



# newsletter

NSW Teachers Federation

May 2008

Federation established a Distance Education Restricted Committee at the beginning of 2007. All positions on the committee were filled late last year and the committee meet twice in 2007. At our first meeting for 2008, the committee decided that it was important to work to develop a communication strategy with teachers in schools and TAFE working in this particular area of DET, hence this newsletter.

The committee hopes to produce one newsletter a term to inform members about matters of particular interest about this area of work.

## Enrolling students with disabilities

If there is an attempt to enrol a student with a current disability confirmation sheet in a distance education setting they must attract equivalent funding and support as a similar student does in a mainstream setting. Otherwise, the Department risks not meeting its legal obligations for “reasonable adjustment” under anti-discrimination legislation.

Enrolment can proceed in a distance education setting once the required funding and support is in place.

If there is pressure placed on the school to proceed with enrolment without funding and support in place, the Federation Representative should contact their local Organizer or Federation on (02) 9217 2100 or 1300 654 369.

## DE teachers not fully allocated in DE

Integrated Distance Education Centres are staffed according to a formula developed by the Department to meet the needs of both modes of delivery: “Where FF or DE school responsibilities are allocated to staff, the undertaking of these responsibilities must not be at the expense of either timetabled FF or DE periods.” (Refer to DET Staffing Principles — Distance Education)

In this type of setting, mixed mode teachers who are under-loaded in DE can only be used to support DE delivery in their DE periods. Work that can be allocated

includes Professional Development in on-line delivery and course development, assisting colleagues with backlog of marking within their subject area, packing for new enrolments, resource management and related duties.

## Home visits/field visits/mini schools

When teaching is being delivered off site, Federation provides the following advice:

- Teachers must comply with OH&S requirements and Departmental policy. that is, a risk assessment must be carried out prior to any off site visit or activity. We suggest members seek advice from appropriate DET officers (for example, a Home School Liaison Officer (HSLO) in developing your risk assessment pro forma and procedure for a home visit.

- The DET currently train HSLOs prior to any home visit. Federation advice is that DE teachers also be provided with this training as per Award Clause 27 Duties as Directed:

“27.2 The Director General may direct an employee to carry out such duties and use such tools, materials and equipment as may be required, provided that the employee has been properly trained in the use of such tools, materials and equipment.”

- For off site visits teachers must be aware of child protection implications, especially in regards to a home visit. Teachers must not unreasonably expose themselves to a potential allegation by entering a student’s home alone. Federation advises that home visits are conducted by at least two staff members. In these circumstances teachers must not be alone with the student and staff must be in clear sight of one another.

- The Federation advises for primary DE teachers that one day’s casual relief is provided per student off-site visit and activity so that you are replaced at your base school. In secondary settings, Federation advises that relief or time in-lieu of is provided for any DE teaching time lost due to off-site visits and activities.

- Specific advice for mini schools is that supervision of extra-curricular activities is voluntary. Any backlog of DE work generated due to participation in a mini school should be addressed (for example, is it expected that there will be a reduced return of work from students?)

- OTEN is a provider of distance education and consequently differs to a large degree from most TAFE college operations. For all teachers who work for OTEN TAFE (be they outreach teachers or tutors employed by disability teacher consultants) it is a requirement that an OH&S inspection has been completed by an authorised person prior to any off-site visit occurring. Most centres used for teaching purpose have their own OH&S procedures in place. If there are no procedures in place, teachers should request that the centre organises an inspection before any on off-site visits occurs.

- Teachers and tutors working for OTEN TAFE are officially dissuaded from practising at the private residences of students. Rather, the preferred option involves the arrangement of a mutually acceptable location such as a public library or accommodation at a TAFE college nearby.

In the event of that being unsuitable owing for example, to a students lack of mobility, a risk assessment is instituted, often with the tutor and contracting teacher consultant as the main assessor.

Only then would such lessons proceed and then only with commensurate monitoring. Teachers in this area tend to rely on the internet and phone systems for a great deal of tutorial business but in some cases personal contact is required and implemented.

- In regards to field visits and OTEN TAFE teachers, there appear to be inconsistencies about undertaking independent risk assessments before teachers go into these centres. Teachers should not to undertake such teaching until a proper risk assessment has been undertaken for the particular centre.