

Dear Mr Werner

In this submission I represent the John Calvin Schools that are operated by the Free Reformed School Association (Inc) of Western Australia. They are:

Bunbury John Calvin School
Byford John Calvin School
John Calvin Christian College
Kelmscott John Calvin School
Rockingham John Calvin School

Of these schools 4 are primary schools, the ones at Bunbury, Byford, Kelmscott and Rockingham, the John Calvin Christian College being a secondary (7-12) College.

The Office of Reformed Education, of which I am principal, provides support services to all these schools and also the Albany John Calvin School.

We would like to submit on two items that cause some hardship to us, partly because of the specific requirement for teachers in our schools to be members of the Free Reformed Churches of Australia. We draw our teachers from a limited pool of people, we are very active in promoting teaching as a career and look to be stepping this up; we are very supportive of teacher registration and we comply with the regulations that are in place, at some cost. In this respect, our submission seeks the mitigation of the current regulations to enable us to better address the needs within our schools as we see them.

1.

This relates to the minimum number of hours that teachers need to do to keep up their registration. In our situation female teachers generally take time out when they start a family, they do not want to maintain a regular teaching commitment but they are happy to be available for relief teaching. Maintaining the minimum hours required to keep up their registration is quite difficult and, as a result, they are inclined to drop their registration, and we then can't continue to use them for relief purposes. We accept that a minimum number of hours needs to be maintained but would be happy to see that minimum number halved in order to be able to retain the services of teachers who only want to be available for relief teaching purposes. We courteously suggest that perhaps a relief teaching category could be added to the current categories of registration, where a teacher can only be used for relief teaching and not for other regular class teaching, where the minimum requirement is less than it is for other categories. If a teacher wants to become eligible for a different category after having been on the relief category for some time, procedures could be in place to make that transition, as they are now.

2.

This relates to the teaching of languages in particular but it could be extended to other specialist areas. Especially now that the schools are mandated to teach languages from the Years 3 – 8, we find it hard to procure the services of teachers who can teach languages. We would like to see a registration category that allows people with a high level of specialist knowledge to teach even if they do not have a formal teaching qualification. We would envisage that such a category would have restrictions in that the person would only be allowed to teach in that recognised area of expertise, under supervision, and only if the school cannot obtain the services of a fully registered teacher in that area. There would need to be processes in place for the school to demonstrate how these conditions are being met. We envisage that after a time (10 years), this category may not be needed anymore, but whilst there is a genuine shortage of teachers in specified areas, we would like to see this provision in place. We feel that we know people who could qualify to teach who have a high level of subject expertise, who we could, with proper guidance, use quite effectively.

We commend these items to your attention and trust you will give them favourable consideration, given the specific requirements for teachers in our schools.

If required I would be happy to elaborate further on the specifics of this submission; please contact me if you think that would be useful.

Yours faithfully

Alwyn Terpstra
Principal