



Simon Corbell MLA

Submission 192.1
EoB Inquiry

MINISTER FOR EDUCATION, YOUTH AND FAMILY SERVICES
MINISTER FOR PLANNING MINISTER FOR INDUSTRIAL
RELATIONS

MEMBER FOR MOLONGLO

The Committee Secretary
House of Representatives Standing Committee on
Education and Training
Suite R1 106
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Secretary

ACT SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

I refer to a letter from Mr Kerry Bartlett MP of 15 April 2002 about the establishment and appointment of the new House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training Inquiry into the Education of Boys following the 2001 election.

Since the original ACT submission to the previous Inquiry, the ACT is undertaking additional research relevant to the terms of reference of the inquiry, through the ACT Department of Education and Community Services *Improving the Educational Outcomes of Boys* consultancy project. This research is expected to be completed in June 2002.

Please find attached an overview of this project to allow an update of the previous ACT submission to the inquiry. The contact for this project is Mr Jeff Mason, Director, Curriculum & Assessment Branch, ACT Department of Education and Community Services on telephone 6205 9205.

Yours sincerely

Simon Corbell MLA

6.5.02

ACT LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

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IMPROVING THE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES OF BOYS IN THE ACT

A consultancy project: *Improving the Educational Outcomes of Boys in the ACT*, was let and is to report mid 2002.

The terms of reference for this project are:

- to research the current practices and issues in the area of the education of boys;
- to provide an analysis of what is currently happening in the ACT in regard to the education of boys;
- to provide an analysis of ACT Government schools' data relevant to the educational outcomes of boys education; and
- to produce a report on strategies for ongoing improvement of education outcomes for boys with regard to levels of schooling, retention and ways to improve their engagement with learning, and literacy and numeracy outcomes.

Dr Andrew Martin completed the first phase of the consultancy in February 2002 involving:

- a review of literature to provide a conceptual background to the issue;
- an analysis of ACT Assessment Program data for Years 3, 5, 7 and 9;
- administration of the *Student Motivation Scale*, developed by Dr Martin, to 1,930 Year 7 and Year 9 students from eight ACT Government high schools in December 2001; and
- provision of an interim report (February 2002).

Summary of key preliminary findings

- The social context within which boys and girls operate is very influential. It is important that boys understand how masculinity is socially constructed and then look at how this construction can sit uncomfortably with success at school.
- Boys' educational outcomes can be enhanced within a gender equity framework. This means that strategies enhancing boys' educational outcomes can also be effective for girls. This is consistent with current approaches of the ACT Department of Education and Community Services.
- Taken together, the *Draft ACT Schools Plan 2002-2004*, the *Draft Student Support Action Plan 2002-2004*, and the *Across Curriculum Perspective Statements* provide a platform for enhancing the educational outcomes of all students and are consistent with the optimistic and inclusive perspective of the report.
- Research shows that school level action can strongly support teacher and class level action in enhancing educational outcomes of all students. Students can benefit from schools:

- effectively modelling principles of gender equity;
 - addressing an anti-academic culture;
 - building a proactive and optimistic school culture;
 - valuing student input into school policy and procedures;
 - celebrating academic excellence, personal bests, and improvement;
 - developing a staffing structure and mix that sends appropriate messages to students; and
 - developing school-wide pedagogical leadership roles to support strategies in the classroom.
- Current ACT Department of Education and Community Services initiatives, such as the *New Generation High Schools* with the Year 9 Exhibitions project, that highlight better engagement of all students through effective teacher pedagogy, are appropriate approaches to improving student educational and social performance in school. Research shows that these approaches are likely to reduce gender differences while improving overall standards of achievement.

Analysis of the ACT motivation data

The research project aimed to explore the links between student motivation levels and school performance as measured by the ACT Assessment Program in Literacy and Numeracy.

- Year 7 students are significantly higher than Year 9 students on all personal motivational characteristics. This is consistent with research elsewhere showing that students' motivation can decline in the middle years of high school. However, ACT Year 7 students are also significantly lower than Year 9 on 'control' and higher in 'failure avoidance'.
- Across Years 7 and 9, girls are significantly higher than boys on learning focus, planning and monitoring, and study management. Girls in Years 7 and 9 are also significantly higher in anxiety. In Year 7 only, boys are significantly higher in failure avoidance and self-sabotage and girls are significantly higher in persistence. In Year 9 only, girls are significantly lower in perceived control.
- Self-belief and persistence are positively correlated with literacy and numeracy. However, the strongest negative effects on literacy and numeracy are low control, failure avoidance, and self-sabotage. Anxiety is also negatively correlated with numeracy.
- English as a second language (ESL) students are significantly higher than non-ESL students in value of schooling, learning focus, planning and monitoring, and study management. Gender effects are generally consistent across ESL and non-ESL students.

Phase 2 – to be completed mid 2002

The findings are to be explored through further in-depth qualitative and some focused quantitative work. The proposed methodology for this next phase of the research is as follows:

- in-depth consultations with key players in educational research (eg. some authors identified in the review of literature);
- in-depth consultations with teachers and executive school staff;
- interviews or focus groups with students;
- case studies of good practice schooling, as it pertains to educational outcomes of students; and
- final report due June 2002.

Researcher

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