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Languages & English as a  
Second Language.



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The Chairman,  
House of Representatives  
Employment, Education and Workplace Relations Committee,  
Canberra.

14 August, 2000

Dear Dr. Nelson.

Please find enclosed my submission to the committee on the Education of Boys.  
There are two parts: the first directly addresses the terms of reference of the committee, whilst the second is a study on subject choices which may provide the committee members with some background.

The research was done without any assistance from the Department, as the education of boys has never been a priority for research. I sincerely hope that this committee at least makes State education bureaucrats sit up and take notice.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ryszard Linkiewicz', written in a cursive style.

Ryszard Linkiewicz, (Head Teacher: LOTE & ESL)

# THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

*A SUBMISSION TO THE HOUSE OF  
REPRESENTATIVES EMPLOYMENT,  
EDUCATION AND WORKPLACE  
RELATIONS COMMITTEE.*

by

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*Better build schoolrooms for "the boy"  
Than cells and gibbets for "the man".  
-Eliza Cook, A Song for the Ragged Schools*

INTRODUCTION:

Education has been allowed to deteriorate so far that only now, when the situation is almost irredeemable, particularly for boys, does a government show concern. The facts and figures showing the poor and declining performance of boys at school have not suddenly come into being, but are the inevitable result of decades of neglect and under-funding. No doubt the Committee will receive many submissions from academics and research organizations with much data and scholarly conclusions. I, too, have studied and researched the questions of class and gender in education for a number of years and most of the studies I have read have either been biased or inconclusive. Many simply fail to address the most serious issues and side-step what are, to the classroom teacher, the most obvious factors. This submission will concentrate not on existing scholastic research, although I am well acquainted with it, but on the experiences and observations of my colleagues and myself. I have worked in co-educational, boys' and girls' single-sex schools, infants', primary and high schools in both public and private sectors. I have also spent time working as an educational consultant in the N.S.W. Department of School Education's former region of the Riverina.

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THE SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND EDUCATIONAL FACTORS AFFECTING THE  
EDUCATION OF BOYS IN AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS.

1) SOCIAL FACTORS.

The social pressures on boys vary according to the school they attend, the area in which they live and the social class to which they belong. The life experiences, daily routine, problems faced, opportunities available, kind of education received and expectations faced by a boy at Colyton High School are very different to those faced by a boy at Scotch College or Pooncarie Public School. Ostensibly, the curriculum each boy will follow will be pretty much the same but the research tells us that intelligence is not the principal determinant of how far these boys will progress through that curriculum. Despite the disparities in circumstance, what they will have in common is their basic attitude to school which is that school exists to equip you with the skills you need for a job.

It is part of our society's construction of the notion of masculinity that boys go to school in order to acquire the skills and knowledge that will enable them to be employed, with a good income, enjoying a quality life-style supporting a wife and kids and all the mod. cons. ( which explains why most of them avoid teaching). As Margaret Mead observed as far back as 1949,

"In every known human society, everywhere in the world, the young male learns that when he grows up, one of the things which he must do in order to be a full member of society is to provide food for some female and her young.....Every known human society rests firmly on the learned nurturing behaviour of men."

Consequently, it should be no surprise to anyone that boys choose to study those subjects in the curriculum which are 'relevant' - maths, science, business studies, industrial arts, computer studies and economics. English is studied merely because it is the only compulsory subject and, even then, most boys opt for the lowest level. The notion of the classically-educated, well-rounded gentleman who is erudite, articulate and conversant with a wide range of pursuits, from Boccaccio to backgammon and from Rubens to Rossini to rugby is well and truly dead. The race for accreditation and, therefore, employability has resulted in generations of boys who are not only unaware of their Western intellectual heritage but woefully ignorant about the world around them. I am sick and tired of: being told that the Nile is Australia's longest river; that World War II ended with the Anzacs in Gallipoli; being asked if Britain and Germany were on the same side in World War II; having boys inform me that the USA is the largest country in the world and myriad other instances of complete ignorance of our history, geography and culture. Our schools are churning out uni-faceted beings, caricatures rather than fully developed, well-rounded men.

The narrowing of curriculum choices and the blinkered attitude of boys to the subjects they do and the utilitarian attitude to school are common concerns in all schools in my experience. The utilitarian attitude that schools should only teach what you need to get a job becomes more uncompromising as one goes down the socio-economic scale. The student at Scotch College, relatively secure in his prospects for employment is more likely to dabble in languages and other 'irrelevant' subjects. The N.S.W. Board of Studies' statistics clearly show that the student least likely to study a language is a boy in a comprehensive government school in the western and south-western suburbs of Sydney and rural N.S.W. The boy at Colyton High school is not only highly unlikely to be studying a language but is more than likely to consider such study completely worthless, maybe even effeminate and react in a racist manner to suggestions that such study is desirable.

Apart from a more or less common attitude to nature of school work, boys share the same deficiency: testosterone. The physiological changes that happen to boys as they grow into men are well-documented and undeniable. For the past few decades, it has been politically correct to insist that behavioural differences are not the result of physiological differences, but are the consequence of variations in experience during development before and after adolescence and socially - acceptable sex-role stereotypes. It is this thinking which is the accepted truth in the upper echelons of the education bureaucracies in Australia and explains Departmental inertia and indifference when the question of boys' education is raised.

Evidence accumulated more recently, however, suggests that the effects of sex hormones on brain organization occur so early in life that, right from the start, the brains of boys and girls are differently wired and so react differently to the environment. Boys tend to perform better than girls on certain spatial tests. they do

well on those tests which involve the mental rotation of three-dimensional objects. They are also more accurate than girls at target-directed motor skills such as throwing objects at a target or intercepting a projectile, they are better at matching lines with identical slopes, interpreting maps and mathematical reasoning. Girls perform better than boys on tests of perceptual speed, memorizing the positions of objects or series of objects. They demonstrate better recall of stories, lists of unrelated words and paragraphs. Their fine motor skills are superior to that of boys and they perform better than boys in mathematical calculation. Their linguistic and literacy skills are far superior to those of boys, their language development is faster, they show a lower risk of developmental dysphasia and score better on tests of social judgement, empathy and co-operation. Recent research using positron emission tomography (PET) and functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) clearly shows the differences between the brain activity of male brains and female brains when performing the same tasks. Imaging studies show that when performing complex mental tasks there is a tendency for women to bring both cerebral hemispheres to bear on the task whereas male brains often use only the hemisphere most suited to the task.

The main structural differences between male and female brains are:

- ◆ The hypothalamic nucleus INAH3, in the medial preoptic area, is, on average, two and a half times larger in males than in females. this nucleus is responsible for male-typical sexual behaviour and contains more cells that are sensitive to androgens than any other part of the brain.
- ◆ The corpus callosum, the band of tissue which connects the two hemispheres of the brain, is relatively larger in females than in males. So is the anterior commissure, which connects the unconscious areas of the hemispheres only.
- ◆ Female brains also have more tissue in the massa intermedia, which connects the two halves of the thalamus.

Testosterone is also important in the development of boys: it is the hormone responsible for the large muscles, the deep voices, the strong bones, hirsuteness and receding hairlines in later (or not-so-later) years. What role testosterone plays in the intellectual development of boys is not understood. Apart from tacit acceptance that it may explain boys' more violent behaviour, studies have limited themselves to merely describing the more pronounced preference that boys have for fighting in school, disobedience and defiance. Boys dominate expulsion lists, truancy lists, classrooms and special programs for behaviour disorders and slow learners. Of the 1.5 million American children on medication for A.D.H.D. (attention deficit hyperactivity disorder), 80% are boys. Studies of the effects of testosterone on the developing brains of boys are conspicuous by their absence.

More research is needed into the effects of testosterone on boys' ability to learn. It is not enough to merely dismiss increased violence and defiance on 'a hormone cocktail', what is required is a detailed knowledge and understanding of exactly what happens to boys' brains when puberty is reached. In languages, my experience has clearly shown that the communicative approaches favoured by modern class-room teachers works for boys as well as girls until the onset of puberty. At this point, most boys will tend to start finding language learning 'stupid' and 'boring'. It is also at this

stage that overt racism will surface. The recent introduction of the mandatory study of a foreign language has had little effect on changing the way boys think about themselves and the world around them, very few boys continue studying languages past the mandatory component. Anecdotal evidence exists that *castrati* tenors retained a facility for learning languages long after their unmodified contemporaries had given up trying. Other studies published in *Nature* magazine in the early nineteen-seventies showed that in some bird species, the young male bird had to learn the mating call from an adult male before the onset of puberty or he would never master it. However, this does not mean that boys are incapable of learning languages. Boys in European countries seem to be just as capable of learning languages as girls. It would seem that there is something peculiar about the construct of masculinity in modern Anglo-Saxon societies that pre-dispose boys to be more oafish and less well-educated, after all, it wasn't that long ago that boys were expected to study a foreign language if they expected to gain entry to university. More boys sat for French at the 1935 Leaving Certificate examination than sat for all languages in the 1999 Higher School Certificate. We can conclude that either boys' general I.Q., as well as sperm count, has fallen in the intervening years or that declining expectations combined with the increasing intellectual flaccidity of the school curriculum and changing social and economic values leave most boys with no worthwhile social purpose to fill and no goal worth pursuing.

The greatest social disadvantage faced by boys is the fact that their neuro-physiological differences are not only minimized or completely ignored by educational policy-makers and bureaucrats, but are not even mentioned in teacher-training courses. In the course of researching the existing literature for a study as part of a Ph.D., I found no references to any studies done into the effects of testosterone on the learning abilities of boys, particularly second language acquisition. Without a clear understanding of the changes undergone by boys in the late primary and early secondary years of schooling, schools and teachers cannot adequately cater for the different requirements of boys.

The indifference to the needs of boys coupled with ever-diminishing funding means that boys experiencing difficulties with their schoolwork are not receiving the support they need. At Randwick Boys' High School 85% of the boys are from non English-speaking backgrounds and we enrol a large number of boys in Year 11 who can neither speak nor understand English. The time they spend at the Intensive English Language Centre is totally inadequate. We struggle to keep enough teachers to enable them to acquire enough English to perform at the H.S.C. at a level which reflects their true ability. Research shows that it takes at least two years for a boy to acquire enough English to survive in the playground. The boys we enrol have only had three months of English teaching before they are enrolled in mainstream classes, the support we are able to give them is minimal and the stresses placed on our E.S.L. (English as a Second Language) teachers are now unbearable. The whole system has been stretched to beyond breaking point. The funding cuts that have reduced our health services to near Third-World levels have been even more severe in education. Teachers are at breaking point. The system is not coping. My teachers are coping to the best of their ability but the boys are being seriously disadvantaged. The resources are so scarce that after introducing special support for those boys whose literacy

levels were well below average in Year 7 we found that at the next test in Year 8 the boys at the top end of the scale had gone backwards: their scores were lower. Boys who come into our school neither understanding nor speaking English receive far less assistance than they would have had even five years ago. Classes are larger, the time spent with specialist E.S.L. teachers has diminished and too many boys simply do not acquire enough English to enter the further education courses of their choice. Even when they do, they still require specialist English language courses whilst at T.A.F.E. or University.

Further evidence that the needs of boys are given a low priority by the Department of Education and Training is the fact that in high schools in N.S.W. there are specialist Head Teacher positions whose sole concern is the welfare of girls. Once a school reaches a certain size a school appoints a Head Teacher - Girls. There is no analogous position concerned with boys' welfare. Were such positions created then boys in our schools would no longer regard themselves as second-class citizens. The general apathy, and subtle antipathy, towards boys extends to the N.S.W. Teachers Federation itself. Teaching is now predominantly female. Men make up only 15%-20% of teachers in primary schools, and about 35% - 40% in secondary schools. In some areas, such as languages, women make up an even greater percentage, about 85% (this figure is only an estimate since the Department declines to keep accurate figures). The Curriculum Directorate in Ryde has 22 senior officers concerned with LOTE, all but 2 are female. In the latest Personnel Bulletin, it was confirmed that 43 teachers had been given permanent appointments to the Department, only 6 (barely 14%) were male. Of 162 teachers appointed as permanent on probation, only 37 (22%) were male. Interestingly enough, the one or two teachers announced in each issue as having had their employment terminated or annulled are invariably male. Despite this gross imbalance, the Federation insists on holding an annual Women's conference which excludes men. May I suggest that if the reverse were the case, the outcry would be deafening.

Because of this gender imbalance, most boys proceed all the way through primary school without ever seeing a male teacher. Given the increasing number of single-mother families, there is a substantial number of boys in the poorer western and south-western suburbs who have no male role models until they reach high school. Even in a school like Randwick Boys', most of the teachers are female, five of the six year advisers are female, the Head Teacher of Welfare is female and, to my knowledge, always has been and both Leading Teacher and Deputy Principal are now female. Although not one of them could be described as anti-male and have all expressed concern about the education of boys the absence of role models in schools should be cause for grave concern. That the education system has become feminised, and that it is not deemed 'men's work', contrary to past practice, will have serious consequences for the social adjustment of our sons.

Although this section is titled "Social Factors", I have included discussion about physiological factors because it is social attitudes that determine how seriously physiological factors are taken. The fact that the Committee's own terms of reference

do not include neuro-physiological factors is proof that the general attitude in policy-making circles is that if there is anything wrong with boys in our schools, then biology has nothing to do with it and any problems are merely ones of socialization. Despite increasing evidence to the contrary, the official attitude is that boys and girls are not all that dissimilar and are not to be treated differently in our schools.

There are wider and more powerful social influences on boys today. The media, the music industry and the entertainment industry are all dominant influences in the lives of boys. So much so that it may be argued that they are the prime influences and school is the distraction. Even a casual observer of adolescent boys could not miss the dominance of styles of dress, speech and behaviour originating in the urban ghettos of the United States. Moreover, the films, music and computer games directed at adolescent males by the commercial media are imbued with violence and aggression. At a time when physiological changes are predisposing them to more aggressive and violent behaviour, they are exposed to more vivid and explicit images of violence in their computer games, films and MTV video clips. Such is the strength of these images that adolescent boys all across Sydney's western and south-western suburbs, and the poorer areas of the eastern and southern suburbs, affect the mannerisms, dress and language of American ghetto Negroes. So strong are these images, in some ethnic groups (most notably Turks, Lebanese and Pacific Islander) the traditional values of family and community are completely over-ridden and the gang culture prevails. The diminishing influence of school, church and family in the lives of young Australian boys leaves the field clear for the deleterious effects of commercialism.

Underpinning this is an even more insidious influence. The phenomenon of increased violence and anti-social behaviour in young males in Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States and New Zealand is the logical consequence of the economic policies pursued by Reagan, Thatcher, Fraser and their successors. The neo-Hobbesian nastiness that is economic rationalism soon manifests itself in increasing crime and incarceration rates. It is no accident that the United States, the home of such policies, is the world's Number One gaoler, with over two million (mostly male) prisoners. The social depredations visited upon the most disadvantaged members of society by interminable cost-cutting, rationalization and privatization can only result in more crime, more violence and more social fragmentation. Slashing expenditure on education, health and social services in the U.S. and the U.K. has resulted in an exponential growth in the prison industry in both countries. In the U.S. the prison industry is the third largest employer in the country. In states like California, more money is spent on gaols than on universities and schools and prison guards are paid more than university lecturers. The same will be true here. Australia is, like all other Anglo-Saxon societies, essentially paedophagic. Child poverty rates in the U.K. are the worst in the European Union and deteriorating. In the U.S., child poverty rates are the worst in the OECD and in Australia they are not much better. Governments continue to demonstrate their contempt for children by continually cutting expenditure on education and child-care whilst paying teachers and childcare workers risible salaries. In 1980, in the U.S., the difference in starting salaries between the average teacher and the average lawyer was \$2000 per annum. Now, the average teacher starts on \$32,000 p.a. whilst newly-graduated lawyers can command



six-figure incomes. All this serves to underline the main social message being directed at children, particularly boys: they are not worthy of our attention. They are expensive nuisances and have nothing to do with the real purpose of the economy. It is a message that will have dire consequences. Politicians of all political stripes are fond of mouthing the platitude that 'our children are our future', well, I work with that future every day and it is increasingly bleak.

## 2) CULTURAL FACTORS.

Political leaders since Keating have waxed lyrical about Australia being the 'Clever Country', 'the Can-do Country' and 'the Knowledge Nation'. The fact is that Australia is an anti-intellectual, dumb country where the erudite, the articulate and the intelligent are often accused of having 'swallowed a fucking dictionary'. The predominant 'culture', particularly for young boys, enshrines sporting prowess as the sole virtue. To be educated, to show a preference for non-blokey activities is to invite suspicion of being both politically and morally suspect. Witness the current disapprobation meted out to anyone who dares raise a voice against the Olympics. If Australia were really 'the Clever Country', then Barry Jones would have been Prime Minister, not Paul Keating. Barry Jones himself acknowledged Australia's anti-intellectualism in an interview on A.B.C. Radio recently. When asked if there were any other intellectuals in Parliament he replied: "Yes, but they've learned to hide it."

In schools, this attitude manifests itself in the almost universal disdain of boys for intellectual pursuits. They choose only those subjects deemed 'useful' and eschew the pursuit of knowledge for its own sake. Recently, at Randwick Boys', the chess team won the regional competition and the 'Tournament of the Minds' team won the State title. Neither team was willing to get up in front of a school assembly to be publicly congratulated. The boys in the chess team have expressed their desire to remain anonymous. Almost like some subversive group or persecuted sect, these boys go 'underground' and avoid any kind of publicity. How different for the sports teams! They only have to get past the first round to be feted by the rest of the school. The 'it's cool to be a fool' attitude is aided and abetted by schools themselves. On Speech Nights in countless schools, numerous glittering trophies are given out for sporting achievements whilst those few whose intellectual achievements are recognized are fobbed off with a certificate. Boys disassociate themselves from school by refusing to take leadership roles. In co-educational schools, the students' council is invariably dominated by girls and girls take on extra-curricular roles in school productions and events: girls are more involved in the school. Boys sit on the sidelines and let the girls do all the work. In boys' schools, the scenario is different but there are, invariably, more positions than boys willing to fill them.

Education in general, and boys' education in particular, cannot be discussed without reference to wider social and economic forces operating in Australia today.

As already stated, Australia is not a 'Clever Country'. This is a recent phenomenon which contrasts starkly with Australia's historical tradition of academic excellence, as a proportion of population, we have one of the highest rates of Nobel Prize-winners in the world. The recent deaths of Australians such as A.D. Hope and Sir Marcus Oliphant serve to underline our recent decline: where are their successors? What are the reasons for the lobotomization of the nation?

First, it is the unrestrained growth in commercial media coupled with a decline in quality programming as exemplified by the demolition of the A.B.C. The commercial media operate on P.T. Barnum's principle that no-one ever went broke underestimating the intelligence of the general public, and commercial T.V. has degenerated into nothing more than a sewer directing unadulterated U.S. garbage into our homes. Secondly, the cuts to education funding, which now place Australia at the bottom of the OECD rankings, have resulted in an increasingly stupid and anti-intellectual corps of teachers. There are fewer male teachers who can provide positive role-models to inspire young boys in the pursuit of knowledge and academic excellence. Thirdly, society rewards the pointless and the banal. Witness the adulation heaped upon sporting people. Not only are sporting heroes richly rewarded financially but they are always first on the Honours Lists and the media canvass their opinions on almost any issue, no matter how unqualified they may be. The message is clear: pick up a football, a cricket bat, a golf club, a tennis racquet; anything except a book. The media bastardize the word "hero" and apply it, hyperbolically, to anyone who can do something completely pointless better than anyone else. Is it any wonder that boys, who are very susceptible to outside pressures and others' values, slavishly follow the lead of the advertisers and sports media? Just as the fashion industry and women's magazines have been condemned, quite rightly, for projecting body images at young girls that are downright dangerous, so the media project an image of masculinity that is both peurile and damaging.

Boys' attitudes to study also vary with ethnicity. At Randwick Boys' High School, there are over 900 boys from 65 different countries and who speak 67 different languages: anything from Amharic to Zulu. The smallest ethnic group in the school consists of Anglo-Saxon boys born in Australia to Australian-born parents. The largest single group is the Chinese (Mandarin and Cantonese), followed by Russian, Indonesian, Turkish and Bengali. There are substantial numbers of Greek, Farsi, Malaysian, Korean, Turkish and Pacific Islander. Generally speaking, the boys from Chinese, Malaysian, Indian, Sri Lankan and Bangladeshi backgrounds study harder and achieve higher results than all the other groups. Their work ethic is predicated upon the belief that hard work and sacrifice now will reap rewards in the future. At the other end of the spectrum is the attitude that school is a waste of time, teachers are only targets for harassment and violence and instant gratification of desires and whims is paramount. At this end the boys are mostly Turks, Lebanese and Pacific Islanders. It is also amongst these boys that violence towards, and harassment of, women teachers and women in general is not only condoned but encouraged. Parents of these boys not only question the school's right to discipline their sons when they harass female teachers, but dismiss such accusations as frivolous and racist. These parents believe that the sun shines out of their son's every orifice, consequently they

grow up to be violent delinquents. The child-rearing practices of these ethnic groups are both paternalistic and *paternalistic* even in their own countries. Schools, however, are expected to deal with the very serious problems which arise without extra support or resources. The escalation of violence in our schools is increasingly swept under the carpet by bureaucrats who are quite willing to sacrifice the physical and emotional well-being of thousands of teachers and students for their own venality and advancement. Increasing violence is evident even in a school like Randwick Boys' High School: in schools like Colyton, Eagle Vale and Ambarvale the violence is out of control. The perpetrators of that violence are young males who are out of control, who have called the bluff of the Department's disciplinary policies and exposed them as the toothless tigers they are. In response, the Department does nothing and society only sits up and takes notice when the tabloid press 'exposes' another failed school or juvenile delinquency in the suburbs, in another attempt to boost sagging ratings. Nearly every criminal in our gaols has been through our school system where they were spotted by teachers who were unable to do anything. Early intervention works miracles with intellectually and physically disabled children: it could also work miracles with the morally retarded. However, the principal cultural factor which militates against effective measures being introduced to reduce the levels of violence amongst boys is the general indifference to education funding cuts. Governments can safely continue to cut education funding because of the support from an overwhelmingly conservative media and general public apathy. The business community is indifferent to education and business leaders are obviously of the idea that education does not contribute to national well-being and, therefore, not worthy of either government or business support. The result of such thinking is evident in the over-flowing gaols of the U.S. and the U.K.. Australia shares the same culture with those countries in that long-term thinking is discouraged, short-term profits are all-important, it's every man for himself and Devil take the hindmost. There needs to be a change of national consciousness and general popular attitudes to the importance of education, science and research. But, as long as the talk-back radio hosts pander to the lowest common denominator and degrade education and educators, then there is little hope that Australia will be anything but an increasingly isolated and impoverished country with increasing internal social division and fragmentation.

### 3) EDUCATIONAL FACTORS.

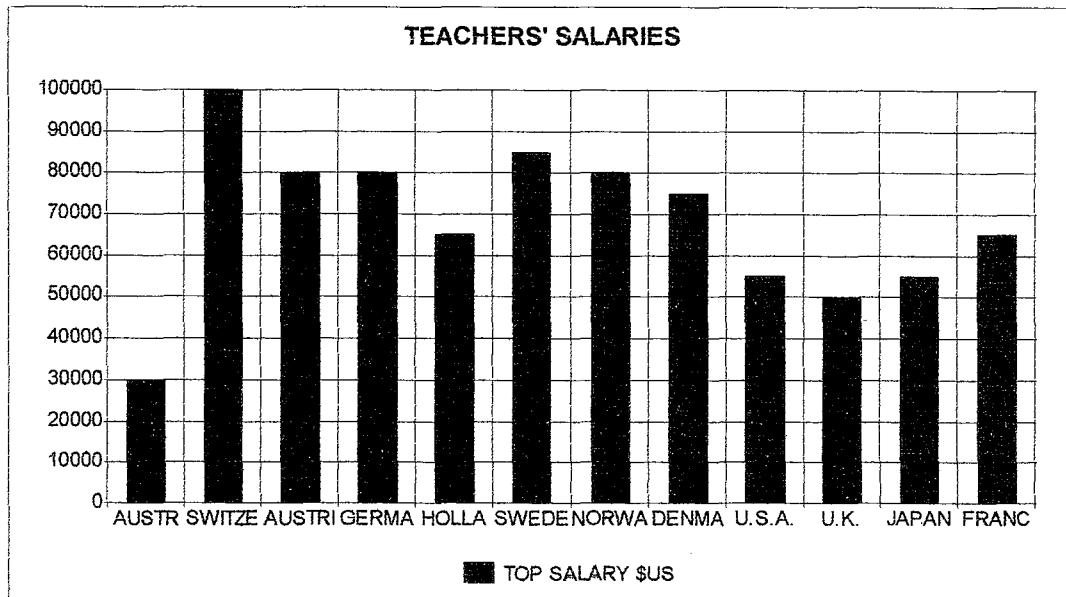
As already stated, institutionalized indifference to the different needs of boys is symbolized by the absence of the position of Head Teacher-Boys in N.S.W. schools. There are further examples of such indifference. In the attached study on why boys do not study languages, I state that N.S.W. has a specialist Languages High school that is for girls only, but not one that is boys only, and this at a time when the Key Learning Area with the greatest gender imbalance is Languages Other Than English (LOTE) where girls outnumber boys by three or four to one. Yet there is no evidence that anyone in the Department is even mildly concerned by such an imbalance let alone doing anything about it.

All schools must have policies and strategies implemented to deal with racism, multiculturalism, occupational health and safety, students from Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent (even if there are no such students in the school), the environment, bullying and sexual harassment. These latter two are areas in which males are invariably aggressors and malefactors. There are no policies for dealing with boys. There is no special education officer designated solely for the design and implementation of strategies targeting the peculiar learning needs of boys. There is no research into the learning styles of boys. Gender equity is defined purely in terms of the number of girls. The assumption is that if boys are not extending themselves into areas of the curriculum which are not traditionally male or, as in the case of languages, withdrawing from areas of traditional dominance in favour of vocational studies, then so be it. If boys are locking themselves into areas of study which lead only to dead-end jobs or jobs in those areas of the economy where jobs are disappearing (such as heavy engineering and manufacturing) instead of developing those skills which are in increasing demand, then it is their problem and theirs alone. The move towards vocational education and training (V.E.T.) in our schools will simply mean a return to the old distinction between high school and technical school. The study of 'irrelevant' subjects such as foreign languages, history, classical languages, art and music will continue to decline in our high schools, especially amongst our boys. At a time when 'globalization' is the 'buzz-word', how smart is it to isolate oneself from the 90% of the world's population that doesn't speak English? Instead of becoming more skilled and increasing cognitive abilities, analytical thinking and problem-solving skills, boys are increasingly making themselves unemployable by concentrating on a narrowing range of subjects and skills. Educational bureaucracies seem quite happy to allow that situation to continue. In 1996, the N.S.W. government announced an inquiry into boys' education. As far as I and my colleagues are concerned that report was never published or, if it was, it was neither widely available nor has any recommendation been implemented. The fate of that document symbolizes the institutional indifference to boys.

As the number of men in teaching continues to decline the situation can only get worse. During the recent teachers' salary dispute in N.S.W., a colleague of mine at Randwick Boys' was asked by her 3-Unit Economics students why she was going on strike. She asked them: "How many of you boys are thinking of a career in teaching?" At this they all laughed. She replied: "That's why I'm going on strike."

Apart from the inertia surrounding the academic performance and subject choices of boys in schools, there is increasing indifference to the status of the teaching profession and the need to attract more able men into the profession. I have heard the lofty rhetoric from our erstwhile Education Premier, but until words are matched by action and, more importantly, substantial salary increases, then the situation will continue to deteriorate until redemption is impossible. If schools cannot attract intelligent and able men into the classroom then boys will become increasingly alienated from school and society. Band-Aid measures such as those being proposed in the U.K. and the U.S., where graduates are being offered bonuses of \$10,000 to \$20,000 just to sign up for teaching are too little and too late. To adequately address the decline in the numbers of male teachers, governments in Australia must boost teacher salaries to at least the OECD average, but since this would require a doubling

of teacher salaries, it can be safely assumed that there is little danger of such a thing happening. The following table shows how far behind the rest of the developed world we have fallen. In 1980, the top salary for a classroom teacher was about the same as the salary of a State Parliament backbencher, now the backbencher is paid almost twice the salary of a teacher.



\* Figures for this table from 'Eurydice' website, a European Union-sponsored site outlining the education systems of all member states. Figures for the United States from the American Teachers' Unions combined website and is an average figure. Teachers' salaries vary from State to State and between school districts in the same State. New Jersey, for example offers salaries up to U.S.\$125,000 per annum. All figures are in U.S.\$

#### 4) SUGGESTED SOLUTIONS.

The relatively poor literacy skills of boys are a direct result of boys' seemingly natural aversion to reading. They are socialized to regard reading as an effeminate activity and they are also disadvantaged by nature in that they are physically more active. Some schools have developed strategies to help boys, for example, the "Machismo" project at James Cook High School. But such programs are sporadic, short-term and *ad hoc*, there is no co-ordinated and sustained program covering all schools to deal with the chronic under-achievement of boys in schools.

At Randwick Boys' High we have been involved in the ELLA tests and have put in place increased literacy programs designed to help the boys at the bottom end of the scale. Unfortunately our staffing and resources are so stretched that we cannot provide support to boys in the normal and upper range of scores to stop them from sliding backwards. We have a program called DEAR - Drop Everything and Read - which runs four mornings a week from 8:50 to 9:10 in which the boys in their roll call groups have to read a book quietly for the whole twenty minutes. It is generally successful but there still is a substantial number of boys who refuse to read or read only comics.

Boys in the early and middle years of schooling are less likely to defy school rules and at our school half the battle is preventing the younger boys picking up bad habits from the older boys who are out of control. The fact that these boys continually and openly defy teachers and school rules with impunity adds to their status among the younger boys. Schools must be given the authority to impose and enforce discipline and uniform codes as they see fit without fear of intervention from senior bureaucrats who may not have been in a classroom for over twenty years. Schools and teachers must be given the due respect their expertise deserves and not forced to cater for every politically-correct whim that has current ascendancy. Governments must provide funding for the teaching of a core curriculum which embodies the Western intellectual tradition. All our children are heirs to that tradition and to deny them access to that knowledge and the values contained therein is a gross dereliction of duty. All children should be fluent in English, their mother tongue if it is not English and at least one other language. All children should be fully conversant with the history and geography of Australia, its Asian and Pacific neighbours and Europe. The school curriculum must be cleansed of 'Mickey Mouse' courses designed to absolve parents of their obligations to teach their children the necessary skills to participate in society. Is it really the schools' job to teach children how to use a telephone directory or street directory?

The first step towards addressing the needs of boys in our schools should be to raise the level of education funding to at least the OECD average and require all State education authorities to immediately set up special groups to research the differing needs of boys and to develop strategies to deal with them. Then funding should be supplied to support a ten-year program to implement such strategies which should include a vigorous campaign to recruit more male teachers.