



New South Wales Teachers Federation
a branch of the Australian Education Union
AEU NSW Teachers Federation Branch ABN 86 600 150 697



Locked Bag N° 3010, Darlinghurst NSW 1300 • 02 9217 2100 • www.nswtf.org.au
NSW PRESIDENT: Maurie Mulheron • NSW GENERAL SECRETARY: John Dixon

NSW TEACHERS FEDERATION MEDIA RELEASE

NEW REPORT SOUNDS WARNING ON CREEPING COMMERCIALISATION IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

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Commercialisation is creeping into our public school system. A new report, Commercialisation in Public Schooling, reveals teachers are concerned about the influence commercialisation is having in schools, on everything from the provision of tests like NAPLAN, through to private providers offering classes in PE, Music and Drama and even teacher professional development courses.

The report reveals schools are now forced to buy in a substantial volume of educational products and services that were once provided by education departments.

These include:

- Lesson plans;
- Reading programs;
- Curriculum content;
- Assessment services;
- Remedial instruction;
- Online learning programs;
- Student data packages;
- NAPLAN and exam preparation materials;
- Professional development for staff, and;
- School administration support.

And with public education and school budgets constantly under pressure, some schools are looking to cost-shift fees for these commercial services to parents wherever they can.

Globally, the provision of education services is a massive business, worth an estimated \$4.3 trillion annually. One of the largest global private educational providers, Pearson, already has a firm foothold in our public education system, with Australian schools contributing to its mega-profits. It is one of a number of multi-national corporations engaged in the creation, marketing and sale of education goods and services to schools by “for profit” providers.



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Pearson is one of the companies behind NAPLAN, the National Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy under contract to the Australian Curriculum Reporting Agency (ACARA). The company claims it has software that can replace all the teachers who currently mark students' NAPLAN extended written answers.

The Commercialisation in Public Schooling Report was commissioned by the NSW Teachers Federation and conducted by Professor Bob Lingard of the University of Queensland's School of Education and a team which included Dr Sam Sellar (Manchester Metropolitan University), Dr Anna Hogan (U Qld) and Assoc Prof Greg Thompson (U Qld).

NSW Teachers Federation President Maurie Mulheron said the report sounded a warning for parents, teachers, governments and education administrators.

"Parents and teachers should be concerned at the shadowy practices of these powerful corporations. They see schooling purely in terms of a potential market so they work to influence government education policies in order to create and then control that market," Mr Mulheron said.

"At the same time as governments hand over to these corporations massive amounts of private data about students, the companies hide their influence under 'commercial-in-confidence' restrictions," he said.

"It is time that all commercial contracts that are signed between governments and these corporations are released for public scrutiny. Parents, teachers and the community have a right to know who is influencing education policy, what impact this is having on how students are taught and how much public money these companies are receiving," he said.

"But we also need to rebuild the capacity of education departments which are at least accountable to government and, therefore, ultimately to the community."

Professor Bob Lingard's report finds that public education is being progressively opened up to private sector participation as part of changes in the governance of education, the "financialisation" of the education sector and the down-sizing of education bureaucracy.

"The danger is that this could lead to commercial interests framing education policy, deciding on the purposes of schooling and how it is delivered and experienced by students," Professor Lingard said.

"These are matters that should not be dictated by commercial interests but instead should be determined by democratically elected governments, the community and the teaching profession."

The Report warns: "Private corporations have also sought an enhanced role in all stages of the policy cycle in education (from agenda setting, research for policy, policy text production, policy implementation and evaluation, provision of related professional



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development and resources) in what has been referred to as the 'privatisation of the education policy community.'

The study conducted a national survey of public school teachers which showed almost 60% were concerned about increasing commercialisation of education services. They wanted better quality control and tighter regulation of commercial products and services available to schools.

The survey revealed private providers use sophisticated marketing campaigns and lobbying strategies to ensure their products and services were taken up by schools and governments.

Teachers reported that commercial provision of products and services was "system wide," with the relentless marketing by education providers no matter whether schools were in metropolitan, rural or remote areas, primary or secondary.

Teachers expressed concerns about the potential for big business to dictate education policies, about the lack of support they received from education departments and about individual public schools being run as businesses.

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