

Continuing the HSC in 2020 favours the children of the rich.

The following is a submission sent anonymously to classconscious.org by a teacher in Australia. We welcome submissions from workers around the world. Please contact us at ClassConscious@protonmail.com

So here is a thought. I work in a high school in which students are economically disadvantaged. It is an overwhelming working class population that draws from an area with higher than average unemployment levels, broken families, poorer income families and non-English speaking backgrounds. I love every one of them. But they need all the help they can get.

The decision today regarding the maintenance of the Higher School Certificate, has given me reason for thinking. Our kids cannot compete with the high achieving academic schools around the country. James Ruse Agricultural, North Sydney Girls etc. etc. etc. are always at the top of the "achievers" list when HSC awards are recognised. The students at these schools are more than capable of performing from home. They have the skills, background and support to undertake the necessary preparation for HSC success.

My students are not. As much as I love them, they need lots of support, teaching and encouragement that cannot be adequately transmitted via online platforms. They need to be in the classroom where teaching really occurs. So this leads me to thinking that the decision to maintain the HSC, while

continuing online education, is going to further disadvantage my already disadvantaged students.

But being present in the classroom poses a life and death risk. Encouraging students to return to school poses a threat to their lives and to the lives of their families and loved ones. The lives of our students are not expendable. The lives of our students are precious. And that includes their lives and rights associated with education. However, it seems to me that any rational decision would suspend the HSC and allow students to learn freely, without external examinations, without the pressure of university or tertiary entry and moreover, to be fully protected in any decision that they wish to take.

The HSC is recognised as Australia's or rather New South Wales', highest secondary education award. But it is subordinate to the market conditions allowing students to attain a result which allows them to continue onto university study to pay exorbitant fees for the right to "learn". In other words, the subordination of the students' lives, (i.e. the continuation of the HSC under pandemic conditions), to capitalist educational markets, takes precedence over the lives of students and teachers.

And here we see once again how the capitalist system makes it impossible for a free, liberal, and open human education to not only meet the aspirations of all students but protect the lives of those very stakeholders, including students, teachers and their families.