



Dear Colleague,

Because of the urgency and the importance of this information faxstream is being used to get it to you even though the Council Newsletter will arrive in the next week or so.

Discussions with the A.D.G. representatives of the Department about the future role and structure of the Secondary Principals' Council and the Primary Principals' Association have, as I have indicated to you before, been difficult. The Director-General has intervened and set out clearly his (and the Department's) position. This was given to us at a 2½ hour meeting on Thursday 1st May.

Present at the meeting were Ken Boston, Terry Burke, Jan McClelland, John Sutton, Steve Buckley (all D.S.E.), Tom Croker and Brian Powyer (Primary Principals) and Jim Harkin and Larissa Treskin (Secondary Principals).

The Director-Generals position is set out below

The crux of the issue is what you want to be. There are only two options.

Option 1: Councils as independent, autonomous professional associations

This is a logical, rational and acceptable option, although not in my view the preferred one. It would give the councils the same level of recognition as the P & C Federation and the NSWTF. Principals would wear two hats, one as an officer of the department and the other as a member of a principals' council. The limited financial support and accountability provisions would satisfy the relevant legislative and audit requirements I am obliged to observe as Director-General.

- Role and structure determined by member principals alone
- All business transacted outside school hours
- Meetings of principals during school hours are meetings of principals as departmental officers, not as members of principals' councils
- No access to school funds to support or participate in council activities
- A grant-in-aid, as an external body.

Option 2: Councils as an arm of the department

The councils would determine their own affairs, but within a framework (as below) negotiated with and approved by the Director-General. On the basis of that approval, authorisation would be given for the expenditure of school funds on principals' council activities, up to a given amount. Additional funding would be provided to support councils at a state level, subject to a resource agreement to provide a range of statewide services. These would include participation in induction and in other types of training and development, and collegial support.

The approval processes and the accountability mechanism arising from a resource agreement would be expressed in broad terms, but they would both need to be sufficiently specific to satisfy the legislative and audit requirements attaching to the expenditure of a substantially larger sum than a grant-in-aid to an external body.

- Role and structure to be approved by Director-General
- Business to be transacted partly within school hours, within limits approved by Director-General.
- Meetings of principals during school hours to be two kinds: meetings of principals as departmental officers, and meetings as members of principals councils, as approved by Director-General
- Annual resource agreement on services to be provided by principals' councils on a cost-recovery basis, within the framework of strategic priorities for principals determined by the Director-General following advice from councils.

I far prefer Option 2, and my understanding is that you do also. If so, let's proceed as quickly as possible to finalise the detail.

Matters for decision

It needs to be understood by all principals that my responsibilities as the employer require me to be accountable for the activities of principals while they are on duty, and for the expenditure of all public funds.

I am obliged to decide which broad categories of activities, including participation in the affairs of principals' councils, are approved activities during school time (which is of course important in providing protection for the principals themselves); I am also directly accountable (as with any other category of expenditure) for the expenditure of any public funds from school or central accounts which are used to support the operation of principals' councils.

These responsibilities simply cannot be set aside or diminished.

If Option 2 is to be adopted, I am therefore obliged to approve the following:

1. The role statement for principals' councils, which is already close to completion.
2. The structure of principals' councils, and in particular the role, operation and cost of the proposed area councils and reference groups. In approving any proposal on this matter, I would be looking for one which supports the operation of districts and the State Office and is efficient and cost-effective.
3. A formal statement on the range of principals' councils activities which would take place during school hours, and indicatively the time to be spent on them each term.
4. A formal statement on the level of funding to be drawn by members from school accounts.

5. A proposal on the strategic priorities for principals in the context of *Agenda 96* and the emerging priorities for 1997-98; a draft resource agreement to be prepared in consultation with the Training and Development Directorate; and a proposal and costing for the services to be contracted to principals councils.

I do not believe these are difficult matters, nor ones which need take up much further time. It is in all our interests to resolve them quickly and unambiguously.

Ken Boston
DIRECTOR-GENERAL OF SCHOOL EDUCATION
30 April 1996

Comments

- (1) This position needs to be calmly and rationally assessed and discussed. This is not the time for a quick, impulsive reaction.
- (2) Option 1. With a 'grant-in-aid' of about \$20,000 would enable the Council to operate like a subject association or the A.C.E.A. There would be no use of school funds or school time. For city principals meetings could be still held but in the country it would be difficult to raise a quorum on a weekday. Training and Development could still occur in school time with the Department and the Council working together. There would be no support for the presidency or executive or travel or grants for Training and Development.
- (3) Option 2 would establish a framework much like a fence around a paddock. Once the framework is in place the Council would be free to operate within it. Despite the firm language used there is room to negotiate the five dot points in Option 2. We can move to position or reposition the fence but the fence is still a fence.

This is not what we are used to, especially in recent years. Our Council has had a great deal of freedom not only with time and the use of school funds but also with our involvement in other associations like A.S.P.A., I.C.P. and A.P.A.P.D.C. We have also had a very free hand in professional development. In departmental eyes our meetings and activities need to be brought more within a set framework. There is no proposal to stop these activities or involvements.

- (4) During the meeting it became clear that the only structure acceptable to the Department was a district based model. Area or regional Councils as outlined in our Bulletin 2 1996 would not be an acceptable structure. The departmental view is that such structures reinforce and retain abolished regional structures now irrelevant and unacceptable to the Department. As administration units such Councils will not relate to any Departmental organisation. For Secondary (but not for Primary) it would be possible for a few districts with very small numbers of secondary schools to establish two-district councils but no more. There would be between 30 and 40 such Councils.

- (5) The trade off is much greater influence and access in state office. Representatives of the 30 to 40 Councils would be funded to come to Sydney once a term for Council Meetings and meetings with Senior Officers of the Department. This larger group of representatives, plus the elected executive of the Council would be the basis of what is now the Management Committee.
- (6) Within Option 2 the Director-General has become more accepting of our reference group.
- (7) Option 2 could only be finally accepted by Principals following further work on the dot points and numbered points in the Director-General's proposal. At this stage what is needed is a preliminary decision to either choose option 1 or explore further Option 2. This would be a focus at the Management Committee meeting on May 24th. Please contact your regional (area) representative so your views can be expressed at this meeting. I think it is fair to say that Annual Conference 1996 at Tweed Heads will see some binding decisions. Be sure to register!
- (8) There may be more than two options. It is not possible for anyone to rule out Option 3 or 4 or 5. No one can even assert that there will be one Council.
- (9) This paper has brought two things into focus. One is the restructuring of the Department and the consequent restructuring of our Council. Does it really matter much if we are pushed out of regions (areas) into districts with a result and increase in state level representation? The other issue is the extent to which the Council primarily serves the interests of the members (and therefore the interests of the members employer). Can the Council be as effective if it is more closely tied to the objectives of the employer and less concerned with those interests of members which lie outside the employers domain? It is your decision. Please keep in touch with your regional delegate or your elected executive.

My new phone number in Bridge Street is (02) 561 8893

Jim Harkin
President
03/05/96