scheme was applied at all. This was necessary to ensure these CEOs had proper feedback and support, especially when they were in temporary positions and would eventually have to face reselection but also to ensure they had the necessary evidence to secure the salary increments due to them.

When Performance Management is properly operated it can provide a means of determining and perhaps realising career aspirations but of course the ISEA realises that career progression cannot nor should it be guaranteed. Nonetheless the DET, in previous negotiations agreed that career development opportunities for CEOs would be identified, eg. to act in more senior positions as they arose.

There is little evidence of this being done, especially in the regions where it seems the direction is for principals, regardless of experience and qualifications to be preferred for acting/relieving SED positions over CEOs.

The ISEA does not seek guaranteed career progression for any senior staff. It does expect the DET to provide opportunities and support to develop the potential of its senior staff.

MEMBERS VIEWS ON THE ABOVE DISCUSSION, AND THE MATTERS REFERRED TO, WOULD BE WELCOME. RESPONSES SHOULD BE SENT TO THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER ON ron.ikin@bigpond.com

THE ISEA IS KEEN TO MAINTAIN A CONSTRUCTIVE AND INFORMED DIALOGUE WITH THE DET OVER MATTERS OF MUTUAL INTEREST AND CONCERN.