

From: Masden Media
To: Committee, Education & Health Standing
Subject: Independent Schools - Mosman Park 2016
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Members of the Education and Health Standing
Committee
March 4 2016

Schools Inquiry

Independent

Plea for clear, simple language

For 18 months I was a community representative (by invitation) on the school board of Mosman Park Priamry School. I attended every meeting and eventually resigned. Frustrated. I explained in my resignation that I felt I was sitting surrounded by people speaking a foreign language. I struggled, and often failed, to understand what they were talking about. That is why I am sending this submission. A plea for simple clear language. The test for any word used in a school should be: "Will most of the parents and students understand this word?" I realise this will be difficult, but I urge you, as Members of Parliament elected by the public, to push very hard for clear speaking and writing. Please turn away from long-winded, technical jargon. Keep it simple. You want as many people as possible to get the message, surely!

The advertisement in The West Australian inviting submissions lists the fourth point to be examined as:

"The impact on the engagement and performance of students, in particualr those with additional needs."

Surely that should be the very first goal ... and it should be set out in simple words, for

example.

"The effect (not impact) on students particularly children with special needs." Surely everything that happens in a school is aimed at children, ultimately.

They do not live in a world where they hear and understand words like "impact".

Another point in your advertisement says, "**The process and extent to which the Department of Education incorporates review outcomes in its management of the independent Public Schools and ensures that Independent School act on review outcomes.**"

I translate that into clear English as: "How the Education Department responds to a review and ensures a school changes, if needed."

Please take this seriously. There is absolutely no point in pumping out statements, brochures, emails or any other messages in the waffle, jargon that is choking the Education Department and schools. Many parents do not have strong English; many do not speak English at all and others have it as a second or third language. Some have little or no education.

Mosman Park had children from 50 nations a couple of years ago. They should understand every note their child brings home.

As background: I am a journalist of 51 years; have won many prizes for my work. Therefore I appear to be fairly good at English speaking and writing.

I love Mosman Park Primary School. I went there with my brothers in the 1940s; my sons Sam and Ned went there and my wife Lindy Brophy wrote the school history for its centenary.

I am available and eager to discuss this further. And recommend a splendid book, "Plain English for Lawyers" by Professor Richard C. Wydick Carolina Academic Press, Durham North Carolina.

Thanks George Williams