



Australian Education Union

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The Editor
The Australian Newspaper
GPO Box 4245
Sydney NSW 2001

Dear Editor

The AEU wrote a detailed and lengthy submission to the Senate Inquiry into Academic Standards in Schools.

Our submission says: "The AEU has long been cautious about the use of basic skills tests and other standardised tests as a means of measuring the well being of Australian schools".

It then went on to give some reasons for this caution and quoted a list from Gerald Bracey, an American academic and commentator, of twenty four desirable educational qualities which are not measured by basic skills tests. These included creativity, civic mindedness, curiosity and resilience. It also included a sense of wonder, which to teachers, translates as firing the imagination and developing a love of learning.

At no point in the submission does the AEU say that we should not have tests.

One of the key points made in the submission was that strategies for improvement must be based on accurately analyzing the available evidence. Your editorial implies that standards are falling or are worse than in other countries and takes the AEU to task for not agreeing. Our position is supported by evidence. This is not to argue that we cannot continue to improve, but rather to acknowledge that we must do so from a sound base rather than from an exaggerated notion of 'crisis'.

The real problem in Australian education is a funding policy which reinforces inequity by not directing sufficient resources to where they are most needed.

Our submission also laments the poor standard of educational debate in this country, noting the greatest responsibility for this must lie with the Federal Government and its use of "tactics designed to intimidate and silence those who do not agree with them rather than welcoming a range of viewpoints and an intelligent debate".

We should now add to that, deliberate misrepresentation.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pat Byrne". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Pat Byrne
Federal President