Background

I have taught for nearly twenty years in public schools in Victoria. For many of those years I have been involved in the area of gifted education; in post graduate study, as past president and a member of the Victorian Association for Gifted and Talented Children and as a teacher of the gifted.

In reading through some of the submissions there has been a wealth of valuable information provided to the inquiry so I will not repeat that. My comments are in reference to DEECD schools only and will focus succinctly on the area of staff professional development in a pragmatic and practical way.

Since the demise of the Bright Futures policy, I have noticed a lack of commitment to the professional development of teachers in SEAL schools and other enrichment programs. Principals tend to regard these programs as a great way to lift the profile of your school but often this is not reflected in other priorities such as professional development.

Recommendation 1
That all DEECD schools (particularly those with SEAL/enrichment programs) be mandated to provide up to six(6) hours professional development from an external and qualified source to at least three teachers per year.

While this is a modest commitment initially, over time this will lead to a body of more informed teachers in the area of gifted education. It is not a concern if these teachers move schools within DEECD because the knowledge is retained in the system and benefits many students within the public system.

Recommendation 2
That all DEECD schools should publicly list the qualifications and professional development the staff teaching in these programs have with respect to gifted education.

This allows parents to make informed decisions about the quality of the program because it is clear that teachers who have a knowledge of characteristics and learning of gifted students often make better teachers of the gifted.

Thank you for your time. This inquiry is a sound step forward in this vital area of education.

Maureen Theobald