The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

Boys:
Getting it right

Report on the inquiry into the education of boys

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Education and Training

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Foreword

No education system, no school, no teacher can guarantee that the needs of every student are fully met. Yet the aim of all involved in education, be they policy makers, administrators or classroom practitioners is, as far as possible, to assist all students to achieve their potential. As well as focussing on defined knowledge and skills objectives, this includes the development of attitudes and values which best equip them for life and for active and productive participation in society.

Yet, the challenges of the classroom are becoming increasingly difficult. Social and economic change has impacted on societal expectations, student needs and attitudes, retention rates and educational policies and programs. Not all students or groups of students have fared equally well in our education system or with social change. Along with socio-economic factors, location and indigeneity, gender has figured significantly in the differing educational outcomes.

In recent decades greater attention has been given to addressing past inequities which had worked to the disadvantage of girls and women in education, the workplace and the broader community. While some of these inequities still exist, many parents, teachers, academics and community workers have expressed concern that, particularly in the area of education, boys are not coping with the changes as well as girls. The evidence seems to support these concerns.

It is imperative that this is addressed, for the sake of the boys themselves and for society more broadly. If boys are not achieving as well as they could, their years of schooling are less enjoyable and less rewarding and they face greater risk of unemployment, under-fulfilment and social problems in their post-school years. Society also loses because of the under-utilisation of their abilities.

There is clearly no single cause for boys' relative under-achievement in education. Nor is there a simple solution. Just as the causes are complex, policy approaches need to be multi-faceted. While this report addresses a number of issues and offers a number of recommendations, it is not exhaustive. However, it is to be hoped that it encourages debate and leads to policy changes which will help achieve improved educational outcomes for boys as well as girls.

Thank you to the many individuals and organisations who contributed to this inquiry and the resulting report. While the report could not make specific reference to all material presented to the inquiry, all contributions helped paint the picture of what is happening with boys' education. Particular thanks to the committee secretariat and to the members of the committee for their painstaking work in compiling this report.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the many teachers, a tiny sample of whom we met during this inquiry, who day in and day out labour tirelessly for the benefit of our children. They deserve all the support they can be given.

Mr Kerry Bartlett MP
Chair

Membership of the Committee

40th Parliament – Standing Committee on Education and Training

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Committee Secretariat

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	Mr Paul McMahon (39th Parliament)
Inquiry Secretary	Mr James Rees
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Terms of reference

On 21 March 2000 the Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs requested the Employment, Education and Workplace Relations Committee to:

- inquire into and report on the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling; and
- the strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

After the election in 2001, the name of the Committee was changed to reflect a change in portfolio coverage. At the request of the Minister for Education, Science and Training, the Standing Committee on Education and Training readopted the inquiry on 21 March 2002.

List of abbreviations

ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AIFS	Australian Institute of Family Studies
CDEP	Community Development Employment Program
DEST	Department of Education, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
HECS	Higher Education Contribution Scheme
HSC	Higher School Certificate
IEP	Individual Education Plan
KLAs	Key Learning Areas
LSAY	Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth
MULTILIT	Making Up Lost Time in Literacy
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
MYRAD	Middle Years Research and Development Project
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
PCYC	Police and Community Youth Club
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment

RD	Reading Disabled
SACSA	South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework
STAR	Student / Teacher Achievement Ratio
TES	Tertiary Entrance Score
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training

Executive Summary

1 Introduction

This inquiry was referred to the Committee in response to growing community concerns about the education of boys. Its aim was to evaluate evidence of boys' educational under-achievement and disengagement from learning as well as strategies being used by schools to address these issues. The Committee has attempted to do this in the wider context of what is occurring socially and economically as well as educationally. Therefore, the Committee has approached its terms of reference quite broadly and considered some factors and issues beyond the early and middle years of schooling.

A wide range of evidence was received in the 231 written submissions and from the 235 witnesses who appeared before the Committee. This evidence, in addition to other research, has convinced the Committee that there is justification for many of the concerns about boys' education and that these are not being adequately addressed within the current framework. However, the Committee also recognises that many schools and individual teachers are achieving excellent outcomes for both girls and boys.

The Committee also believes that efforts to raise the educational achievement of boys can be undertaken without threatening the gains made by girls in recent decades. It is not a competition. The aim of our educational system must be to maximise the achievement of all our students, boys and girls. The responsibility of governments is to ensure their policies assist in this as far as possible.

2 School and post-school outcomes

Evidence of boys' under-achievement

Boys are not achieving as well as girls across a broad spectrum of measures of educational attainment and this is a pattern which is reflected in almost all other OECD countries.

Key indicators include:

- measures of early literacy achievement, where in 2000, 3.4% fewer Year 3 boys and 4.4% fewer Year 5 boys achieved the national benchmarks than girls;
- school retention, where the retention rate of boys to Year 12 was 11 percentage points lower than retention rate of girls in 2001;
- results in most subjects at Years 10 and 12, where girls are achieving higher average marks in the majority of subjects at Year 12 and the gap between boys' and girls' total marks has widened markedly (for example, in NSW the average Tertiary Entrance Score for girls has been up to 19 percentage points higher than for boys);
- admissions to higher education, where approximately 56% of university commencements are females, although this is balanced by higher rates of participation in post-school vocational education by males; and
- other indicators such as suspensions and expulsions which involve many more boys than girls.

A range of factors is affecting boys' achievement at senior level and results need to be interpreted cautiously. Rising retention rates have broadened the purpose of senior schooling beyond university preparation while also changing the social composition of students. This and other factors appear to have operated to the relative disadvantage of boys in senior schooling.

Post-school outcomes

While young men have better access to full-time employment than young women, they are also more likely to be unemployed. Young men are also less likely to be undertaking higher education but they are far more likely to be involved in employment-based training such as apprenticeships.

Longer term measures of participation in education and employment as well as a range of social measures are needed as indicators of the effectiveness of equity policies in education. Current indicators of equity in education are usually limited to the labour market outcomes and incomes of young adults. This overlooks the longer term impact of low achievement and the resulting restriction of some males to lower skilled employment. A range of other measures of social and emotional wellbeing are also relevant indicators of how well family, school and society are meeting the needs of boys and girls. On many of these measures boys and men are not doing well.

The assumption over recent decades appears to have been that girls have urgent educational needs to be addressed and that boys will be all right. The Committee

believes that the evidence seriously challenges this assumption and believes that change is essential.

Resistance to addressing boys' education issues has often argued that rather than gender, the focus should be on "which boys and which girls?". While this is, in itself, a valid question, the fact is that for almost every socio-economic group, boys are underachieving compared to girls. Significantly, the disparity is greatest for those in the most disadvantaged socio-economic groups.

3 Labour market, social and policy change

Education does not occur in isolation from the wider community and must be considered in the context of the social and economic changes that have occurred over recent decades. A range of labour market, social and education policy changes have impacted on the educational experience of boys and girls but appear to have more adversely affected boys.

Labour market change

Over the last 20 years the full-time labour market for young males and females 15 to 24 years of age has collapsed while the school retention rate has doubled. The fall in full-time employment has been partially offset by a rise in part-time employment but the changes have not affected young men and women equally.

While the distribution of part-time and full-time employment between young men and women is now more equitable than it was 20 years ago, young men still enjoy better access to full-time employment. This is because young men have better access than young women to unskilled labouring jobs and jobs in the traditional trades. However, these jobs are declining, both in number and as a proportion of all jobs. The labour market, in all areas, is demanding better communication and interpersonal skills. Generally, boys do not develop these skills to the same extent as girls and this has long-term implications for boys' adaptability to ongoing labour market change.

Social change

The changing status of women and changing family structures have been among the most obvious social developments over recent decades. Some people have emphasised the impact of these changes on boys, particularly the increase in the number of single-parent families headed by women. However, the effect that these social changes have had on the attitudes and educational achievement of boys is difficult to measure.

Policy change

Girls' education strategies and programs have, as a by-product of their original purpose, assisted girls through the social and economic changes of the last 20 years. In comparison, over this period, little has been done to help boys understand and negotiate the same changes. The current gender equity framework is partly a continuation of the earlier approaches to address girls' needs. As such, it does not separately research and identify boys' needs, and at times it is couched in negative terms, even setting boys' needs in the context of what still needs to be achieved for girls.

For this reason the Committee has concluded that the focus of the current approach embodied in *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* is too narrow, and recommends that it be recast, focusing on positive values and goals, to provide for distinct but complementary, education strategies for boys and girls. The way forward for both boys and girls is to identify their common and separate educational needs and to implement a policy framework with positive strategies to address those needs, focussing on positive student / teacher relationships, relevant educational programs and quality teaching (*Recommendation 1*).

4 Curriculum and pedagogy

Curriculum and pedagogy, although distinct in theory, merge in practice in the classroom. Boys are more likely than girls to respond negatively or overtly to irrelevant curriculum and poor teaching.

Learning styles

Outcomes-based curriculum frameworks influence pedagogy by emphasising that teachers need to adapt what they do to meet the needs of their students and their school community. While it is dangerous to generalise, boys and girls do tend to prefer different learning styles. Boys tend to respond better to structured activity, clearly defined objectives and instructions, short-term challenging tasks and visual, logical and analytical approaches to learning. They tend not to respond as well as girls to verbal, linguistic approaches. Good teachers respond to the different learning styles of their students and utilise students' preferred learning styles while also aiming to develop the full range of capacities in each student.

However, in many schools insufficient attention is paid to the differing needs of boys and girls and their tendency to favour different learning styles. Traditional primary and secondary schooling tends to favour passive learning to the detriment of those students who prefer interactive and experiential learning styles. Therefore, a much greater emphasis on raising teachers' awareness of the

differences and commonalities in boys and girls preferred learning styles is required in pre-service and in-service teacher education (*Recommendation 2*).

Assessment

Assessment is an important issue in boys' education for two reasons. First, the methods of assessment, their relevancy and interest, will affect boys' motivation and engagement with learning. Second, assessment needs to be an accurate measure of student achievement in a particular area of study. However, there are indications that because of changing assessment methods, boys with relatively poor literacy skills are disadvantaged across much of the curriculum. More research is needed on the impact of assessment methods on the educational achievement of boys and girls (*Recommendation 3*).

The outcomes-based curriculum frameworks are changing assessment tasks so that they have more real world relevance. This should be a positive development for boys. However, whatever the educational programs and assessment methods are, the evidence shows that the most critical factor is the quality of teaching.

5 Literacy and Numeracy

The importance of literacy and numeracy

It is important for all students to develop a strong foundation of literacy and numeracy skills in their early years of schooling. These skills are the most reliable predictor of longer term educational outcomes and personal and economic wellbeing. Poor achievement in literacy and numeracy is linked with early school leaving and this association is stronger for boys than for girls. Poor literacy and numeracy achievement is also linked to lower rates of entry to university and TAFE, higher rates and longer periods of unemployment, the type of work that is accessible, and potential earnings.

There are a number of reasons why boys do not perform as well as girls in literacy tasks. Developmental differences in language and social maturity are significant, as girls, on average, develop language and social skills earlier than boys. Behavioural factors are also important, with boys tending to be less attentive and experiencing more behavioural problems than girls. If not addressed by appropriate strategies such as explicit, structured teaching, attention difficulties and behavioural problems usually have adverse effects on literacy achievement. Action is necessary to raise awareness of these issues so that behavioural and attention problems are addressed early (*Recommendation 4*). Hearing and auditory processing difficulties are also more common in boys. While hearing and eyesight should be professionally tested, simple teaching strategies can help address auditory processing difficulties in the classroom (*Recommendation 5*). There are also

many things parents can do to support the development of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills in their children and these need to be more actively promoted (*Recommendation 6*).

Effective interventions

Research indicates that a systematic, integrated approach to reading instruction which focuses on phonic word attack skills, sight word recognition (of the most frequently occurring words in print), and the practice of these skills through reading text appropriate for the student's age and reading level is the most effective way to teach children to learn to read. The evidence supporting the importance of explicit, phonics instruction in literacy teaching is substantial. Further, slower than average readers are less likely to make satisfactory reading progress without such explicit instruction and these readers are more likely to be boys. Research also indicates that Reading Recovery is more effective when supplemented with explicit phonics instruction as part of regular classroom teaching. More effective pre-service education and increased professional development for teachers, focussing on appropriate teaching practices should help raise student achievement in literacy. The Committee believes that Commonwealth funding for literacy should be directed towards programs, teacher support and teacher education that recognise the importance of explicit phonics instruction as an essential part of an integrated approach to literacy. (*Recommendations 7, 8, 9 & 10*).

There is an ongoing need to provide support for students in upper primary and secondary school who have not acquired adequate literacy skills. Effective interventions exist but they should be more widely available for students who need them (*Recommendation 11*). Also, secondary teachers should be supported with professional development programs that assist them to enhance secondary students' operational literacy across the curriculum (*Recommendation 12*).

Research also indicates that there are real benefits of small class sizes in the early years of school. The improvements in learning and engagement last beyond the initial years of reduced class sizes and provide most benefit to the most disadvantaged students. Accordingly, the Committee recommends Commonwealth involvement to support the States and Territories to implement reduced class sizes in the early years of schooling (*Recommendation 13*).

6 Schools, teachers and role models

The quality of the relationships between students, teachers and parents is crucial to achieving optimal educational outcomes for all students, and this is particularly true for boys.

Peer relationships

Peer relationships become particularly important to boys during the middle school years and schools need to employ strategies to ensure that peer influences are positive. The types of strategies that are effective include involving students in decision making, mentoring programs and other activities that encourage boys to take responsibility for others. The Committee looked at examples of programs that aim to establish positive alternatives to negative peer cultures and provide effective interventions for boys who are already engaged in destructive behaviours.

Teacher/student relationships

Positive teacher / student relationships are essential to good teaching and learning, especially for boys. Organisational structures in schools can be used to support the establishment and maintenance of good teacher / student relationships. Some witnesses argued that middle school structures and separate senior schools or colleges are examples of organisational structures which can create student centred learning environments to more effectively meet students' needs. However, the effectiveness of any organisational structure depends on the commitment of the school leadership and staff, the level of school resourcing and the quality of teaching.

School structures

Both the absolute number and the proportion of students in Years 10, 11 and 12 who are combining school and work are much higher now than they were 20 years ago. The employment commitments of students combined with higher retention rates and other social changes mean that for contemporary senior students the gap between their life at school and their life outside school is wider now than ever before. Boys are less likely than girls to tolerate the resulting conflicts and this is likely to be a factor influencing their lower retention rate.

There is significant variation in the way schools are structured among the States and Territories. This is also true of assessment systems, with a variety of school-based and external examination structures in existence. The influence of these different structural factors on school retention and engagement has not been adequately examined and this would be a productive area for further research (*Recommendations 14 & 15).*

A number of schools are utilising whole-school choice theory approaches to discipline and welfare. In some situations, such approaches can provide more effective systems to manage student behaviour particularly for students with behavioural problems. However, they are dependent on teachers' commitment to applying the rules and processes of the school's agreed system consistently and

this often requires extensive professional development when such systems are implemented.

There is a question mark over the adequacy of provision for the most vulnerable and disengaged students with behavioural difficulties, most of whom are boys. The Committee has recommended an evaluation of the need for, and effectiveness of, existing programs and that teacher education programs need to place greater emphasis on behaviour management (*Recommendations 16 & 17*).

Teacher training

Teachers who establish positive relationships with students and who recognise and attempt to resolve the conflicts between life at school and outside school can transform a student's school experience. More emphasis on the practical skills teachers need to establish and maintain productive teacher / student relationships is required in pre-service and in-service teacher education (*Recommendation 17*).

Male teachers, fathers and role models

There is widespread concern about the decline in the number of male teachers, particularly in primary schools where the proportion is down to 21 per cent. This has been attributed to a number of factors including the status of teachers in the community, salary, career opportunities and concerns about child protection issues. These issues need to be addressed. State and Territory governments should pay substantial additional allowances to skilled and experienced teachers to retain them in teaching and to provide career paths which attract new teachers (*Recommendation 18*). The admission criteria for teaching courses should be broadened to recognise that motivational factors and particular personal qualities are as important as academic achievement in making a good teacher (*Recommendation 19*). The supply of teachers, and male teachers in particular, should be enhanced by providing HECS-free scholarships to equal numbers of males and females to induce high quality candidates to enter teacher education (*Recommendation 20*).

Male role models do matter and boys benefit by men modelling appropriate behaviour and respectful relationships with other men and women. This is much more effectively demonstrated to boys by men than it can be taught to boys by women in the absence of men. Many schools are using fathers and other positive male role models from the community to the benefit of both boys and girls. Some examples of effective strategies being used by schools are described in this Chapter (*Recommendation 21*).

7 Conclusion

While some educational authorities and many individual schools and educators are responding effectively to these issues, approaches are still too piecemeal.

The lack of consistency between States and Territories and the lack of available, comparable information hinder a more effective approach to dealing with a range of educational issues including boys' education. Therefore the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth review the adequacy of the published national education data (*Recommendation 22*). The Committee also recommends that the Commonwealth and the States and Territories work towards more effectively coordinating their approaches and policy frameworks (*Recommendation 23*).

Overlaps between state and Commonwealth in terms of funding and administration add to these difficulties. A number of the recommendations in this report require a financial commitment from the Commonwealth. The Committee is also concerned that this does not lead to cost shifting from the States or cause them to reallocate funding elsewhere (*Recommendation 24*).

The effects of educational under-achievement for the students themselves and for society generally are too profound to be ignored. The Committee is hopeful that the relevant educational authorities and governments will respond positively to the recommendations made in this report.

List of Recommendations

3 Putting it in context: Labour market, social and policy change

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education, Science and Training act to have MCEETYA revise and recast *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* into a new policy framework which is consistent with *The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* and reflects the positive values expressed in that document:

■ the framework should provide an overarching policy structure for joint and distinctive boys' and girls' education strategies which—

⇒address boys' and girls' social and educational needs in positive terms;

⇒allow for school and community input to address local circumstances;

■ the achievement of the goals and values expressed in the framework and the boys' and girls' education strategies should be evaluated against a range of social, employment and educational indicators; and

■ these indicators should be used by MCEETYA to inform changes in policy and practice to ensure the social and educational needs of boys and girls are being met.

4 Putting it into practice: Curriculum and pedagogy

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the major focus of pre-service and in-service teacher education should be on equipping teachers to meet the needs of all boys and girls. This must include raising teachers' awareness of the differences and commonalities in the learning styles of boys and

girls and the teachers' influence on student outcomes and helping them develop balanced, effective and practical teaching strategies.

The Committee also recommends that the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments jointly fund additional professional development for practising teachers for this purpose, particularly targeting strategies that work with boys.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth fund further research into the impact of different assessment methods on the measured relative attainments of boys and girls.

5 Building strong foundations: Literacy and numeracy

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that as part of a strategy to raise community and parental awareness of the effect certain parenting styles may have on learning and behaviour and the correlation between behavioural problems and learning difficulties; the relevant Ministers should:

■ review the available Australian qualitative and quantitative research on behaviour and learning;

■ develop information for inclusion in a package for new parents on the effect of particular parenting styles on children's behaviour and learning; and

■ develop an information package or packages, for General Practitioners, child-care workers, pre-school teachers and others in contact with parents of pre-schoolers, which includes a guide to services to help parents whose children have behaviour and attention problems.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that:

a) all State and Territory health authorities ensure that kindergarten children are fully tested for hearing and sight problems; and

b) the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments jointly fund the implementation of the strategies used in the Victorian study on auditory processing in primary schools throughout Australia. Implementation should include:

■ professional development for all primary school teachers to raise awareness about the normal development of auditory processing in children;

■ the provision of the relevant auditory screening tests and training to equip teachers to administer preliminary tests with referral to specialised support where needed; and

■ professional development for teachers in practical classroom management and teaching strategies to address the needs of children with auditory processing difficulties.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that:

a) the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the State and Territory governments, coordinate a public information program comprised of the following elements:

■ information for all new parents on the importance of developing early language skills and the games and strategies which parents and child carers can use to develop these skills, with follow-up at key stages in their pre-school years;

■ basic information on the way that adults traditionally have interacted with boys and girls stressing the importance to parents of developing pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills in both boys and girls while recognising their differences; and

■ a periodic, low intensity, media campaign to raise and maintain community awareness about the need to talk and play with babies and young children in ways that develop their pre-literacy and numeracy skills.

b) the Commonwealth, with the State and Territory governments, work with pre-schools and childcare centres to ensure that there is adequate awareness of, and attention to, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skill development in boys as well as girls.

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth-funded literacy programs should be required to adopt an integrated approach which includes a strong element of explicit, intensive, systematic phonics instruction.

When programs such as Reading Recovery are used they should be augmented by explicit, intensive phonics instruction as part of regular classroom teaching.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth, State and Territory education authorities ensure that teacher education places much greater emphasis on the pedagogy of teaching literacy and numeracy. Further, pre-service training in teaching literacy should involve an integrated approach which includes explicit, intensive, structured phonics as an essential element in early and remedial literacy instruction.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth, State and Territory funding for teachers' professional development be increased on a dollar for dollar basis and that it be directed towards a greater focus on literacy and on early diagnosis and intervention to assist children at risk. This should involve developing skills in intensive phonics instruction as part of an integrated approach to teaching literacy.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth in conjunction with the States and Territories, ensure funding for the provision of a Literacy Coordinator and an early intervention intensive literacy teacher in every Australian primary school, the proportion of a full-time equivalent load depending on the size of the school and the measured level of literacy need.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth ensure that existing funding under the Literacy and Numeracy program to support students in the middle years is used effectively by the States and Territories to provide intensive literacy support programs for disadvantaged students whose need for them is identified by the Literacy Benchmark Tests.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that teacher pre-service and professional development programs assist teachers with practical strategies to develop secondary students' operational literacy and communication skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the State and Territory governments reduce class sizes in Years K to 3 to not more than 20 students by 2005. The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth support this by assisting to meet the additional capital cost of reduced class sizes (in proportion to its current share of capital funding).

6 Making the connections: Schools, teachers and role models

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth government fund research to evaluate different approaches and strategies to maximise the engagement and motivation of boys and girls in the middle years of school.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth fund comparative research into the influence that different school structures, curricula, assessment systems, the availability of alternatives to senior school (such as TAFE), behaviour management and other factors have on the apparent retention rates and attitudes to school of boys and girls.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth Government fund the assessment of existing programs being run by the States and Territories and community organisations to assist the most vulnerable and disengaged students with a view to the States and Territories expanding successful programs.

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education, Science and Training encourage university teacher education faculties to place greater emphasis on the development of behaviour management and interpersonal skills, particularly those that will support teachers to establish effective relationships with boys.

The Committee further recommends that more professional development be provided for this purpose for practising teachers.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that State and Territory Governments urgently address the remuneration of teachers with the payment of substantial additional allowances for skilled and experienced teachers as

an inducement for them to remain in teaching and to attract new teachers by offering more attractive career paths.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth government and university teacher education faculties work together to develop admission processes for teacher education courses that evaluate relevant personal attributes in addition to academic achievement.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth provide a substantial number of HECS-free scholarships for equal numbers of males and females to undertake teacher training. These would be based on merit and take into account other admission criteria developed in line with Recommendation 19.

The scholarships would operate as a rebate of the HECS liability while the recipients were employed by a recognised teaching authority.

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that education authorities use their websites and in-service workshops to promote successful strategies being used by schools to involve fathers and other men from the community as positive male role models.

7 Conclusion

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth review all aspects of published national education data to ensure its adequacy to comprehensively inform Commonwealth and State and Territory education policy.

The Committee further recommends that in the event that the States and Territories do not provide the necessary data, the Commonwealth consider making the Australian Bureau of Statistics responsible for its collection and compilation.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that MCEETYA continue to work towards achieving greater consistency in their policy frameworks and greater uniformity in assessment processes so that results, including gender differences, are more readily comparable between States and Territories.

Recommendation 24

Where Commonwealth funding is provided in response to other recommendations in this report, the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government ensure that the outcomes are monitored and that appropriate conditions are attached to Commonwealth funding to ensure that the States and Territories do not undermine the Commonwealth's contribution by reducing their own financial commitment.

1 Introduction

Why the education of boys?

1.1 The fact that boys are generally not achieving as well as girls across the curriculum from early literacy to senior secondary is a growing concern to many parents and teachers. The impacts of under-achievement on the boys themselves and on the broader society are such that the issues must be addressed.

1.2 At the first public hearing of this inquiry the then Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs presented the following powerful evidence of the differentials in the educational achievements of boys and girls:

- nationally, girls' results in Year 3 and Year 5 Literacy Benchmark tests are up to five percentage points higher than boys';
- the Year 12 retention rate for girls is between 11 and 12 percentage points higher than it is for boys;
- girls' average levels of achievement in a majority of subjects assessed at senior secondary level are higher and the gap in the total has been widening, for example the difference between the aggregate NSW Tertiary Entrance Score for girls and boys widened from 0.6 to 19 percentage points between 1981 and 1996; and
- over 56 per cent of students in higher education are women.[1]

1.3 The difficulty experienced by some students, particularly boys, in early literacy requires attention as it can impact adversely on the rest of their schooling. Further, the apparent decline in boys' relative performance at secondary level requires investigation and explanation, especially as the

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1 *see Transcript of Evidence, pp. 1-17, and Submission Nos. 117 and 117.2.*

gap in achievement between boys and girls appears to have widened significantly in the last 10 to 20 years.

1.4 Another concern is the growing trend for boys to disengage from learning, misbehave or truant. Explanations variously offered include the absence of fathers, the lack of male teachers, inappropriate curricula and teaching strategies, the feminisation of curricula and assessment systems, the declining status of men and the prevalence of negative, violent or hyper-masculine stereotypes in the media.

1.5 The costs of under-achievement are substantial. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling has estimated that the lifetime cost to the country of each early school leaver is $74,000. Half of this amount is a direct monetary cost borne by the individual and government and the remaining half is a social cost borne by the individual, government and the community.[2]

1.6 While public discussion has raised awareness and concern it has frequently done little to analyse, and inform the public about, the complexities underlying the issues. The quality of the educational program is central but there is undeniable evidence that gender is a factor in education. It interacts in complex ways with other social factors such as race, ethnicity, locality and aspects of socio-economic status to influence the educational success of children, be they boys or girls.

1.7 Aspects of the public discussion have at times pitched boys' education in competition with girls' education suggesting that there has been enough focus on girls and now it is the boys' turn. This is simplistic and misleading and detracts from an analysis of the real issues. It is the role of schools to help all children achieve their potential. Efforts to raise the achievement of boys can be made without threatening the gains made by girls in recent years.

1.8 The Committee has concluded that the focus of the current approach embodied in *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* is too narrow and recommends that it be recast to provide for separate, but complementary, education strategies for boys and girls. The way forward for both boys and girls is to identify their joint and separate educational needs and to implement a policy framework and positive strategies to address those needs, focussing on positive student / teacher relationships, teacher training, relevant high quality educational programs and effective teaching.

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2 National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, *The Cost to Australia of Early School-Leaving*, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, October 1999, p. 1.

The terms of reference

1.9 In the terms of reference for the inquiry into the education of boys the Committee was specifically asked to inquire and report on:

- the social, cultural and educational factors affecting the education of boys in Australian schools, particularly in relation to their literacy needs and socialisation skills in the early and middle years of schooling; and
- the strategies which schools have adopted to help address these factors, those strategies which have been successful and scope for their broader implementation or increased effectiveness.

1.10 While the early to middle years of schooling are covered comprehensively, as required by the terms of reference, this report also looks beyond these years at school. Much of the public debate and concern about the education of boys takes place around published measures of educational attainment at Year 12, such as the New South Wales Higher School Certificate or the Victorian Certificate of Education. Other measures of social and economic success beyond school, such as rates of imprisonment, unemployment, labour force and tertiary education participation rates and income, have also featured prominently in the debate and been raised in evidence to the inquiry. This is understandable as the social, cultural and educational factors affecting boys in the early and middle years of schooling influence their outcomes beyond those years.

The structure of the report

1.11 First of all it is necessary to review carefully a range of school and post-school outcomes to establish whether the evidence on boys' and girls' educational attainments supports claims about boys' under-achievement. A number of key indicators are considered in Chapter 2. The evidence does not support the notion that the educational needs of boys and girls are in competition such that measures must be taken to prevent either sex enjoying an educational advantage. However, it does clearly point to areas of concern with boys' education. The needs of boys and girls can and must be addressed simultaneously and education must focus on achieving the best possible outcomes for all students.

1.12 Education does not occur in isolation from the wider community and what happens in schools must be looked at in the context of the social and

economic changes that have taken place over recent decades. A range of labour market, social and education policy changes have impacted on the educational experience of boys and girls but appear to have more adversely affected boys. These changes are relevant in considering whether policies and practices in Australian schools are appropriate for both boys and girls. These issues are examined in Chapter 3 and are also presented as important background to the remainder of the report.

1.13 Curriculum, pedagogy and assessment interact with each other, and other factors, to create the learning environment in each school. The Committee believes that teachers and school leaders are pivotal in shaping positive learning environments out of that interaction of factors but that, above all, it is good teaching that motivates and engages all students. Being aware of learning differences and adapting practices to meet the common and different needs of girls and boys is essential to helping all students reach their potential. This issue is considered in Chapter 4 together with some examples of effective practice.

1.14 The Committee is convinced by the substantial body of evidence indicating that literacy and numeracy, and success in early literacy in particular, are crucial to success at school and in later life and learning. Boys are generally not performing as well as girls at literacy tasks and this has important implications for the rest of their schooling. Some of the reasons for this gender performance differential are considered in Chapter 5 along with potential interventions. Again, the evidence does not support the notion that boys' needs and girls' needs are in competition. The Committee has recommended interventions aimed at lifting the achievement of all students and simultaneously reducing the gap between boys and girls and between high and low achievers.

1.15 Chapter 6 considers a range of other issues of public concern that were put to the inquiry. These issues include peer and teacher / student relationships, teacher education, school structures, behaviour management, men in teaching and the importance of male role models. The Committee believes many of these factors are of central importance to students, teachers and parents but their significance has been understated by education departments, some academics and education unions as they have sought to protect the current gender equity policy framework. The Committee also believes it is time to consider whether a gap between rhetoric and practice in education is partially responsible for the alienation of some boys and whether teachers are adequately supported to create conditions where good teacher / student relationships flourish.

The aims of the report

1.16 The degree of public concern about boys' education issues, and the welfare of all boys and girls, demands a dispassionate examination of the facts. This report attempts to do that from the perspective that Australia should provide the best education possible for all children irrespective of their sex or social background. The Committee hopes that the report will lead to a better public understanding of the issues, a commitment to further research where that is needed and a positive response by Australian governments to its recommendations.

1.17 The Committee has made several important recommendations in this report that require the Commonwealth to make a financial contribution. However, the Committee is concerned that extra Commonwealth grants for education should not be offset by the reallocation of State and Territory resources elsewhere. Therefore, the Committee expects that the Commonwealth will ensure that the outcomes are monitored and that appropriate conditions are attached to Commonwealth funding to ensure that the States and Territories do not undermine, but actively support, the Commonwealth's commitment.

2 Stating the case: School and post-school outcomes

2.1 A wide range of measures of educational performance and outcomes were presented in submissions to show that boys are either disadvantaged or not disadvantaged relative to girls in education. Measures include the results of national testing against early literacy benchmarks, measures of attainment at Years 10 and 12, retention rates and other indicators such as post school employment, income and education outcomes. The complexities inherent in this information are not easily covered in media presentations. As a result the public debate on boys' achievement has focused on the relatively simple measures while the underlying complexities have been overlooked.

2.2 This chapter considers a range of outcomes and measures of attainment and what they reveal about the relative achievement of males and females in society, education and employment. The evidence reveals a mixed picture of under-achievement which is influenced by characteristics such as the quality of teaching, curriculum, resources, gender, socio-economic status, racial and ethnic background and location, many of which are inter-related.

2.3 Research in the United Kingdom has revealed a widening gap between boys and girls in achievement in secondary education similar to that evident in Australia.[1] The patterns of achievement in literacy for Australian boys and girls are similar to those evident in many other countries with girls outperforming boys. More girls than boys complete school in other OECD countries and women have higher rates of entry to university. Patterns of participation in vocational education are also similar.[2]

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1 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 27.

2 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 20.

2.4 This chapter provides evidence that many of the old gender divisions in education and employment still exist almost unchanged. This repudiates the suggestion that too much has been done for girls and that now it is the boys' turn. It is more constructive to seek to understand the issues in boys' education as a need to address boys' under-achievement rather than as a need to 'correct' an apparent disadvantage relative to girls. The way forward for both boys and girls is to identify their joint and separate educational needs and to implement a policy framework and strategies to address those needs.

Early literacy

Boys and literacy attainment

2.5 It is well understood from the *National School English Literacy Survey (1996)* that, on average, boys do not perform as well as girls in each aspect of literacy — writing, reading, viewing, speaking and listening — and that the gender differences are greatest for the expressive modes of writing and speaking and least for the receptive modes of reading, listening and viewing. The differences between boys and girls are greater for children from lower socio-economic groups.[3] Also, boys typically comprise about two-thirds of all students referred to reading recovery programs in Australian schools.[4]

2.6 National literacy benchmark data for Years 3 and 5 in 1999 also show that girls consistently outperform boys, but that the levels of attainment and the gender gap in different States and Territories are not uniform. There are also likely to be social, biological or developmental reasons why boys' levels of attainment are lower than girls. A comparison of the State and Territory Year 3 and Year 5 reading benchmark results for 1999 and 2000 demonstrates that it is possible to raise the overall achievement of both boys and girls while reducing the achievement gap between them.[5] (Year 3 and Year 5 reading benchmark data are included at Appendix E.)

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3 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, pp. 5-6.

4 *For example see* Mr J. Coleborne, Executive Director, School Education Division, ACT Department of Education and Community Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, p.1324; Professor P. Hill, Deputy Dean, Centre for Applied Educational Research, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 519; Ms M. O'Halloran, Senior Vice-President, New South Wales Teachers Federation, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 366.

5 DEST, *Submission No. 117.2*, pp. 14-17.

2.7 Another study, conducted by the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER), confirmed the gender difference in literacy attainment at 14 years of age and also found that the difference between the percentages of boys and girls who achieved mastery in reading comprehension had increased from 3 percentage points to 8 percentage points over the period 1975 to 1995.[6]

2.8 Within each socio-economic group, boys achieve at a lower level than girls and the difference is larger for lower socio-economic groups.[7] Other factors besides socio-economic status and gender which affect early literacy attainment include aboriginality, geographic location and whether a student is from a non-English speaking background.[8] Some of these factors exert a greater influence than gender on the acquisition of literacy skills and some appear to compound the effect of gender.

2.9 Clear differences in the levels of literacy attainment between boys and girls emerge in early primary school. The differences persist into high school and are likely to be compounded by other factors. Literacy issues are covered more comprehensively in Chapter 5.

School retention and early leaving

The importance of school completion

2.10 Early school leaving is a matter of great concern because young people who have not completed Year 12 have much greater difficulty making a successful transition from school to post-school education and training, and employment. This is highlighted by the differential in unemployment rates for young people with differing levels of educational attainment.

2.11 In May 2000, the unemployment rate for young people 20 to 24 years of age who did not complete Year 12 was 18.5 per cent, compared with 8.2 per cent for those who had completed school, 7 per cent for those with skilled vocational qualifications and 3.8 per cent for those with university degrees. The returns to education in the labour market are sustained

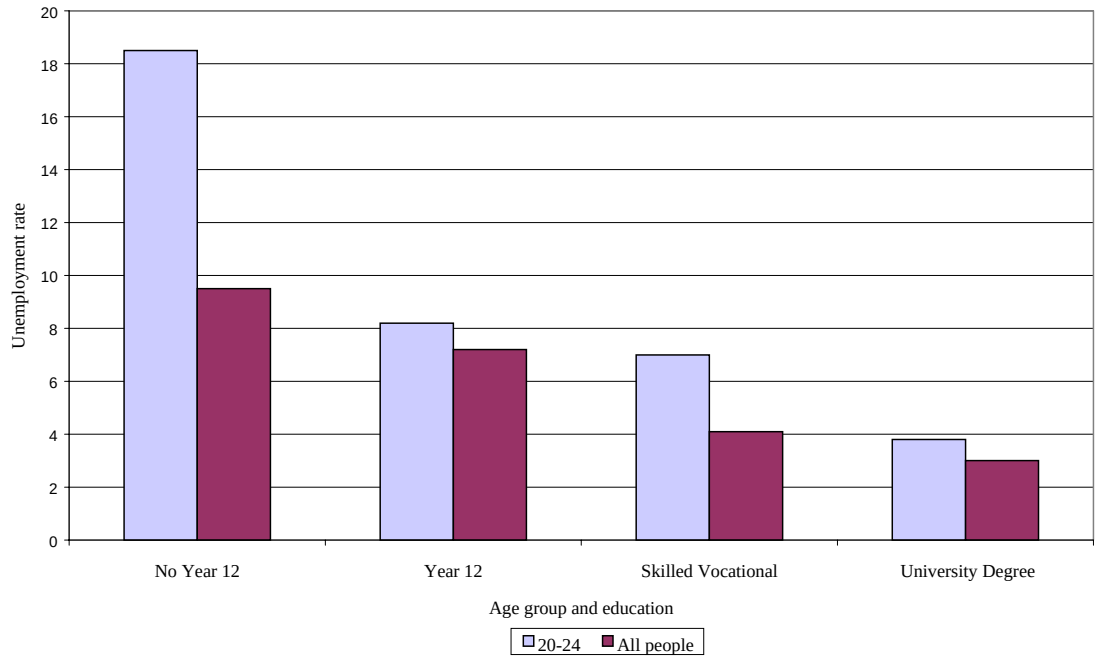
6 Marks, G. N. and Ainley, J., *Reading Comprehension and Numeracy among Junior Secondary School Students in Australia*, LSAY Research Report No. 3, ACER, March 1997, p. 6, *and see* DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 7.

7 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 8.

8 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 8 and NSW Department of Education and Training *Submission No. 164*, p. 12.

throughout life. In May 2000, the unemployment rate for all people who did not complete Year 12 was 9.5 per cent compared to 7.2 per cent for those who had completed school, 4.1 per cent for those with skilled vocational qualifications and 3 per cent for those with higher education qualifications[9] (*See* Figure 2.1 *below*).

Figure 2.1 Unemployment by Educational Attainment



Source *ABS, Transition from School to Work, (Cat. no. 6227.0), May 2000.*

2.12 The costs of early school leaving are substantial. The National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling has estimated that the lifetime cost to the country of each early school leaver is $74,000. Half of this amount is a direct monetary cost borne by the individual ($14,700) and government ($22,400) and the remaining half is a social cost borne by the individual, government and the community.[10]

2.13 Labour market changes, which will be covered more comprehensively in Chapter 3, have increased the competition that early school leavers face for a declining number of low and unskilled jobs.

9 Derived from ABS, *Transition from School to Work*, (Cat. no. 6227.0), May 2000.

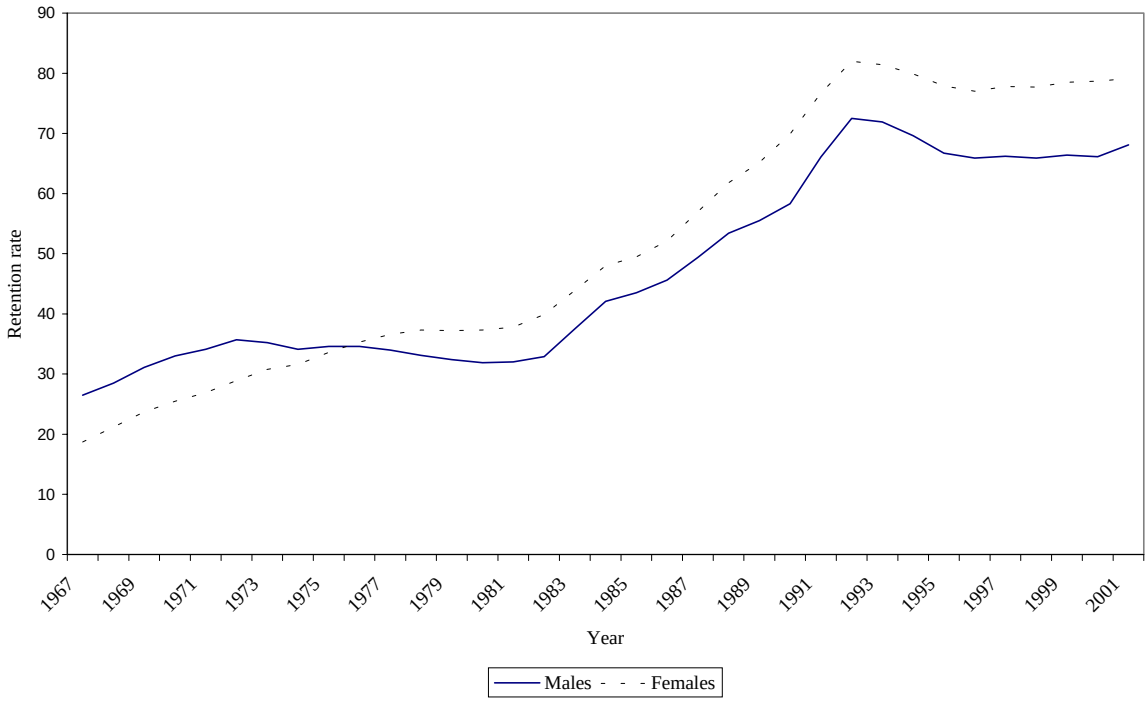
10 National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling, *The Cost to Australia of Early School-Leaving*, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, October 1999, p. 1.

Year 12 apparent retention rates[11]

2.14 In 2000, the gender gap in school retention was 12.6 percentage points, the widest gap ever. It fell to 11 percentage points in 2001 but this is still very wide by historical standards (*see* Figure 2.2 *below)*. The national school retention rate rose strongly throughout the 1980s peaking at 77.1 per cent in 1992. It subsequently declined to 71.3 per cent in 1996 and plateaued just above that level at 72.3 per cent in both 1999 and 2000.[12]

2.15 The rise and decline has not been uniform for males and females. Since 1976, when the retention rate for females first exceeded the rate for males, the gender gap in school retention widened to 11.6 percentage points in 1990. The gender gap narrowed to 9.5 percentage points in 1992 and 1993 as retention rates for males and females peaked. The subsequent decline was greater for males until the rate turned upwards in 2000. The female retention rate plateaued several years earlier and began rising. Both male and female retention rates now appear to be trending upwards.

Figure 2.2 National Year 12 Apparent Retention Rates by Gender



Source DEET (1993), Retention & participation in Australian schools, 1967 to 1992; DEET (1994), Retention & participation in Australian schools, 1993; ABS, Schools Australia, (Cat. no. 4221.0) 1994 onwards.

11 The Year 12 Apparent Retention Rate is the percentage of students of a given cohort who continue to Year 12. A range of factors such as inter-state and inter-sector student transfers and repeating students are not taken into account hence the qualification "apparent".

12 DEET (1993), *Retention & participation in Australian schools*, 1967 to 1992; DEET (1994), *Retention & participation in Australian schools*, 1993; ABS, *Schools Australia*, (Cat. no. 4221.0) 1994 onwards.

Table 2.1 Year 12 Retention Rates by State and Gender, 2000

Sector	NSW		VIC		Qld		SA	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Government	54.7	67.4	62.2	80.7	66.7	78	50.3	62.5
Non-Government	76.7	86.6	81.2	94.2	83.6	91.5	79.3	90.6
All Schools	61.7	73.5	69.2	85.8	72.4	82.6	59.2	71.8

Table 2.1 Year 12 Retention Rates by State and Gender, 2000 — *continued*

Sector	WA		Tas		NT		ACT	
	Boys	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*	*Boys*	*Girls*
Government	60.2	72.4	62.2	77.9	50	68.2	100.1	109.7
Non-Government	77	88.3	65.2	72.5	27.2	35.2	64.1	60.8
All Schools	65.5	77.6	63	76.4	42.5	57	84.9	89.3

Source ABS, National Schools Statistics Collection.

2.16 The timing and magnitude of the national trends in school retention rates for males and females vary for each state and school sector. However, the trends in each state and in each school sector are broadly consistent — female retention rates overtook male retention rates some years ago and the gaps between the male and female retention rates are now relatively wide[13] (*see* Table 2.1, *above*).

Factors linked to early school leaving

2.17 As with the acquisition of literacy skills, factors such as the quality of teaching, curriculum, resources, socio-economic status, geographic locality, ethnicity and aboriginality, in addition to gender have been linked with early school leaving. Research by the Australian Council for Educational Research has also linked other factors such as early school achievement, attitudes to school, school type, parental education levels, and parents' country of birth to early school leaving.[14] An ACER research report concluded that at the same levels of school achievement and with social background and demographic factors equal, boys are substantially more likely than girls to leave school early and "the gender difference is

13 DEET (1993), *Retention & participation in Australian schools*, 1967 to 1992; DEET (1994), *Retention & participation in Australian schools*, 1993; ABS, *Schools Australia*, (Cat. no. 4221.0) 1994 onwards.

14 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 11, *and see* Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999; Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997; *and* Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000.

large in comparison with other effects".[15] It also found that the gender effect declines somewhat as attitudes and aspirations are introduced into the analysis.

> Therefore, differences between males and females in attitudes to school and aspirations account for some of the gender difference in early school leaving.[16]

2.18 The link between attitudes and gender in the ACER research resonates with the findings of Slade and Trent, who reported that boys often find school a hostile, irrelevant and boring imposition that interferes with their lives outside school.[17] It appears that boys are more likely than girls to act on a negative attitude towards school and leave.

2.19 In the ACER study, school achievement, as measured by literacy and numeracy achievement at age 14, was also found to have a substantial effect on early school leaving which was larger than other individual-level background and school factors such as socio-economic status, geographic location and school type. The influence of school achievement also operates on early school leaving through the effect it has on students' satisfaction with school (especially among boys) and attitudes to achievement (especially among girls).[18]

2.20 Parental education levels and parental country of birth also have an influence on school completion. Higher parental education levels are associated with a higher likelihood of school completion for both males and females although the association has weakened over the last 20 years.[19] Students of non-English speaking backgrounds are more likely to complete school than students from English speaking backgrounds and this remains true when other socio-economic and school factors are constant. However, there is a strong gender difference, with the effect for non-English speaking girls being stronger than for non-English speaking

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15 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 16.

16 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 16.

17 Slade, M. and Trent, F., What the boys are saying: An examination of the views of boys about declining rates of achievement and retention, *International Education Journal Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, and see Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 874-888.

18 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 21.

19 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 18 *and see* Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000, p. 25.

boys. The higher propensity for boys from non-English speaking backgrounds to complete school compared to other boys is explained almost entirely by their more positive attitudes to school.[20]

2.21 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are much more likely to leave school early with ACER research indicating that Aboriginal boys are slightly more likely to leave early compared to Aboriginal girls. For Aboriginal boys, ACER concluded "that their increased propensity to leave school early can be largely attributed to their social backgrounds and school achievement" but the study was unable to offer explanations as to why Aboriginal girls were more likely than other girls to leave school early.[21] A Northern Territory study of Jabiru Area School found much wider differences in Aboriginal male and female enrolment rates at 45.4 and 61.9 per cent of the total possible enrolment respectively. Large differences in tertiary enrolments by Aboriginal men and women and awards to Aboriginal boys and girls of the South Australian Certificate of Education (NT) also imply a much wider differential in Aboriginal male and female participation and school completion rates than that suggested by the ACER study.[22]

2.22 ACER research confirms the expectation that the rapid rise in school retention from the early 1980s to the mid 1990s has broadened the social composition of school completers significantly. For example, recent populations of school completers now include higher proportions of students from government schools, from lower socio-economic backgrounds and from families with lower levels of educational achievement.[23]

2.23 However, the effect on the composition of the (now smaller) pool of non-completers has been to increase slightly the proportions of non-completers who are: boys from low socio-economic backgrounds; boys and girls from rural areas; and boys and girls whose parents were born in Australia. Boys now comprise a much higher proportion of school non-completers than they did 20 years ago. In the early 1980s boys comprised 56 per cent of non-completers and by the mid 1990s they comprised 64 per cent.[24]

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20 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 18.

21 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 19.

22 Northern Territory Aboriginal Male Health Reference Committee, *Submission No. 190*, p. 1.

23 Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000, pp. 18 & 20.

24 Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000, pp. 21-23.

2.24 The rising retention rate over the last twenty years has been only one of several factors, but a major factor, driving changes in curriculum and pedagogy, as schools and entire education systems have struggled to meet the needs of students. The social composition of the student body in senior schooling has changed enormously and those students face a radically different labour market, which has different expectations of them, than the labour market of 20 years ago. This is forcing an examination of policy and practice at all levels in education from the early years onwards.

> The fact that we have many more young people participating in senior secondary has brought some of the issues to the fore and made us go back and find and dig and discover the issues that have been there inherent in the early years and primary years for a long time. I would not necessarily say that these trends were not there in the early years 20 years ago. It is that we have become more alert to the fact that they are in our face in senior secondary.[25]

2.25 While school retention rates for boys and girls have risen strongly over recent decades a significant proportion of young people, nearly two thirds of whom are boys, still fail to complete school. Literacy and numeracy achievement have a strong influence on school completion as do attitudes towards school and aspirations. Attitudes towards school seem to be a particular influence on boys' decisions to leave school.

2.26 Attitudes towards school and aspirations are influenced by school achievement and by a range of social and family factors. This suggests that governments should direct attempts to lift school participation for boys and girls by lifting the levels of literacy and numeracy achievement for the lowest achievers, encouraging parents and students to develop higher aspirations and more positive attitudes towards school and education, and by modifying the school environment to make it a more acceptable experience.

25 Ms Jennifer Stehn, Executive Director, Curriculum, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 827.

Suspension from school and truancy

Suspension

2.27 Approximately 80 per cent of the students suspended or excluded from school are boys, a rate consistent in each state that provided data.[26] Two States provided some detailed data to the Committee. In South Australia during Term 3, 1999, 2,374 boys and 651 girls were suspended. In Western Australia during 2000, 7,402 boys and 1,956 girls were suspended.[27] Of the students suspended, males are more likely than females to have been suspended for violence.[28] If these figures are typical of other states, the national figures are quite alarming.

2.28 Suspension rates rise rapidly from Year 8, peaking in Year 9 and dropping significantly after Year 10.[29] Rates of suspension seem to be highest for the groups of students who are the most marginally engaged in schooling.[30]

2.29 Suspensions and expulsions appear to be closely correlated to boys' disengagement from school. The connection between school engagement and the behaviours that lead to detention or suspension is illustrated by the observation of a South Australian school principal.

> …once you get to Year 9 the figures explode. The difference is just astronomical between boys and girls. The interesting bit though is that there is not an arithmetic relationship between the compulsory areas of schooling, the compulsory subjects and the subjects that the kids have chosen. Boys get sent out of class far more often than girls at Year 9, but they get sent out radically less proportionately from the subjects that they have chosen than from the subjects that they just have to do.[31]

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26 *see* South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, *Submission No. 154*, p. 4; Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168*, p. 2; Tasmanian Department of Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1106; Western Australian Department of Education, *Exhibit No. 126*.

27 South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, 'Audit of Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions, Term 3, 1999', *Exhibit No. 49*, p. 3; Western Australian Department of Education, *Exhibit No. 126*.

28 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 14.

29 *see* Western Australian Department of Education, *Exhibit No. 126*.

30 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 14.

31 Mr Anthony Kirkman, Manager Middle School, Hallett Cove School, Department of Education, Training and Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 825.

Truancy — dropping out

2.30 Data on school enrolments by gender suggest that some children drop out of school permanently at a very early age, with proportionately more boys leaving as early as Year 8.

> In Year 7, the ratio of males to females is virtually the same as in primary school. In Year 8, however, there is a gain in the percentage of females, suggesting that more males drop out very early. In Year 9, more females than males appear to drop out. Thereafter, in Years 10, 11 and 12 attrition is greater for males than females in expanding ratios each year.[32]

2.31 That young people are dropping out of school as early as Year 8 was supported by the observations of training providers.

> We have a fairly close relationship with Centrelink. The figures they have are that between 500 and 600 people under the age of 30 years of age have year 8 or less… The other area of concern is that we know from statistics and our own research within the region that between 150 and 200 young people every year fall out of the Murrumba Downs region in terms of education. Whether they are expelled, do not go to school, truant regularly or are not achieving is not the question; the question is that the numbers are there.[33]

2.32 The Committee's predecessor in the 37th Parliament, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, undertook an inquiry into truancy and exclusion from school. In its report presented in 1996, that Committee lamented the inadequacy of the data available on truancy, school exclusion and 'informal suspensions' and expressed its concern that 'the dimension of the problem of school non- attendance amongst children and young people is unknown.'[34] While a number of jurisdictions provided the Committee with current data on school suspensions, the historical data necessary to determine whether rates of truancy or exclusion from school have improved or worsened are unavailable.

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32 Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*, July 2000, p. 30; based on ABS, *Schools Australia*, 1998.

33 Mr Dallas Morgan-Williams, Manager MW Training Consultants, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 586, *and see* p. 588.

34 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Truancy and Exclusion from School*, 1996, p. 13.

2.33 The Committee is also concerned that the aggregate enrolment data indicates that some young people appear to be leaving school before the minimum leaving age. In some jurisdictions there is no system to track the school attendance of students in transition from primary to high school or who may leave one school and not re-enrol at another, especially from one school year to the next.[35] The potential for this problem to involve more than one jurisdiction as people move interstate suggests that the issue of tracking school attendance should be considered by the Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA).

Year 12 performance

Year 12 performance and the boys' education debate

2.34 The apparent decline in boys' relative performance requires investigation and explanation, especially as the gender gap in achievement appears to have widened dramatically in the last ten years. The relative achievement of boys and girls in Year 12 assessments features prominently in the popular debate. Concern in the 1970s and 1980s about the low participation rates of girls in higher maths and science has given way to widespread concern about the decline in boys' achievement relative to girls as measured by average tertiary entrance scores and similar general measures of achievement. However, it is important to remember that while improvements in educational outcomes for some groups of girls are real they have eluded many other girls.

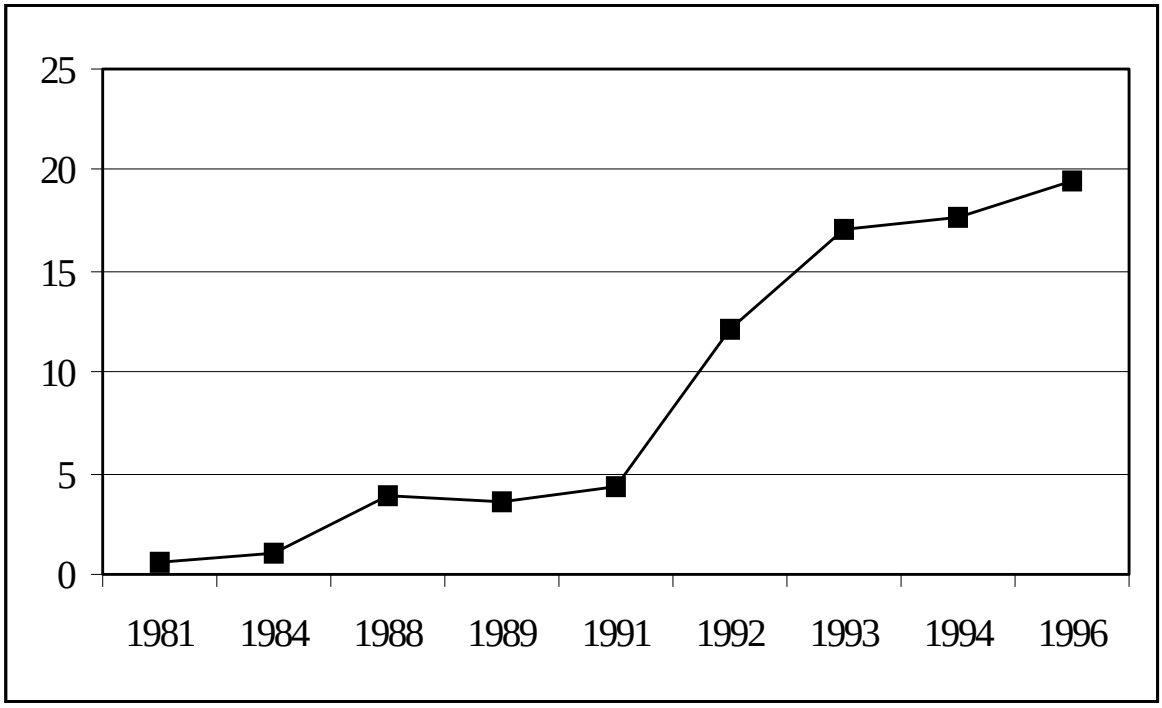
2.35 The popular debate belies the underlying complexity of what is happening and overlooks the fact that boys and girls have dramatically divergent patterns of enrolment in different subjects in senior school. In upper secondary school, there are many reasons why boys and girls choose particular subjects. This makes it extremely difficult to make sound comparisons between the performance of boys and girls, who have enrolled in subjects in unequal numbers, and to draw reliable conclusions about the different levels of achievement that boys and girls attain.

35 *see Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 638-639.

Average levels of achievement at Year 12

2.36 Recent research indicates that that the pattern of gender performance is similar throughout Australia and that the gap between girls and boys appears to have widened between 1994 and 2000.[36] For example, aggregate results at Year 12 level show that in the 1999 NSW Higher School Certificate, for subjects studied by more than 100 students, the girls' average mark was higher than the boys' in 36 of the 40 subjects by up to 11 per cent. In 1998 in Queensland there was a greater proportion of girls in the top performance bands in 36 of 45 Year 12 subjects and in 1998 in South Australia there was a higher proportion of girls in the top performance bands in 27 of 34 subjects in Year 12.[37]

Figure 2.3 Marks by which Female Average TES exceeded Male Average TES 1981 -1996 (NSW)



Source *MacCann R., ABS, as produced by Buckingham, J., Submission No. 26, p. 3.*

2.37 The situation in NSW is a dramatic example. The difference between boys' and girls' average NSW Tertiary Entrance Score (TES) results has widened from 0.6 marks in 1981 to 19.4 marks in 1996, with the difference increasing rapidly in the early 1990s. While changes to assessment practices[38] have been suggested as a possible explanation for the rapid

36 Department of Education, Science and Training, *Submission No. 117.2*, p. 8.

37 Ms Jennifer Buckingham, *Submission No. 26*, p. 2.

38 Mr Robert Horne, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 7.

divergence in the early 1990s no definitive explanation has been offered. However, it does need to be clearly understood that the TES is a ranking instrument, not an absolute measure of educational attainment (*see* Figure 2.3 *above*).

2.38 One of the difficulties with these general measures of achievement is that the cohort of young people completing Year 12 in the late 1990s or the early 2000s is much more broadly representative than the cohort which completed Year 12 in 1981. The Year 12 cohorts from 20 years apart are not directly comparable because the Year 12 retention rates for boys and girls in 1981 were 32 per cent and 37.8 per cent respectively and by 2000 these rates had increased to 66.1 per cent and 78.7 per cent.[39] Perhaps the more recent cohorts of boys in senior school are not being catered for as well as the more recent cohorts of girls.

> Twenty years ago, the majority of boys would leave at a particular age because there was manual, industrial age type of technology that they could be involved in… Now… you do not have those manual jobs… The other thing you have is very much a multicultural society which was not there 20 years ago, and a lot of the parents do not understand the system that they have brought their children to. They want to see their boy get a bit of paper, and that bit of paper has to be a Higher School Certificate. It does not matter that they are not able to do the things… So there is this differential… because the boys we are seeing in year 12 now we would not have seen in year 12 twenty years ago.[40]

2.39 Research by the ACER suggests that various factors have a different influence on boys' and girls' decisions to complete school[41] and that this affects the relative social composition of the boys and girls who leave school early[42] and, by implication, of those who complete school. Put more clearly, the 'matching' cohorts of boys and girls in the same senior year do not have identical characteristics. Similarly, cohorts of boys or girls in Year 12 from recent years do not share identical characteristics with earlier groups and extreme care must be taken when making comparisons.

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39 DEET (1993), *Retention & participation in Australian schools*, 1967 to 1992; ABS, *Schools Australia*, (Cat. no. 4221.0) 1994 onwards.

40 Mr Stephen Billington, Principal, James Cook Boys Technology High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 715.

41 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, pp. 3-8.

42 Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000, pp. 21-23.

2.40 If proportionately more low-achieving boys than low-achieving girls are early school leavers then other factors must be present to account for the better average performance of girls. In other words, if the retention rate of low achieving boys were higher, the differentials in Year 12 achievement between boys and girls would probably be greater.

Literacy demands of the senior curriculum

2.41 There is general agreement that the senior curriculum has become more language intensive, with the assessment of courses such as physics, chemistry and even mathematics requiring greater application of literacy skills than it did 20 years ago. There is also general acknowledgment that this has come about as education authorities attempted to remove barriers to girls' participation in these subjects. Frustration was expressed by some students and teachers at the imbalance in assessment methods.

> One of the things I have noticed is that…the senior curriculum…is very language intense. In South Australia…the physics exam and the structure of the physics course was changed to make it more appropriate for girls. This meant an extended response question was put in, the multiple choice questions were taken out; more problem solving, more literacy type skills required in the physics exam. We have seen this shift now. The girls are achieving better but the boys are dropping, because they are actually having to write extended writing in physics and chemistry.[43]

> As for specialist maths or four-unit mathematics at year 12, a content analysis has demonstrated that on average the level of the nomenclature and sophisticated verbal reasoning skills that are required—to even understand what the problem is—is on average four times greater than what is required in Australian history and English literature. So not only does the student have to understand what is being asked, they must translate it then into a mathematical algorithm and justify or explicate the solution.[44]

2.42 These observations on the increasing literacy demands of the senior curriculum and assessment were not contested by any of the education agencies which gave written or oral evidence. Given the existence of the measurable literacy gap between boys and girls in the early years, and the

43 Mrs Bronte Nicholls, Association of Independent Schools of South Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 842, *and see* Mrs Sylvia Walton, Principal, Tintern Schools, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 230.

44 Dr Kenneth Rowe, Principal Research Fellow, ACER, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 117.

relative reluctance among boys to read and develop their literacy skills, it is likely that the different literacy demands of the senior curricula have been a factor in boys' declining relative performance.

2.43 The broader social composition of secondary students, which now includes a higher proportion of students from non-English speaking and lower socio-economic backgrounds, may have increased the proportion of students in senior secondary school who struggle with the literacy demands of the senior curriculum.

> The boys at this school…often come from non-English speaking backgrounds. What I have noticed here is that the boys have a lot of trouble trying to bring life into their reading. I think that is because they are not running the movie in their head. They can do the literal work very easily... What they do not seem to grasp—and that is right up to year 12—is the inferential work. They literally will be given five or six facts, and they cannot then say, 'From all of this information, this is what I see.' They do not pick up the nuance of the language, the colour of it and its various emotive qualities…The whole aim of everything we do—role plays, other small drama pieces, empathy exercises, even visuals such as drawings on the board—is to let them see that this phrase represents this set of emotions… If we do not show them, they will not see it. You literally have to stand up there and perform for them so that they can pick up that type of thing. That is a huge gap in their experience of literacy.[45]

2.44 It is important that curriculum and assessment methods are related to the world outside school so that school prepares young people to be able to find, assimilate and process knowledge in the ways that they will be expected to do so outside school. It is important that students can understand and communicate the implications of their work rather than simply perform calculations and solve problems, albeit very complex ones. However, assessment procedures for maths and sciences must, as a first requirement, provide information about students' knowledge, skills and achievement in the subject, and not be a de facto examination of students' English comprehension and expression.

45 Ms Deborah Rees, Classroom Teacher, James Cook Boys Technology High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 717-8.

Gendered patterns of subject choice

2.45 Boys and girls exercise quite different patterns of subject choice in the high school curriculum. The sub-groups of boys and girls enrolled in any particular subject at the same level are usually not numerically balanced and will not necessarily have comparable levels of ability, interest and motivation. Consequently, it should not be a surprise that aggregate measures — such as the NSW Higher School Certificate and Victorian Certificate of Education scores — reveal different levels of performance for boys and girls when these results are compared by gender.

2.46 Gender equity strategies intended to break down barriers to girls' access to, and performance in, high status and traditionally male areas of study have been in place for over two decades. In more recent years there has been a significant broadening of the senior school curriculum to meet the challenges of rising retention rates and a rapidly changing labour market. Despite these efforts, there remain stark differences in the way that boys and girls access the curriculum.

Enrolment patterns in popular Key Learning Areas

2.47 There are a number of Year 12 subject areas which are popular with both boys and girls studying at the tertiary entrance level. Most students of both sexes take subjects in four of the eight Key Learning Areas (KLAs).

> Over 90 per cent of both sexes take English…; around 80 per cent of both take at least one mathematics subject; around 90 per cent of both take at least one subject in the Society and Environment KLA; and about two thirds of both take at least one science subject.[46]

2.48 Table 2.1 (*below*) disaggregates subject participation data by gender to reveal some distinctly different patterns of participation even within the four KLAs[47] that most boys and girls study. Care needs to be taken in comparing the numbers and proportions of boys and girls studying subjects because of the different male and female Year 12 retention rates. While 93 per cent of boys and 100 per cent of girls studied English in 1997[48] this amounted to a numerical difference of over 15,000 students.

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46 Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*, July 2000, p. 37. The national data presented in this report have been used in the discussion for simplicity and consistency. A range of studies and the State and Territory Government submissions to the inquiry confirm these enrolment patterns.

47 The four most popular KLAs are English, Mathematics, Science and Society and Environment.

48 English is not a compulsory subject in every State and Territory.

About the same number of boys (79,500) and girls (77,300) studied mathematics but they represented 85 per cent and 79 per cent of all male and female students, respectively. Eighty five per cent of boys and 94 per cent of girls studied subjects in the Society and Environment KLA, a numerical difference of about 25,000 students. The percentage enrolments of boys and girls were comparable in the science KLA at 66 per cent and 67 per cent, respectively, but nearly 7,000 more girls than boys studied in that key learning area.

2.49 More significant differences between boys' and girls' enrolment patterns become apparent when data on enrolments within the four most popular KLAs are examined. Fifty nine per cent of all boys who studied science in 1997 studied a physical science while only 35 per cent of girls who studied science did so —about 14,000 more boys. About 21,000 more girls than boys studied biological and other (non-physical) sciences. Other major gender differences become apparent within the four most popular KLAs when the level of study is taken into account. These will be considered later in this chapter.

Table 2.2 Participation by 1997 Y12 students in tertiary accredited subjects by Key Learning Area

Key Learning Area	Males		Females	
	Subject enrolments	*%*	*Subject enrolments*	*%*
English	76,388	93	91,885	100
Mathematics	79,596	85	77,307	79
Society and Environment	85,666	85	110,628	94
Science	71,793	67	78,430	66
Physical sciences	*42,077*	*59***	*27,655*	*35***
Biological and other sciences	*29,716*	*41***	*50,775*	*65***
Arts	22,834	23	38,557	34
Languages other than English	8,257	10	16,524	18
Technology	43,004	49	28,625	36
Computer studies	*21,960*	*51***	*13,387*	*47***
Home science	*1,156*	*3***	*5,936*	*21***
Technical studies	*17,031*	*40***	*7,628*	*27***
Agriculture	*2,857*	*7***	*1,674*	*6***
Health and Physical Education	17,946	22	20,597	24

** *Denotes the number of boys or girls doing that subject as a percentage of boys or girls studying in that Key Learning Area. Other figures are the percentage of Year 12 students studying at least one subject in that Key Learning Area*

Source *Based on Table 2.3 in* Collins, C., Kenway, J. and McLeod,J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School, July 2000, p. 37.*

Enrolment patterns in other Key Learning Areas

2.50 The gender differences are greater outside the four most popular KLAs (Table 2.1). In 1997 twice as many girls as boys studied a Language other than English — over 8,000 more girls than boys — and three girls studied Arts subjects for every two boys — nearly 16,000 more girls than boys. The Technology KLA was and still is more attractive to boys than girls. Overall, 49 per cent of boys compared to 36 per cent of girls selected a subject in this KLA — over 14,000 more boys than girls. Fifty one per cent of the boys who studied a technology subject enrolled in Computer Studies compared to only 36 per cent of girls who studied a technology subject — 8,500 more boys than girls. Again, within the Technology KLA, over 9,000 more boys than girls enrolled in Technical Studies.

Enrolment patterns at different levels of study in popular Key Learning Areas

2.51 A detailed study of gendered participation and outcomes in senior secondary schooling by Teese et al., *Who wins at school*, confirmed that boys and girls were unevenly distributed across the various levels of English, mathematics and science subjects and that there were similar gender disparities in participation and the distribution of ability in other subject areas.[49] While the study was based on data from the late 1980s and early 1990s and was published in 1995, its identification and analysis of enrolment patterns is still relevant today as the enrolment patterns are substantially unchanged.[50]

English

2.52 Senior high school English has diversified over recent decades and may now be studied at a range of different levels in some states. Teese found that where English is not compulsory, boys were less likely than girls to enrol and a lower proportion of boys than girls attempted the higher levels of English study.[51] Despite the fact that more girls than boys study English and that the girls are more broadly representative of their cohort than boys, girls still outperform boys in this subject.

> Since more academically oriented girls take 2-unit and 3-unit English [in NSW], those enrolling in English (General) include a

49 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995.

50 Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*, July 2000, p. 40.

51 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, pp. 45-49.

> higher proportion of average and below-average students. Yet despite this, girls' performance in this subject deviates sharply from that of boys. As many as 27% of boys were located in the lowest band of performance compared to only about 14% of girls.[52]
>
> English is the major subject area where average female and male outcomes at the HSC diverge. Males are twice as likely as females to be in the bottom quartile of English achievement in the HSC and almost half as likely to be in the top quartile.[53]

2.53 *Who wins at school* concluded that boys are "decidedly disadvantaged in English". The significance of this disadvantage lies in the centrality of English as a cultural transmitter and as a means for developing communication and inter-personal skills.[54] These skills are more highly valued by the labour market than they were and this issue is examined later in this report. Success in English supports other learning and may be more necessary as the language complexity of other subjects increases.

Mathematics

2.54 The mathematics KLA, and higher level maths courses in particular, enrol disproportionate numbers of boys. Boys' results tend to be distributed towards the upper and lower ranges with a 'hollowing out' in the middle. This reflects the tendency of large numbers of boys to select mathematics at this level regardless of their strength in this subject area. Girls' results tend to be more evenly distributed and they experience lower rates of failure.[55]

2.55 Analysis of NSW results revealed that proportionally fewer but more able girls enrolled in higher level mathematics. The effect of this was that a small group of able girls were competing with a larger and more representative group of boys in the hardest mathematics subjects and they tended to do better except at the very highest level. At the intermediate 2-unit level [NSW] girls' results were skewed towards good results while boys' results were skewed towards poor results, implying that, compared to boys, a smaller proportion of abler girls added the more difficult 3-unit maths to their program. By excluding themselves from higher level maths, abler girls enhanced the overall results of girls at the 2-unit level and

52 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 49.

53 NSW Department of Education and Training, *Submission No. 164*, p 13.

54 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, pp. 46 & 72.

55 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 52.

ensured that girls are disproportionately represented in the upper bands of performance.[56]

> Boys move more freely into the higher levels of the mathematics program. Girls are more restrained. Their rewards for achievement are given at lower levels of the program than their ability range would justify…They are more often confined, in effect, to levels of the mathematics program which do not do justice to their abilities.[57]

2.56 More recent ACER data from 1998 confirms that these gender patterns persist in mathematics enrolments and therefore the *Who wins at school* conclusions based on earlier data are still pertinent.

> …the Victorian data indicate that the grouping together of all Mathematics units masks much larger differences in participation rates. In these data, males make up 78 per cent of the enrolments in specialist mathematics, whereas they constitute 67 per cent of enrolments in mathematics methods and 63 per cent of enrolments in fundamental mathematics (general or further mathematics).[58]

Sciences

2.57 The divergent patterns of boys' and girls' enrolments in the sciences is discussed above in relation to the data in Table 2.1. Teese made the following observations on boys' and girls' relative participation and performance.

> Chemistry is a subject in which the performance benefits which should accompany lower relative participation…are not delivered [for girls]. This does not mean girls are not good at chemistry. Rather the factors which tend to discourage higher levels of participation in this subject would also appear to inhibit or check higher levels of achievement…
>
> Girls…are less likely [than boys] to do either very well in physics or very badly. Their numbers concentrate in the middle bands of performance. These reverse images are based on very large differences in participation rates…

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56 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 54.

57 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 58.

58 Fullarton, S., Ainley, J., *Subject Choice by Students in Year 12 in Australian Secondary Schools*, LSAY Research Report No. 15, ACER, June 2000, p. 13.

> Only in the case of biology — a highly 'feminized' subject, undertaken by nearly 40% of girls in New South Wales but only 25% of boys — do we see performance indicators working in favour of girls. Girls are much more highly represented than boys in the top bands of performance and much less well represented in the bottom bands. These biology profiles are very nearly the reverse of the chemistry profiles.[59]

Society and Environment

2.58 This Key Learning Area includes the humanities, social sciences, economics and business subjects and occupies the 'middle order' of the curriculum after the higher level English, mathematics and physical science subjects.

> Because this hierarchical pattern operates on both academic and gender lines, the intermediate and lower orders of the curriculum become the meeting ground of *boys who have been less successful in their school careers* and *girls who are more representative of the whole ability range*.[60]

2.59 The Teese analysis of two subjects, economics and geography, are presented here as examples of gender differences in participation and performance in this KLA.

2.60 Economics, perhaps because it is more vocationally oriented than alternatives in this subject group, attracts more boys than girls. Many of the boys seemed to have chosen economics in refuge from higher level maths and science, and they were competing with a smaller number of girls whose average level of achievement was higher. While the performance profiles of boys and girls in economics were similar in the Teese study, girls were less likely than boys to do poorly and just as likely to do very well.[61]

2.61 Geography has broader appeal than economics and is sometimes offered at more than one level. The gender balance of enrolments in geography is relatively even although the Teese study suggests that boys and girls tend to have different reasons for choosing it — girls generally did better than boys but they were more likely to have chosen geography because they

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59 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 62.

60 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 62.

61 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 65.

were intrinsically attracted to it. As with economics, many boys had chosen geography in refuge from higher level maths and science. In higher-level geography courses, which enrolled boys and girls who had been similarly motivated by interest and ability, performance profiles did not diverge as much, although girls were more likely to achieve at the highest level.[62]

Factors driving subject choice

2.62 Boys generally have a much more vocational orientation to schooling and choose their subjects accordingly. Forty three per cent of boys compared with 15 per cent of girls limit themselves to study in the mathematics, science or technology Key Learning Areas. There is a strong tendency for high achieving boys to gravitate to the maths and physical science options while the low achievers tend towards the technology subjects popular with boys.[63] Girls are more inclined to select subjects on the basis of their interests and abilities.

> Girls who participate in higher level mathematics and physics are the more determined and capable of the girls in the same cohort, while some boys consider they ought to do these subjects by virtue of their gender and / or career aspirations. It may also be that boys feel more social pressure to make mathematics / science choices and consequently [choose] harder options.[64]

2.63 The concentration of boys' subject choice in the maths and physical sciences also has strategic benefits for those experiencing success.

> The most popular subjects taken by girls do not provide the same kinds of benefits as the most popular subjects taken by boys — coherence, mutual support, vocational orientation, reliability of personal investment, and institutional prestige. When girls do enter this terrain — as they have done increasingly — it is with more restraint and with less complete success.[65]

2.64 An ACER study identified that there is a strong correlation between social advantage — as measured by socio-economic status and parental

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62 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, pp. 65-72.

63 Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*, July 2000, p. 39.

64 Northern Territory Department of Education, *Submission No. 162*, p. 7.

65 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 108.

education — and participation in the physical sciences, higher level mathematics and foreign languages. The economics and business subjects and the technology group of subjects tend to be selected by students from lower socio-economic backgrounds.[66] The gender differences in subject selection and performance are less severe for boys and girls in higher socio-economic groups.

> The relative disadvantages experienced by boys and girls in the curriculum are not experienced equally by all groups of girls and boys. Social analysis shows that the higher up the scale of socio-economic status, the more the disadvantages by girls in maths and sciences decline and the more the disadvantages faced by boys in English also decline. Gender relativities…are weakest where individuals enjoy the greatest cultural and material advantages, though they are by no means absent, even here.[67]

Conclusions about subject choice

2.65 This report has devoted significant space to subject choice and performance as evidence of the underlying complexities of the issue of boys' and girls' relative academic performance. The essential point is that aggregate measures of relative performance at Year 12 cannot alone be relied upon as measures of relative advantage or disadvantage.

2.66 The trends in the average Year 12 performance of boys and girls may be symptomatic of other underlying problems and warrant investigation. Aggregate data on gender performance must be carefully considered in the light of information on relative male and female school and subject participation rates and a clear understanding of what motivates boys and girls to select particular subjects. It has been clearly demonstrated that even numerically matched enrolments of boys and girls in a popular subject area are unlikely to be an even match in terms of their interest, motivation and ability. A flaw in the public debate about boys' academic achievement is that comparisons are drawn between boys and girls as if they were evenly matched cohorts at each level of each subject. Clearly they are not and we should be very cautious about formulating policy on the assumption that they are.

2.67 One of the problems in analysing the effects of patterns of subject choice is establishing the 'optimal' pattern. The discussion usually revolves around

66 Fullarton, S., Ainley, J., *Subject Choice by Students in Year 12 in Australian Secondary Schools*, LSAY Research Report No. 15, ACER, June 2000, pp. 14 & 17.

67 Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M., Polesel, J., *Who wins at school: Boys and girls in Australian secondary education*, University of Melbourne, 1995, p. 109.

boys' or girls' under or over-enrolment in certain subjects. By implication this is in comparison to participation rates of the opposite sex, although these may not be 'optimal' either.

2.68 The exhaustive analysis of the *Who wins at school* study indicates that while more girls than boys complete school, girls as a group have a lower rate of participation in higher level maths and physical science subjects. Strategies to encourage girls to attempt academic challenges commensurate with their abilities are still required and new strategies need to be devised to unlock the potential of girls who under-achieve at school as a result of social or other factors.

2.69 In comparison to girls a much higher proportion of boys participate in higher level maths and physical science subjects even when success is unlikely. Boy's lower rates of participation and success in English and the humanities arguably limit their development of better communication and interpersonal skills and a wider understanding of the world around them. Arguably this also affects their attitudes to life and social issues.

2.70 The labour market has changed dramatically over recent decades towards placing increasing value on the skills developed in subjects where boys' participation rates are lower. (*See* Chapter 3 for a detailed discussion of labour market change.) Successful strategies to encourage boys to study a wider range of subjects might exploit boys' vocational orientation towards education by alerting them to the increasing importance the labour market now places on communication and interpersonal skills. As with girls, particular strategies need to be devised to unlock the potential of boys who under-achieve at school.

Indigenous boys

2.71 The Committee has not undertaken a separate investigation into the issues surrounding the educational under-achievement of indigenous boys. However, it has received sufficient evidence to indicate that most of the issues affecting boys' education generally also apply to indigenous boys, although they clearly suffer from some additional educational disadvantages.

2.72 While most of the published data for indigenous students does not distinguish between boys and girls, it is clear that indigenous boys and girls are the most disadvantaged students in Australia. The available data

suggests that within the indigenous cohort of students, boys are not achieving as well as girls.

2.73 For the purpose of its submission to the inquiry, the NSW Department of Education and Training analysed literacy data isolating key variables including Aboriginality and gender. This analysis showed:

> Aboriginality has the greatest effect on achievement when considered on its own, far above that for all students, and within this group, the performance of boys is lower than that for girls indicating that they are more at-risk of lower educational achievement than all other students.[68]

2.74 Participation and school retention rates for indigenous students are lower than for non-indigenous students, and indigenous boys are more likely to leave school early than indigenous girls.[69] South Australian data shows that in that State, indigenous students are more than twice as likely as non-indigenous students to be suspended or excluded from school.[70]

2.75 Data published by the Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory (the Collins report) shows that indigenous girls are much more likely than indigenous boys both to complete school and to qualify for entry into the Northern Territory University.[71] However, school completion and university entrance by indigenous girls is still far below numbers commensurate with their proportion of the population.

2.76 The Committee believes that most of the issues it has identified relating to the under-achievement of boys, generally, also apply to indigenous boys, sometimes with greater impact. The Collins report supports this assertion although that report also identifies a host of other issues that have been beyond the scope of this inquiry to investigate. In particular, issues identified in this report are relevant to indigenous boys in the following ways:

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68 New South Wales Department of Education and Training, *Submission No. 164*, p. 10.

69 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 19; *and see* Northern Territory Aboriginal Male Health Reference Committee, *Submission No. 190*, p. 1; *and see* Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, p. 158, for comparisons of indigenous / non-indigenous participation rates in the Northern Territory.

70 South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, 'Audit of Suspensions, Exclusions and Expulsions, Term 3, 1999', *Exhibit No. 49*, pp. 3, 5 & 9.

71 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, p. 31.

- **Tracking the attendance of students moving between primary and secondary schools and between schools**: The Collins report noted the impact of poor school attendance on the outcomes of indigenous students and raised the issue of the mobility of indigenous students as a factor in their under-attendance or non-attendance.[72] Mobility of indigenous students also negatively affects the establishment of good teacher/student relationships which are central to good teaching.

- **Hearing difficulties:** (*Recommendation 5*) The Collins report noted the prevalence of hearing and other health and nutrition problems in indigenous students and the effect these have on their literacy and other learning outcomes.[73] The Committee's recommendation relating to hearing and auditory processing difficulties could have significant benefits for many indigenous students, boys and girls.

- **Pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills development:** (*Recommendation 6*) Community-based programs to raise parental awareness of activities that will enhance the development of pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills may be beneficial. These might be effectively supported through mobile and community pre-schools and health services.[74]

- **Researched-based explicit literacy instruction:** (*Recommendations 7 to 12*) The Collins report noted the need for explicit pedagogy and also noted reluctance on the part of some teachers to be strong in their literacy instruction. 'Coupled with the diffidence some teachers feel about teaching Western concepts in the first instance — for fear of contributing to an assimilationist rather than educationist outcome — it is small wonder some teachers are tentative about the role and place of literacy instruction for Indigenous students.'[75]

2.77 The lack of positive male role models is an issue that is more acute in indigenous communities and the impact seems to be more negative on indigenous boys than it is for non-indigenous boys. It is also necessary to consider educational provision and achievement in the wider context of the full circumstances indigenous people experience.

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72 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, pp. 146-8.

73 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, pp. 120, & 150-153.

74 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, pp. 96-99.

75 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, pp. 131-133.

> We cannot take the discussion away from the circumstances in which indigenous people in contemporary Australia find themselves—the disadvantage and poverty facing many indigenous families. For indigenous boys, some of those things are a whole life experience; it is not just geared to what happens in education. We need to look in a holistic way at what happens to young men and boys in indigenous communities. There is a lack of role models for a lot of indigenous boys—in their own homes, in the workplace and in service delivery areas. A lot of that is to do with what happens to young men as they get older: indigenous young men are being caught up in juvenile justice in our jails and detention centres a lot more than young indigenous women are.[76]
>
> One thing that we need to take into consideration in the education of males in the community is the usurping of the male role as part of the colonisation process… Most of the things that are happening now have been taken over by women in the community. That is not to say that is a wrong thing. It is just that, because our blokes have been so marginalised in terms of health and education in particular, the women have sat up and said, 'If you blokes are not going to do it, we will do it,' and away they go. The women's liberation movement and that sort of thing have helped with that process, so we have become further and further marginalised. It has got to the point that if we are talking about male health and male education issues… we have females representing males on all the different forums. That makes it really hard as well for our males to grab the bull by the horns and say, 'This is the way we are going, because I have there a bloke that is showing me the way.'[77]

2.78 The issues of health and the roles of indigenous men in the community also affect the way that indigenous boys perceive the value and relevance of education. The tendency, at least in the Northern Territory, for the indigenous workers in health, education and local government to be mostly women also may lead indigenous boys to infer that rewards such as employment do not necessarily flow from education.[78]

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76 Ms Carmelita Dunn, General Manager Indigenous Education Division, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1252.

77 Mr John Christophersen, Interim Chairman, Northern Territory Indigenous Male Health Reference Group, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1267.

78 Mr Ken Davies, Acting General Manager School Services, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *and* Ms Carmelita Dunn, General Manager Indigenous Education Division, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1264.

> The 3Rs are part of the education process that relate to employment prospects at the end. If you are talking about a system where you do not have to worry about employment prospects, do you need to be able to read, write and add up? If you want to leave school, go to university, get a job and earn X amount of dollars a year, you need your 3Rs. But if, at the end of the day, you are not going to have a job or some menial work, CDEP or whatever it might be, why do you need to have the 3Rs?[79]

> There are other things apart from the social context of indigenous people. In most remote communities in the Northern Territory a lot of indigenous people say, 'Education for what?' There is a limited labour market in remote communities. The prospect facing many indigenous young people coming out of our system is CDEP, which is the equivalent of Working for the Dole. I think that is an issue as well.[80]

2.79 Schooling in remote communities often involves second language learning because Standard Australian English is not the language of everyday speech either at home or play. This complicates the development of English language and literacy for many students and is compounded for some students by poor hearing and erratic school attendance.[81]

2.80 The solutions to these difficulties for indigenous students are not obvious and will involve a more integrated approach to the delivery of health, education, employment and other community services, especially in remote areas. Successful approaches must involve the local community in the planning and implementation. The importance of local involvement is evident in the examples of successful practice in remote communities given in the Collins report and in a range of examples provided in Education Queensland's submission to the inquiry.

2.81 The Committee has not made recommendations to address issues specific to indigenous boys although it believes that many of its recommendations will benefit indigenous boys and girls along with all students. More detailed work on the specific needs of indigenous students has been done by others. These reports include *What works? Explorations in improving*

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79 Mr John Christophersen, Interim Chairman, Northern Territory Indigenous Male Health Reference Group, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1270.

80 Ms Carmelita Dunn, General Manager Indigenous Education Division, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1264.

81 Collins, B. and Lea, T., *Learning Lessons: An Independent Review of Indigenous Education in the Northern Territory*, Northern Territory Department of Education, 1999, pp. 127-129.

outcomes for Indigenous students[82] and the Collins report. The Committee urges all education authorities, including the non-government organisations with responsibility for educating indigenous students, to review these reports for information on aspects of policy and practice relevant to their responsibilities.

Post-school outcomes

Social outcomes

2.82 A number of submissions argued that the current attention to education and employment outcomes in framing gender equity policy is too narrow because it ignores a range of other gender imbalances.

> …our society sees the delinquency rate among males as a normal and natural state of affairs. Why do boys suicide at a rate five times above what is 'normal' for girls? How is it that we so readily accept a subculture of violence and alcohol abuse with boys and men as a part of their manliness?[83]

> While men and women had similar overall [rates of mental illness] there were differences by type of mental disorder. Women were more likely than men to have experienced anxiety disorders (12% compared with 7.1%) and affective disorders (7.4% compared with 4.2%). On the other hand, men were more than twice as likely as women to have substance use disorders (11% compared with 4.5%)…The prevalence of affective (mood) disorders was highest at 11% for women aged 18–24 years, more than three times the rate for men of this age.[84]

2.83 It follows that a range of other social measures also ought to be used to indicate how effectively families, society and education meet the needs of both boys and girls.[85] The additional indicators suggested included rates of depression and mental illness, attempted and completed suicide, self-

82 McRae, D., Aisworth, G., Cumming, J., Hughes, P., Mackay, T., Price, K., Rowland, M., Warhurst, J., Woods, D., and Zbar, V., *What works? Explorations in improving outcomes for Indigenous students*, March, 2000.

83 Mr John Fleming, *Submission No. 75*, p. 5.

84 *Mental Health and Well Being: Profile of Adults, Australia*, ABS, 4326.0, 1997, p. 6.

85 *see, for example,* Australian Council of State School Organisations, *Submission No. 119*, pp. 8, 12-13; Mr John Fleming, *Submission No. 75*, pp. 5-6; and Mr Richard Fletcher, *Submission No. 166*, p. 14.

harm, drug and alcohol abuse, motor vehicle deaths and injuries, juvenile crime and detention, violent crime and adult rates of imprisonment. The Committee does not intend to imply that these negative outcomes are necessarily attributable to education.

2.84 On many of these types of measures men are not doing well. In 1998, over 80 per cent of the 737 opiate overdose deaths were of males and many more male than female users of heroin and cannabis were frequent (once a week or more) or daily users. Among secondary students 12 to 17 years of age in 1996, more young males than females are likely to have recently used illicit drugs or engaged in binge drinking. In 1999-2000, 274 males, or nearly five and one half times as many males as females, committed homicide and males were one and one half times more likely than females to be homicide victims.[86] In 1998, 2,150 males, or four times as many males as females, committed suicide.[87] In 2000, 1,300 males, or two and one half times as many males as females, were killed on the roads.[88]

2.85 In 2000, 604 males, or nine times as many males as females, were held in juvenile correction institutions. This is consistent with the sex distribution of adult prisoners. Ninety four per cent of adult prisoners are male and two-thirds of prisoners are under 35 years of age. Therefore, about 13,500 adult males under 35 years were in custody on 30 June 2000.[89]

2.86 For males, evidence linking low educational attainment, unemployment, drug and alcohol abuse and imprisonment is clear. In NSW prisons in the early 1990s only six per cent of prisoners had completed secondary schooling while three per cent had received little or no schooling. Of the prison population at that time 74 per cent had a problem with drug or alcohol abuse and, at the time of their arrest, 72 per cent of prisoners were not employed. About two per cent of prisoners had a significant intellectual disability and a further 11 per cent were at the margin of being classified with an intellectual disability. Around 15 per cent of all prisoners were enrolled in basic literacy courses. [90]

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86 Australian Institute of Criminology, *see* http://www.aic.gov.au/research/drugs/stats; http://www.aic.gov.au/research/hmonitor/stats.

87 Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, *Australian Injury Prevention Bulletin*, Issue 23, 2000, *see*, http://www.nisu.flinders.edu.au/pubs/bulletin23/bulletin23-4.html.

88 Australian Transport Safety Bureau, *Road Fatalities Australia: 2000 Statistical Summary*, August 2001, pp. 6-8.

89 Australian Institute of Criminology, *see* http://www.aic.gov.au/stats/juveniles/2000 *and* http://www.aic.gov.au/publications/facts/2001/sec6.html.

90 Grant, D. *Prisons: The Continuing Crisis in NSW*, Sydney, 1992, p. 8; 49 per cent of prisoners had a drug problem, 18 per cent had an alcohol problem and seven per cent had both a drug and alcohol problem; 59 per cent of prisoners were unemployed while a further 13 per cent were

2.87 The connections between low levels of education attainment and substance abuse and imprisonment were not included in the current *Gender Equity Framework*. These deficiencies are not taken up in the report *Factors Influencing the Participation of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations After Leaving School* which was commissioned to further inform gender equity policy making.

2.88 It is naive to believe that education alone can successfully address all of society's social problems and it would be unreasonable to load such an expectation onto teachers and schools. However, the links between poor educational attainment and negative social outcomes do justify the inclusion of social indicators as relevant indicators of the effectiveness of educational policies and strategies.

Labour market outcomes

2.89 There are major gender differences in the post-school labour market outcomes for young people. Employment for young men and women tends to be concentrated in different industries and occupations although both young men and young women, and teenagers in particular, are heavily reliant on employment in the retail industry. Teenage males enjoy a marked advantage over teenage females in access to permanent full-time employment largely through the opportunities provided by apprenticeships in the traditional trades and the access males have to unskilled labouring jobs. Long term trends in the youth labour market which have a bearing on the boys' education issue are considered in Chapter 3.

2.90 Table 2.3 (*below)* details some of the differences in the employment outcomes for men and women 20 - 24 years of age. In particular:

- young men are more likely to be employed;
- young men are more likely to be unemployed[91];
- young women are more likely to be studying, whether or not they are in the labour force;
- young women are much more likely to be working part-time; and

on permanent pensions, *and see* Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee, *Report of the inquiry into Education and Training in Correctional Facilities,* April 1996, p. 86, 13.5 per cent of NSW prisoners in 1993/94 were unable to read and write.

91 Differences in the labour force participation rates of males and females make it possible for men simultaneously to be more likely to be employed and more likely to be unemployed.

- young women are much more likely to be not studying and not in the labour force.

Table 2.3: Labour Market Characteristics of People 20-24 years of age by sex, August 1998

	Males	Females	Persons
% age of the population in the labour force	86	75.9	81
% age of the population employed	75	67.6	71.3
% age of the population studying and not in labour force	8.5	9.7	9.1
% age of the population not studying and not in labour Force	5.4	14.4	9.8
% age of the population studying	17.4	21.4	19.3
% age of the population combining work and study	7.4	10.5	8.9
% age of the population unemployed	11	8.3	9.6
part-time employment as a % age of full-time employment	20.1	34.5	26.9

Source *From ABS Labour Force, Australia, Cat No. 6203.0, see Wooden, M. and VandenHuevel, A in Australia's Young Adults: The Deepening Divide, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 1999, p. 39.*

2.91 These differing patterns of participation in employment and education reflect differences in the opportunities which young men and women have available to them when they leave school. The labour market does not present young men and women with an identical set of opportunities and, on average, young men earn significantly more than young women.[92]

2.92 An ACER report found that, at 19 years of age, males in full-time employment with very low levels of literacy achievement (as measured at age 14) earn, on average, more than females at 19 years of age in full-time employment with very high levels of literacy achievement.[93] This group of teenage males also earned more than all but the very highest achieving males the same age.

2.93 A number of submissions from teachers' unions suggested that this calls into question the significance of the boys and literacy issue.[94] It is disturbing that organisations so closely connected to education could take this position and ignore the remaining evidence in the same ACER report

92 Landt, et al, 1998 and ABS, *Australia's Young Adults: The Deepening Divide, Dusseldorp Skills Forum*, 1999, p. 89.

93 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, pp. 33-37.

94 Australian Education Union, *Submission No. 150*, p. 26, *and see* Queensland Teachers' Union, *Submission No. 160*, p. 7; NSW Teachers' Federation, *Submission No. 148*, p. 13.

which showed that both males and females with low and very low achievement in literacy and numeracy were more likely to be unemployed, and to be unemployed for longer periods, than higher achievers.[95] It also ignores the questions of career paths, future prospects and long term earning patterns.

2.94 The transition from school to work is difficult for many young people and teenage females and young women are less likely to successfully negotiate a path to full-time employment than males in the same age groups. However, the objective of public education must be to enable all students, irrespective of their sex or other background factors, to achieve their full potential. While the labour market disadvantage of women exists and warrants its own policy responses it can never be a justification for down-playing the educational needs of any individual or group.

Tertiary education

2.95 The proportion of enrolments in post-secondary study leading to a recognised qualification is split evenly between males and females at 49.2 per cent and 50.8 per cent, respectively.[96] However, patterns of participation in tertiary education by young men differ markedly from those of young women. As with employment data and measures of educational attainment, the aggregate data conceal as much as they reveal about the relative positions of men and women.

Higher education (university)

2.96 During the 1980s the university participation rates for men and women at 19 years of age were approximately the same but by the mid 1990s the university participation rate for women was eight percentage points higher than for men. For the group that entered university in 1999, the participation rate for women at 19 years of age was 9 percentage points higher than for men. For all age groups, in 1999 women accounted for 55.6 per cent of all higher education commencements and 54.9 per cent of total enrolments.[97]

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95 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, p. 19.

96 ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, p. 9.

97 DETYA, *Submission No. 150*, p. 17, *and see* Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., and McMillan, J., *Patterns of Participation in Year 12 and Higher Education in Australia: Trends and Issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, p. 15.

2.97 However, women's apparent advantage in the university participation rate is explained by their dominance of the enrolments in arts, nursing[98] and education courses which do not necessarily provide access to the higher income streams available on completion of other professional education and training. The aggregate measure also conceals women's low participation rates in engineering courses (9 per cent), information technology (24.5 per cent) and architecture and building (33.4 per cent) at the Bachelor degree level.[99] In May 2001, over 56 per cent of students undertaking higher degrees were male.[100]

Vocational education and training (VET)

2.98 In May 2001, male and female enrolments in VET courses[101] were roughly even at 51.5 per cent and 48.5 per cent, respectively[102]. However, the aggregate enrolment data conceal widely divergent patterns of participation which owe much to the better access to the employment-based training opportunities in the traditional trades that young men continue to enjoy.

2.99 In May 2001, males accounted for 66.4 per cent of enrolments at, or immediately below, trade level (Certificate III and IV) whereas women accounted for over 58 per cent of enrolments in basic vocational courses (Certificate I and II). Women accounted for 54.5 per cent of enrolments in Advanced diploma and diploma level courses.[103]

2.100 In 1997 males accounted for 85.2 per cent of commencements in employment-based training and this share equated to 93.4 per cent of commencements if female apprenticeship commencements in hairdressing were excluded. By 1999, males accounted for a much lower 60 per cent of New Apprenticeship commencements[104] but this is mainly because New

98 The transfer of nursing education from hospitals to universities during the 1980s eliminated a major source of employment-based training opportunities that were mostly accessed by women. In 1978, about 26,500 nursing students were in basic training in Australian hospitals, most were women. *see The Report of the Committee of Inquiry into Nurse Education and Training to the Tertiary Education Commission*, August 1978.

99 ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, pp. 12-13; *and see* Australian Secondary Principals' Association, *Submission No. 81*, p. 10.

100 ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, p. 9.

101 VET courses include employment-based training course such as apprenticeships and traineeships in addition to vocational courses, such as accounting courses, which are not attached to employment.

102 ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, p. 9.

103 ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, p. 9.

104 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 52.

Apprenticeships are also available in a broader range of employment occupations with higher rates of female participation. In May 2001, about 85 per cent of teenage employees in skilled trades were male.[105]

Implications

2.101 Despite rising school retention rates and changing curricula, the educational needs of many boys have been overlooked and are not being met. The assumption over recent decades appears to have been that girls have urgent needs to be addressed and that the boys will be all right but the evidence indicates that the latter is not so.

2.102 However, an examination of the issues behind the broad measures of social, economic and educational outcomes reveals that under-achievement and disadvantage closely follow patterns based on gender. Despite major changes to social attitudes about the role and status of women, and two decades of educational policies targeting the needs of girls, many long-standing patterns of employment disadvantage for women and educational under-achievement for girls persist, particularly for girls from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

2.103 Unfortunately, much of the public debate about the educational under-achievement and disengagement of boys has not gone beyond the simplistic idea that educational authorities should reverse an apparent imbalance in educational provision in favour of girls. Boys' needs are more complex than that implies and, in any event, girls' needs have not been universally met. The way forward for both boys and girls is to identify their joint and separate educational needs and to implement a policy framework and strategies to address those needs.

105 ABS Labour Force, original data *and see* ABS Education and Work, Cat No. 6227.0, pp. 12-13; in May 2001, males comprised over 96 per cent of enrolments at Certificate III or IV level in the Engineering and related technologies field and 100 per cent of enrolments at that level in the Architecture and building field.

3 Putting it in context: Labour market, social and policy change

3.1 The last 40 years have witnessed major social and economic changes which have accelerated more recently. Among many things the changes include the type and distribution of employment, social changes such as the structure of families and the status of women as well as educational policy.

3.2 Some changes in education, such as rising school retention rates and changes in curriculum and assessment, were considered in Chapter 2. This chapter considers the education of boys in the wider context of social and economic change and concurrent changes to educational policy and how these may have affected boys.

3.3 Changes to the type and distribution of available employment have relatively clear effects while the impact of social change is more subtle and impossible to quantify. It is also possible that the equity for girls education agenda over the last 20 to 25 years has helped to guide girls through some of the social and economic changes while boys have largely been left to find their own way.

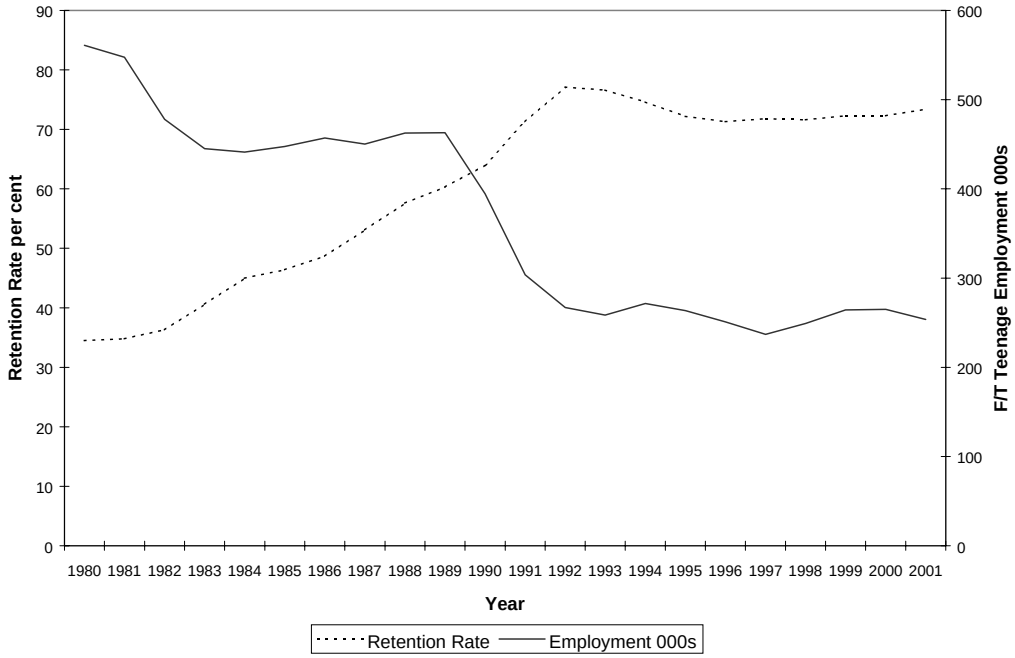
The youth labour market

The shift away from full-time employment

3.4 Major structural changes in the labour market over the last 20 years have had particular significance for young people and the types of skills they need to acquire to be competitive in the labour market. This committee's predecessor, the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, last examined the features of the youth labour market in its report *Youth employment: A working solution* in

1997. It established that employment for young people is highly concentrated in a few, predominantly service, industries, most notably retail. More significantly, the Committee found that teenage full-time employment had collapsed over the 15 year period to June 1997. While the growth in part-time employment for those young people 20 to 24 years of age had exceeded the decline in full-time employment, total employment over the 15 year period for young people 15 to 24 years of age declined by 3 per cent compared to overall employment growth of 31.2 per cent.[1]

Figure 3.1 School retention and teenage full-time employment compared



Source *ABS Schools Australia and ABS Labour Force*

3.5 The rise in school retention over the last two decades has mirrored the decline in teenage full-time employment (*see* Figure 3.1). The Year 12 retention rate for 1981 was 34.8 per cent, and in December 1981, 547,600 teenagers were employed full-time. The 2001 Year 12 retention rate was 73.4 per cent and 253,700 teenagers were in full-time employment. If the 1981 Year 12 retention rate had applied in 2001, there would have been approximately 200,000 fewer students enrolled in Years 11 and 12. Another important change over the last 20 years is that in December 2001 just over 212,000 teenagers had part-time jobs while they attended school.

1 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Youth employment: A working solution*, AGPS, 1997, pp. 2-9.

Total teenage part-time employment in December 2001 was 461,400, compared to 160,800 in December 1981. [2]

3.6 An examination of labour market trends to consider the gender dimension and the implications for educators and the education of boys is illuminating. Table 3.1 shows that full-time employment for both teenage males and females has collapsed but that males increased their relative share of teenage full-time employment from 58 per cent to 62 per cent.[3] This is probably because young males are the major beneficiaries of employment-based training opportunities, particularly in the traditional trades, and these are still predominantly full-time jobs (*see below*). Part-time employment for teenagers is now more evenly distributed between males and females than it was 20 years ago, as are both full and part-time employment for 20 to 24 year olds.

Table 3.1 Full-time and Part-time employment of 15-24 year olds by sex: 1981 to 2001

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Males 15-19 years of age - May 1981	322,100	62,500	384,600
Males 15-19 years of age - May 2001	137,600	199,700	337,300
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*-57.3*	*219.5*	*-12.3*
Females 15-19 years of age - May 1981	230,500	89,600	320,100
Females 15-19 years of age - May 2001	83,100	250,300	333,400
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*-63.9*	*179.4*	*4.2*
Males 20-24 years of age - May 1981	511,100	34,800	545,900
Males 20-24 years of age - May 2001	403,600	116,500	520,100
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*-21*	*234.8*	*-4.8*
Females 20-24 years of age - May 1981	338,700	68,400	407,100
Females 20-24 years of age - May 2001	313,200	169,300	482,500
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*-7.5*	*147.5*	*18.5*
Males - May 1981	3,854,300	222,300	4,076,600
Males - May 2001	4,374,100	721,700	5,095,800
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*13.5*	*224.7*	*25*
Females - May 1981	1,507,500	828,200	2,335,700
Females - May 2001	2,241,100	1,797,000	4,038,100
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*48.7*	*117*	*72.9*
All employment - May 1981	5,361,800	1,050,600	6,412,400
All employment - May 2001	6,615,200	2,518,800	9,134,000
% change over 20 years to May 2001	*23.4*	*139.7*	*42.4*

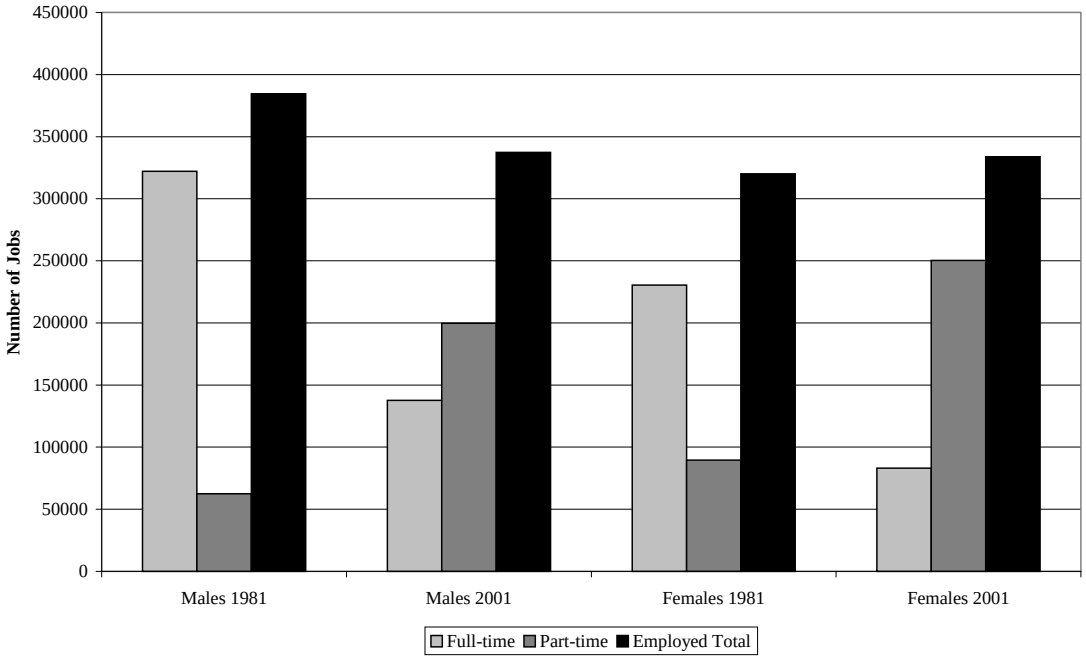
Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

2 ABS Labour Force, Teenage Employment and Unemployment, Australia, Preliminary - Data Report, Cat No. 6202.0.40.001; *and* ABS Schools Australia, Cat. No. 4221; There were 411,500 students enrolled in Year 11 and 12 in Australia in 2001.

3 (1981) 322,100 / (322,100+230,500)x100=58.3%; (2001) 137,600 / (137,600+83,100)x100=62.3%.

3.7 Young people's overall share of the labour market has declined over the last 20 years. The decline in full-time employment for teenage females was offset by a rise in part-time employment while teenage males have suffered an absolute decline in total employment. Young adult women have improved their access to full-time employment relative to young adult men but neither group has maintained its position in relation to the overall labour market. The essential point is that there are over 330,000 fewer teenagers in full-time jobs (and nearly 185,000 fewer males in full-time jobs) today than there were 20 years ago, while the population of this age group has risen by about 72,000 over the same period.

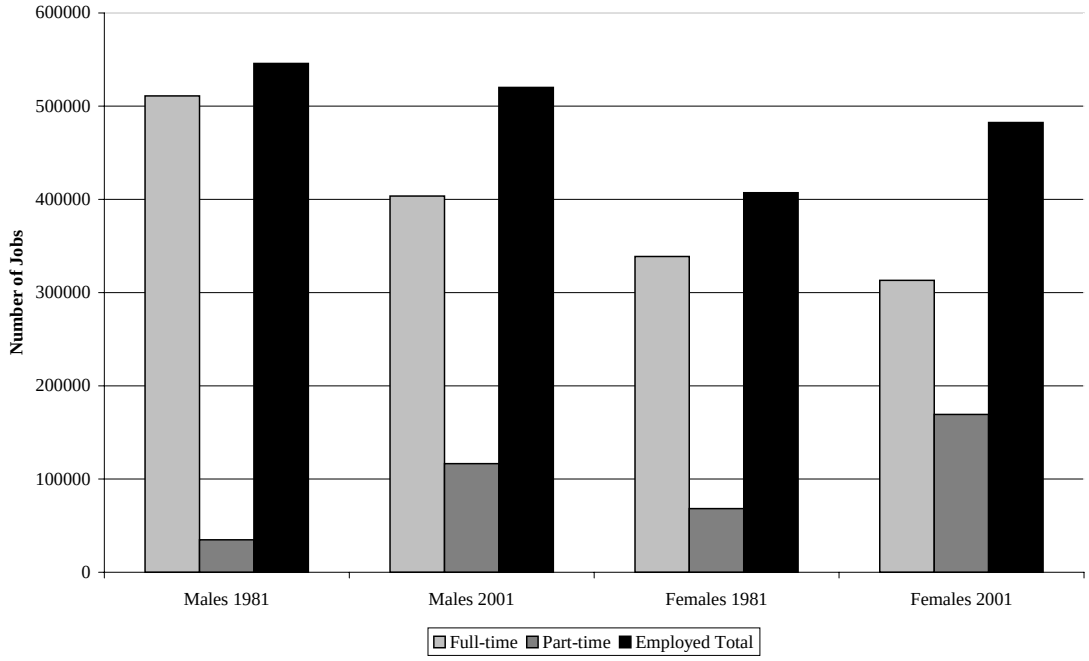
Figure 3.1 Employment: 15 to 19 Years of Age



Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

3.8 Figures 3.1 and 3.2 illustrate the extent of the decline in full-time employment for young people and show that the distribution of the available full-time and part-time employment between males and females has become more even over the last 20 years. However, the apprenticeship system still gives teenage males a marked advantage in access to full-time employment (*see below*) and the convergence in the distribution of the available full-time and part-time employment between young men and women does not necessarily imply that their incomes and access to quality career opportunities have converged to the same extent.

Figure 3.2 Employment: 20 to 24 Years of Age



Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

Other trends in male youth employment

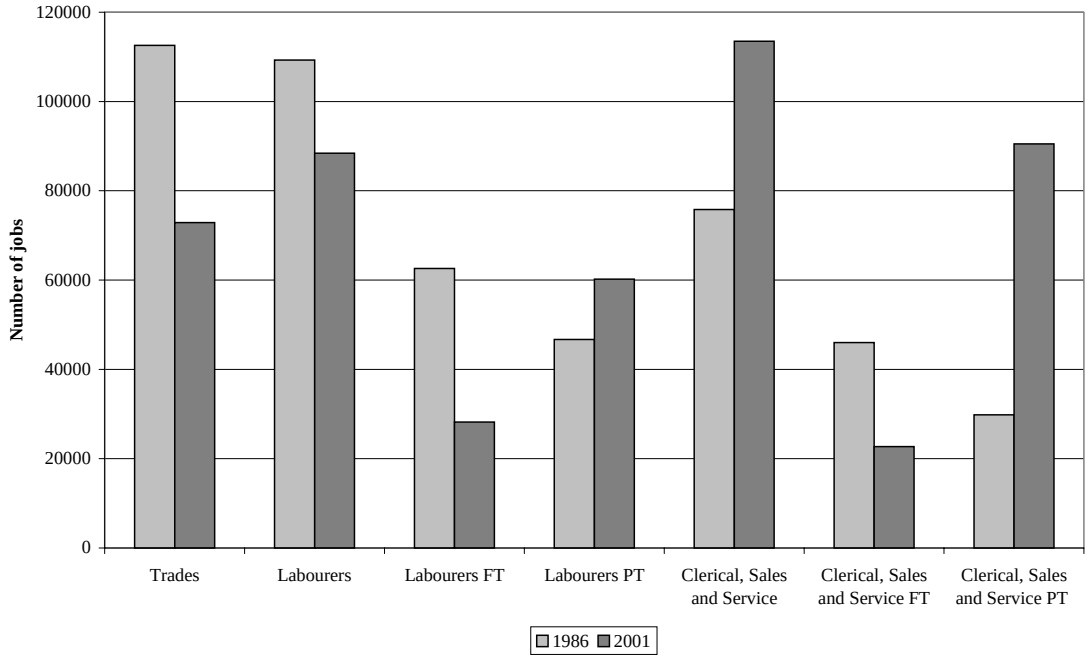
3.9 In addition to the collapse in full-time employment opportunities for young people there have been major occupational shifts in the labour market. For young males, and for teenagers in particular, the collapse in full-time employment has been greatest in occupations such as labouring and the skilled trades, which traditionally have been the destination of early school leavers. Table 3.2 and Figures 3.3 and 3.4 illustrate the extent of these employment shifts over the 15 year period to May 2001.

Table 3.2 Occupational trends in male youth employment

	Full-time	Part-time	Total
Trades: 15-19 years of age August 1986	106,500	6,100	112,600
Trades: 15-19 years of age May 2001	64,500	8,400	72,900
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-39.4*	*37.7*	*-35.3*
Trades: 20-24 years of age August 1986	165,600	3,900	169,400
Trades: 20-24 years of age May 2001	127,600	5,700	133,300
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-22.9*	*46.2*	*-21.3*
Labourers: 15-19 years of age August 1986	62,600	46,700	109,300
Labourers: 15-19 years of age May 2001	28,200	60,200	88,400
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-55*	*28.9*	*-19.1*
Labourers: 20-24 years of age August 1986	97,200	13,200	110,300
Labourers: 20-24 years of age May 2001	48,300	22,000	70,300
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-50.3*	*66.7*	*-36.3*
Clerical, Sales and Service: 15-19 years of age August 1986	46,000	29,800	75,800
Clerical, Sales and Service: 15-19 years of age May 2001	22,700	90,500	113,500
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-50.7*	*203.7*	*49.7*
Clerical, Sales and Service: 20-24 years of age August 1986	90,300	12,700	103,100
Clerical, Sales and Service: 20-24 years of age May 2001	75,000	57,600	132,500
% change over 15 years to May 2001	*-16.9*	*353.5*	*28.5*

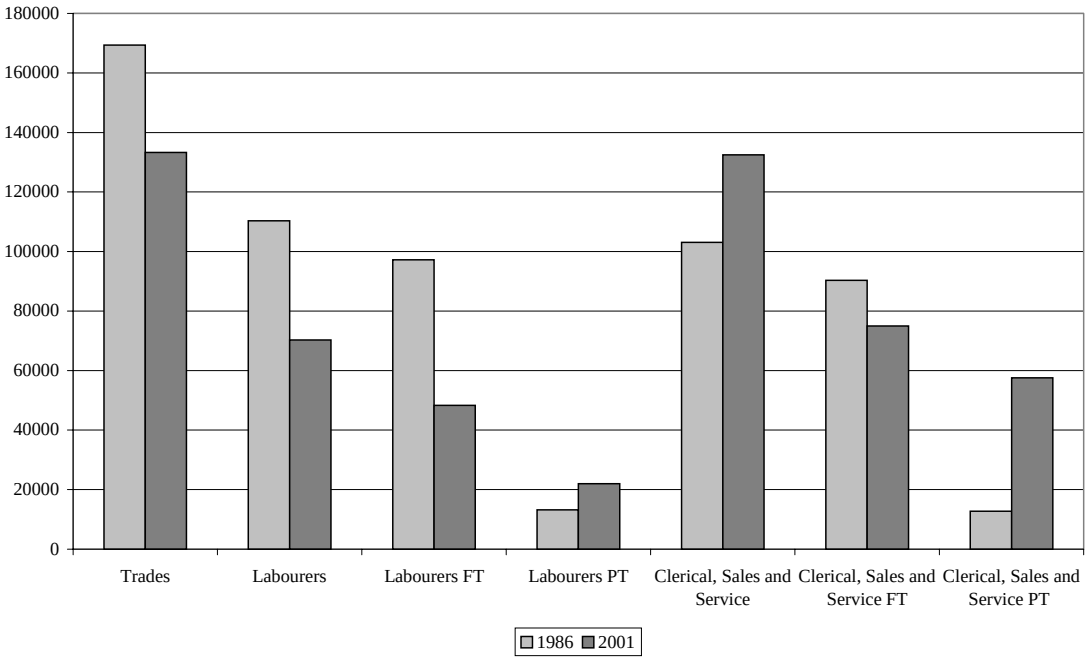
Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

Figure 3.3 Males 15 to 19 years of age: Employment in selected occupations 1986-2001[4]



Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

Figure 3.4 Males 20 to 24 years of age: Employment in selected occupations 1986-2001[5]



Source ABS Labour Force (original data)

4 Employment in the trades has not been broken down into full-time and part-time because most teenage male employment in the trades is full-time (*see* Table 3.2).

5 Employment in the trades has not been broken down into full-time and part-time because most employment in the trades for males 20 to 24 years of age is full-time (*see* Table 3.2).

3.10 In May 2001, 59,800 more teenage boys worked in retail and hospitality than 15 years ago, as did 69,900 more young men 20 to 24 years of age.[6] Over the same period there has been a drop of 42,000 in the number of full-time jobs in the skilled trades and over 34,000 fewer full-time labouring jobs for teenage males. Compared to 15 years ago, there are 36,100 and 40,000 fewer jobs in trades and as labourers, respectively, for young men 20 to 24 years of age. Labouring, manufacturing and the traditional trades are providing a diminishing number of employment opportunities to young men who do not leave school equipped with the skills demanded by employers in the service sector.

> The economy no longer provides opportunities for large numbers of boys to be employed as production workers – the new jobs are in the service sector. In a service-based economy, gaining and maintaining employment are dependent on much more than academic credentials or manual skills. Good self-presentation, articulateness and an ability to focus on the needs of others – the so-called 'soft' skills – are crucial in this economy…There is currently widespread concern about youth unemployment, and the failure of young people – in particular boys – to present evidence of their development of these skills. This problem is exacerbated by a culture of masculinity in which self-presentation, social communication and service are low status concerns.[7]

3.11 The shift towards placing a higher value on 'soft skills' due to faster growth in the retail and hospitality sectors is affecting young men in other occupations. The emphasis on service, presentation and client communication is now much higher in the traditional trades and household service / maintenance occupations.

> …job seekers who do not have service or social interaction skills, strong communication skills, will either have no jobs or they will be consigned to the shrinking, less skilled sectors of the economy. I think that is a real issue for boys…What you have now is a huge shift in what constitutes valuable skills.[8]

3.12 Boys tend to have a vocationally focused approach to their school subject choice. As a result many boys place less emphasis on personal development, communication skills and interpersonal skills that they

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6 ABS Labour Force (original data).

7 Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Education, *Submission No. 139*, p. 2.

8 Associate Professor Erica McWilliam, Assistant to the Dean (Postgraduate Programs), Faculty of Education, Queensland University of Technology, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 595 & 596.

might develop by engaging in a wider range of extra-curricular activities or by studying the humanities.

> …with most jobs these days…the issue is not just of the skills and knowledge people have but of a whole lot of other things about whether they will work well in teams, what sort of person they come across as. Those broader areas of schooling that boys have often seen as being fairly irrelevant—and I am talking more, I suppose, about working-class boys here—are not as irrelevant as people think, given the nature of the job changes that are going on.[9]

3.13 The perception amongst some boys that service occupations are not highly regarded is a dangerous one in today's labour market. Nearly all occupations are affected to some degree and one of the challenges for education authorities, for schools and for teachers is to find ways to raise boys' and their parents' awareness of the rising importance of communication skills and continuous learning in a changing labour market. Boys should be encouraged to broaden their awareness of the labour market and the range of skills required by males to succeed.

Apprenticeships

3.14 The traditional trade-based apprenticeships have played and continue to play an important role in providing employment opportunities for teenage males. In May 2001, over 70,000 teenage males were employed full-time in trades and trade-related occupations or six times as many teenage males as females.[10] While this is about 40,000 fewer teenage males than 15 years ago[11], access to full-time employment through the traditional trades largely accounts for the better access to full-time employment that teenage males have compared to teenage females.

3.15 While apprenticeships in the traditional trades remain an important source of employment for a diminishing number of male early school leavers, the proportion of early leavers accessing apprenticeships within one year of leaving school has declined from 37 per cent in the early 1980s to 21 per cent in the mid 1990s. Over the same period, the proportion of males completing Year 12 who entered apprenticeships remained constant. However, the number of males completing Year 12 has risen,

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9 Professor Lyn Yates, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 323.

10 ABS Labour Force (original data)

11 *see* Table 3.2 above.

indicating that increasingly apprentices have entered from Year 12.[12] National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) data support this conclusion. During the 12 months to September 2001, just over 85 per cent of people commencing apprenticeships and traineeships were 18 years of age or older.[13] Early school-leaving males are taking up a smaller proportion of a declining number of traditional apprenticeships, a further indication that the traditional employment destinations for low-achieving and early school-leaving males are in decline.

Social change

3.16 It is necessary to consider how social change over recent decades may have affected boys and girls differently, even though it is difficult to state with certainty what effect social change has had on boys and girls. There have been major shifts in the participation of women in the labour market and in the distribution of employment, some of which are presented in the statistics in the section above. Like labour market change, the positive and negative effects of social change have not affected different groups of men and women and boys and girls in the same ways.

The changing status of women

3.17 Over the last three to four decades there has been major ongoing change to the level of women's contribution in all areas of life: government, law, arts, sciences, religion, politics and education. There have been corresponding shifts in the role of women in family life, including their financial role and contribution in households. While these changing social circumstances and aspirations have influenced the expectations parents have for their daughters, so have the changing educational opportunities available to girls reinforced social change and lifted the social and economic aspirations of women.

3.18 Between January 1986 and December 2001, the female labour force participation rate rose from 47.4 per cent to 54.9 per cent, while for men it dropped from 76.1 per cent to 72.3 per cent. During that period, women's

12 Lamb, S., Dwyer, P. and Wyn, J., *Non-completion of School in Australia: The Changing Patterns of Participation and Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 16, ACER, September 2000, p. 34.

13 NCVER, unpublished statistics, *Exhibit No. 151, and see Youth Employment: A Working Solution*, AGPS, 1997, p. 87.

share of total employment rose from 38.7 per cent of total employment to 43.9 per cent.[14]

3.19 Some submissions noted the significance of the improving social, political and economic status of women as important background information and essential knowledge for putting the boys' education issues in context.[15]

> The impact of girls and women claiming a right to be equal and their changing educational and work patterns is something that has affected all boys. Many different studies have shown that many boys today are much less clear about their future and their place in the world than they would have been in the past. And many studies would suggest that though most boys today formally accept girls' equality and academic success, many find this uncomfortable in terms of their own quest to have a sense of what 'boys' do, and who 'boys' are. In some cases, girls very success at school leads boys to direct their efforts elsewhere – to avoid the ignominy of coming second.[16]

3.20 It was also argued that boys have been disadvantaged by two decades of social change which has encouraged women towards economic independence and left boys confused about the role of men in modern society. The educational solutions offered included allowing gender identified subjects such as home economics and woodwork / metalwork and recognising the social significance of traditional gender roles.[17] However, the implication that boys and girls, men and women, should be consigned to particular roles in society merely by virtue of their sex is rejected by the Committee. This 'solution' also fails to confront the economic reality that the skills of many boys and men are mismatched to the modern labour market. It is more important to encourage boys to be attuned to all the requirements of contemporary labour markets.

Family structure

3.21 Another significant social shift has been the rise in the number and proportion of single parent families. Between 1989 and 2000, one parent families with children under 15 years of age, as a proportion of all families

14 ABS Labour Force, Cat. No. 6203.

15 *see, for example,* Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168,* p. 3, and Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Submission No. 54,* p. 2.

16 Professor Lyn Yates and the University of Technology , Sydney, Faculty of Education, *Submission No. 66,* p. 3.

17 The Institute of Men's Studies, *Submission No. 18,* pp. 15 - 19, *and see* The Endeavour Forum, *Submission No. 21.*

with dependent children under 15 years of age, increased from 14 per cent to 20.9 per cent. The actual number of single parent families with children under 15 years of age rose from 272,600 to 453,900. In 2000, 89 per cent of single parent families, or 404,000, were headed by women.[18]

3.22 The discussion about family structure often stresses the correlations between single parenthood and / or divorce, family income, parental education levels and the educational attainment of children. However, recent researchers have often placed the emphasis on single-parenthood as the significant point of difference between these families and other families.[19] Single parenthood, of itself, is not responsible for the under-achievement of children. Rather, it is other characteristics such as low parental education and low income that are more prevalent in single-parent families but have the same negative effects on children when they are present in two-parent families. Government policy is relatively ineffective at influencing such things as family structure, and better results will be obtained by providing support to mitigate characteristics, which may be present in any type of family, which inhibit student achievement.

> I have found the majority of single mothers doing well in difficult circumstances, yet the professional gaze on them is one of blaming the individual mother as if she has some deficiency in rearing a son, rather than offering the support and understanding necessary to carry out this difficult parenting task.[20]

> As a sole parent, I am concerned that women on their own are seen as inadequate or less than the full 'bit' needed by boys. Do we feel this way when we talk about girls (daughters of single mothers) or are we perpetuating gender difference in the very discourse?[21]

3.23 While there is a higher proportion of single parent families today than in the past it is important to bear in mind that they are not new.

> We need to think historically here- men have always left women – for war, for work and for many other reasons. Women have frequently been the ones who raised the children – male and

18 ABS, *Australian Families and Households, Census 86* (Cat. No. 2506.0); 1996 Census of Population and Housing basic Community Profile; *Australian Social Trends* (Cat. No. 4102.0).

19 Buckingham, J., Policy Analyst, Centre For Independent Studies, *Submission No.26*, pp. 7-8; *and see* Rich, A., "Trailing the Class: Sole Parent Families and Educational Disadvantage", *Issue Analysis*, No. 11, Centre For Independent Studies, 26 June 2000.

20 Social Worker as quoted by The Australian Association of Social Workers, *Submission No. 165*, p. 12.

21 Social Worker as quoted by The Australian Association of Social Workers, *Submission No. 165*, p. 12.

> female. Why are we worried now? What is the difference – is it the lack of a sense of community or extended family that we should be addressing. We need to avoid men being considered the victims of single / sole parents.[22]

3.24 The increasing number of working mothers, single parents, and single mothers in particular, cannot be held solely accountable for an apparent inability to control boys or for a decline in parenting skills generally. Their counterparts in earlier generations are likely to have enjoyed more support and assistance from friends, family and neighbours. While the hard evidence is not available to support the assertion, few people would dispute that a generation ago it was much more common for neighbours to assist each other in the supervision and routine discipline of each others' children. It is also true that a generation ago more parents had the support of an extended family network.

Family characteristics and educational attainment

3.25 Family characteristics such as income, socio-economic status, locality, race, ethnicity, educational background and so on have a bearing on the educational attainment of children. Disadvantageous characteristics such as low income and lower levels of parental educational attainment are more frequently found in single parent families compared to two parent families.[23] However, in much of the debate about family structures and boys' education the significance of these other characteristics has been down-played or overlooked. Many single parents, women and men, are successfully supporting their children's learning. The discussion needs to focus on the factors that really matter rather than a family's observable structural characteristics.

3.26 Recent studies looking at family background, family structure and the educational attainment of children question the wisdom of accepting the simple correlation between single parenthood, lower socio-economic status and the educational attainment of children. A study undertaken on behalf of The Smith Family, using a sample of about 3,000 financially disadvantaged students on its Learning for Life program examined the effect of a number of student characteristics upon the probability of

22 Social Worker as quoted by The Australian Association of Social Workers, *Submission No. 165*, p. 13.

23 Rich, A., "Trailing the Class: Sole Parent Families and Educational Disadvantage", *Issue Analysis*, No. 11, Centre For Independent Studies, 26 June 2000, pp. 2-3.

attaining outstanding results.[24] The characteristics examined were: sex, school level, unexplained absences, English / non-English speaking background, location, family structure, parental source of income, parental education level, and housing type.

3.27 The study made several important conclusions relevant to this inquiry. First, when other factors were controlled, sex was a statistically significant predictor of academic performance with girls more likely to do well than boys.[25] Second, when other factors were controlled, single parenthood did not of itself have a negative effect on student achievement, irrespective of whether the student was a boy or a girl.[26] Third, when other factors were controlled, a higher number of unexplained absences (a good indicator of school engagement) was a statistically significant predictor of poorer academic performance. At higher numbers of unexplained absences, the gender differential in favour of girls achieving better academic results diminishes.[27] Fourth, when other factors were controlled (and irrespective of whether a parent's source of income was employment or social security), parental education level was a statistically significant predictor of a student's academic performance.[28]

> The finding that even within a group with considerable financial disadvantage, socio-economic status as reflected by the level of parental education, was a key predictor of student academic achievement raises several important policy implications…it supports the notion that the "social" and the "economic" components of the socio-economic status equation may have distinct and separate influences on educational outcomes. While financial assistance…is important, policies and programs that also assist low-income parent / s in providing appropriate psychological and educational support for their children should also be promoted.[29]

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24 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001.

25 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001, pp. 8 & 12.

26 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001, p. 12.

27 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001, p. 10.

28 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001, p. 8.

29 Zappalà, G. and Considine, G.; *Educational performance among school students from financially disadvantaged backgrounds*, Working Paper No. 4, The Smith Family, 2001, p. 13.

3.28 While The Smith Family study concluded that English speaking / non-English speaking background was not a significant predictor of academic achievement it did not disaggregate the data for the either the English speaking or non-English speaking samples into different ethnic groups.

3.29 An ACER study of patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education[30] has looked in detail at the educational participation rates of different groups of students from English and non-English speaking backgrounds. This study concluded that participation rates for students in Year 12 and in higher education were significantly higher for students whose fathers were born in non-English speaking countries compared to students whose fathers were Australian born.[31] This remained true for all but one group with non-English speaking origins and the effect was still strong after controlling for socio-economic background.[32]

> The strong effects for students whose fathers were born in some non-English speaking countries suggest that cultural factors are involved in leading to higher rates of participation. The higher participation rates experienced by these groups cannot be explained by socio-economic background nor school achievement.[33]

3.30 The ACER study also found that parental wealth and education were important influences in educational participation but that cultural factors, such as parental education, were more important. Parental aspirations for their children were "a reasonably strong influence" but not as strong as the students' own aspirations and academic self concept.[34] The study also

30 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000.

31 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, pp. 13, 16, and 24.

32 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, pp. 24-25.

33 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, p. 28.

34 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, pp. 29, 37-40.

concluded that "the influence of these psychological factors is largely independent of socio-economic factors".[35]

3.31 The ACER study shows that a family's higher educational aspirations for children may mitigate lower financial resources and/or lower educational background to promote higher education participation rates. The Smith Family study shows that the presence of favourable educational background factors in parents will mitigate financial disadvantage. What both studies clearly suggest is that much more sophisticated concepts of educational disadvantage are required if governments and the community are to effectively support families to lift the educational attainment of their children. These studies imply the existence of families whose financial circumstances are not a barrier to their children's educational endeavour but whose attitudes, aspirations and educational background are severely limiting factors.

3.32 It is relatively easy for government to provide a minimum level of financial support to schools, families and young people to enable educational participation by financially disadvantaged students. However, improving the level of educational participation by students disadvantaged by the non-financial characteristics of their families requires other forms of social and psychological support to those students and their parents to promote early educational achievement, positive attitudes to learning, and higher educational aspirations in both the students and their parents. Such approaches may be the key to improving the educational performance of many boys and those girls who have not been aided by the earlier girls' education strategies.

Absent fathers

3.33 Between 1981 and 2000 the number of couple families with children under 15 years of age in which both parents worked increased from 696,000 (41 per cent of all couple families with children) to 968,100 (56.3 per cent).[36]

3.34 The absence of fathers in many families, whether resulting from single parenthood, the work commitments of men or even men's physical presence but possible disengagement from their children, has raised concerns about the under-fathering of children, which is held by some to be particularly detrimental to boys. This is a generally accepted, but not thoroughly researched, view that is supported by the anecdotal evidence.

35 Marks, G. N., Fleming, N., Long, M., McMillan, J., *Patterns of participation in Year 12 and higher education in Australia: Trends and issues*, LSAY Research Report No. 17, ACER, December 2000, p. 41.

36 ABS, *Labour Force Status and Other Characteristics of Families* (Cat. No. 6224.0).

The following observations were made by the consultants offering a program for boys-at-risk in rural Victoria.

> Until we started working in the Catholic education system, we had not come across one young man—and we are talking 150 or perhaps 180 young men—selected for the course by their peers and by their teachers who actually had a father figure in his life. I would also be aware if there is a dad figure, whether it is dad or step-dad or an uncle, of just what input they are having into the young man's or young person's life. If dad is off working and doing a whole lot of other things, he is not really having much input.[37]

3.35 At the same time, the increasing labour market participation of women with children and the increasing propensity of older children and teenagers to spend significant periods of time unsupervised has also led to claims of under-parenting, even in two-parent families.

> Dads may well be more ineffective in this era than in any other, but more ineffective does not equal totally ineffective. Nobody disputes that single mums and single dads can do a successful job in raising their kids. Of course they can, but it's much harder… Many Australian dads grew up in the fifties and sixties when the 'generation gap' was already alive and well. They too did not relate well to their dads; now they, as dads, are living out the same image of fathers they saw in their own homes. A recent survey of all secondary boys in my school demonstrated that in the opinion of the boys themselves they do not communicate as well with their fathers as they do with their mothers.[38]

Media stereotypes and self-image

3.36 The representations of men and women and their relationships in the media are important influences over both boys and girls. There are now more boys who lack adult male role models, or whose experience of adult men has been limited to those who are uncommunicative, uncaring or violent and abusive. These boys are less likely to identify with other, more positive, male images that do not resonate with their experience than with stereotyped media images.

> The socialisation of many boys within families, schools and community life is distorted by the increasing absence of

37 Mr Scot Gardener and Mr Peter Little, COOL Consulting, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 86.

38 Mr Andrew Mullins, Principal, Redfield College, *Submission No. 80*, p. 6.

> appropriate and constructive male role models… Boys come to rely on alternative and usually unbalanced models of masculinity which abound in the media, peer and popular culture. These other sources readily model such qualities as restrictive emotionality, concern with power and status, excessive self-reliance, homophobia, anti-authoritarian bravado, anti-intellectualism and non-relational attitudes towards sexuality.[39]

3.37 The depiction of male action and violence in the media, particularly in films and video games, is often exciting, 'heroic' and apparently free of consequences. Such images need to be effectively countered. Where they are not, boys may be attracted to peer cultures that reinforce these images.

> Their exposure to the type of male images available through film, television, magazines and popular sport are not being compensated for by the role of real life male figures in their lives. As they get older they will gravitate towards those negative male mentors, peers and behaviours who are best able to duplicate the unrealistic images they associate with a strong male identity.[40]

3.38 The media depictions of many sporting heroes and the limited range of masculine values these public images present (strength, toughness, winning) may affect the self-esteem of those boys who do not, or cannot, identify with this type of masculinity.[41] These images are also one dimensional and may conceal a more rounded man behind the image. What is visible might not be an appropriate model.

> Some boys are in situations of poverty and high unemployment in their family situations. The dominant masculinity that might be portrayed in media—say, in football or video game culture—may become the dominant masculinity that they then display in their social interactions. And they may not be the most appropriate ones in school.[42]

3.39 Why some boys are more at risk of identifying with, and following, negative images of masculinity and how this might be countered is considered in Chapter 6.

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39 NSW Secondary Principals' Association, *Submission No. 52*, p. 3.

40 Mr John Fleming, Director, Boys In Focus Consultants, *Submission No. 75*, p. 2.

41 Professor Lyn Yates and the University of Technology , Sydney, Faculty of Education, *Submission No. 66*, p. 3.

42 Ms Judith Gardiner, Curriculum Executive Officer, Queensland Catholic Education Commission, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 618.

Gender equity policy

3.40 There appears to be widespread support among State and Territory education departments, Catholic education authorities, teachers' unions, principals' associations and academics for the existing gender equity policy framework which is enunciated in the document *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*. However, there is clearly room in the existing framework for interpretation— the NSW Secondary Principals' Council advocates a separate boys' education strategy within the existing gender inclusive policy framework[43], Education Queensland already has one[44], other states and territories have not expressed the need, while most education unions are emphatically opposed to them being established.[45]

3.41 Most of the teachers who have contributed to the inquiry, whether male or female, have been eager to address boys' education issues as part of their commitment to achieve the best outcomes for all their students. However, it is difficult to avoid the impression that some gender equity units in education departments and education unions, generally, have been reluctant to openly confront boys' under-achievement and disengagement as an issue, perhaps for fear of undermining ongoing support for strategies for girls.

3.42 Opinion among academics varies from strong support of the current framework to the view that it is too narrowly based on the issues that drove reform for girls and does not adequately address boys' needs.[46] Many of the former have been participants in the development of girls' education policy and its evolution into its more inclusive, current form.

> …there are some who are not satisfied with boys' education being addressed within the parameters of a gender equity framework. They are a small but active and vocal minority who are intent not

43 NSW Secondary Principals' Council, *Submission No. 52*, pp. 4-5.

44 Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168*.

45 *see, for example,* Australian Education Union, *Submission No. 150*, p. 9, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 204, Queensland Teachers' Union, *Submission No. 160*, p. 2.

46 For examples of a range of views *see*: Professor Lyn Yates, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney, *Submission No. 66*, p. 1, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 321; Dr Martin Mills and Dr Bob Linguard, Graduate School of Education, University of Queensland, *Submission No. 84*, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 641-643; Dr Cherry Collins and Dr Julie McLeod, Faculty of Education, Deakin University, *Submission No. 107 and Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 153-155; Dr Lori Beckett, Faculty of Education University of Technology, Sydney, *Submission No. 122 and Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 320-330; Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program, Newcastle University, *Submission No. 166*, p. 12; Professor Faith Trent and Mr Malcolm Slade, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 877-879.

> only on advocating a boys' education strategy but on exploiting populist concerns about raising boys.[47]
>
> While there has been a genuine attempt to broaden the gender framework from one focussed exclusively on girls to one addressing the needs of both girls and boys, the current policies and supporting research have serious limitations. A number of assumptions developed during two decades of activity in girls' education have been uncritically carried forward into the renamed gender strategies.[48]

The Gender Equity Framework

History

3.43 Australian policy and research on gender equity and schooling has a long history dating back to 1975 and the Commonwealth Schools Commission's report *Girls School and Society*. In 1984 a working party of the Commonwealth Schools Commission followed up with *Girls and tomorrow: The challenge for schools*, a first attempt to establish a national policy to address the outstanding issues identified in *Girls School and Society*. In 1987 a recommendation of *Girls and tomorrow* to establish a national policy found expression in *The National Policy for the Education of Girls*. Following a review of the implementation of that policy the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* was produced.[49] The most recent, and still current, expression of Commonwealth policy is *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* introduced in 1997.

3.44 In 1993, early in the life of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997*, parent organisations began to press for attention to the educational needs of boys. The team briefed to report on the monitoring of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* was asked:

> "…to provide data on boys as well as girls so that the study would offer, as well as data on progress in relation to girls under the *National Action Plan*, data on the gendered experiences and

47 Dr Lori Beckett, *Submission No. 122*, p. 1.

48 Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, The Men and Boys Program, Family Action Centre The University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 166*, p. 4

49 *see* McInnes, S., *"Girls, schools ..... and boys: promoting gender equity through schools: twenty years of gender equity policy development"* Social Policy Group, Research Paper No 24, Department of the Parliamentary Library, Canberra, 1996, *and see* Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their Initial Destinations after Leaving School*, Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Canberra, July 2000, pp. 21-23.

> gendered relations of both sexes and of the actions of systems and schools in attempting to steer those experiences and relations in positive directions."[50]

3.45 The report on the monitoring of the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* was titled *Gender and School Education*, another major landmark in the development of gender equity policy. The major focus of this report was on girls' needs but the report did ask the question: Is there a need to focus on issues for boys in schooling? It concluded that the major challenge for schools was to support boys—

> …to dismantle the walls they construct around themselves and others in order to feel safely "masculine"… and expecting, pushing and supporting them to extend themselves across the whole range of human activities and learnings, including those that girls do. The alternative may be that many boys continue to redraw the boundaries in ways that are constricting of their own development as well as restricting, hurtful and dangerous for other boys and girls.[51]

The Committee questions whether this was an adequate assessment of the educational needs of boys.

3.46 *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* was formulated to account for these concerns and the document states clearly "that boys have needs that are not being met effectively by schools."[52] However, *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* is not a fundamental re-examination of the gender equity strategy intended to tackle boys' education issues from the ground up as happened for girls. In fact, a footnote to the introduction exhorts people to read the *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* as a companion document.[53]

Assumptions underpinning the Gender Equity Framework

3.47 For people who were born before the mid to late 1960s, the 1975 report, *Girls School and Society*, is a trip back in time to their schooldays and an instructive reminder of how much needed to change for girls.

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50 Collins, C., Batten, M., Ainley, J., & Getty, C., *Gender and School Education,* ACER, June 1996, p. 2.

51 Collins, C., Batten, M., Ainley, J., & Getty, C., *Gender and School Education*, ACER, June 1996, p. 176-177.

52 *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*, MCEETYA Gender Equity Task Force, Canberra 1997, p. 6.

53 *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*, MCEETYA Gender Equity Task Force, Canberra 1997, p. 3.

> Although girls are increasingly adopting slacks and trousers outside school time, it seems that many schools are anxious to retain traditional female dress, even where it is impractical and out of date. This insistence often brings with it restrictive rules about what is modest activity,… For example, catherine wheels, trampolining, climbing and even sitting on the floor may be seen as immodest because dresses or skirts are prescribed.[54]
>
> While the formal core curriculum in Australian primary schools is the same for all students, the non-academic "interest" subjects are remnants of past assumptions about the "natural" interests of girls and boys. Girls are usually offered Sewing and Needlework, boys engage in Carpentry, Basket and Leatherwork.[55]
>
> The process of "choice" of electives and even examinable subjects at secondary level is often based on unnecessary and unjustifiable sex distinctions. Girls, for example, are offered Domestic Science, Typing, Shorthand, Sewing and Cooking; boys do Metal and Woodwork or Industrial Arts and Technical Drawing.[56]

3.48 *Girls School and Society* looked at demographic shifts, women's changing role in families and the labour market, and sex differences in school participation and post-school participation in education. It also considered the effect of school electives and subject choice on the ability of girls and women to achieve their educational potential and take an equal place with men in society. For women and girls, many of the barriers were, and still are, institutional[57], in addition to barriers posed by their own attitudes and parental and societal attitudes and expectations. From an understanding of this background, the *Gender Equity Framework* and its preceding documents have as clear aims, the removal of barriers and the changing of attitudes inimical to girls' interests. The *Gender Equity Framework*, built as it is on the prior work for girls, does not separately research and identify boys' needs and it sets boys' needs solely in the context of what still needs to be achieved for girls.

> Propositions which have become accepted as self evident over the years of developmental work in girls' education have been applied

54 *Girls School and Society*, Schools Commission, 1975, p. 67.

55 *Girls School and Society*, Schools Commission, 1975, p. 79.

56 *Girls School and Society*, Schools Commission, 1975, p. 80.

57 An example of an institutional barrier for girls that once existed would be sex specific subject electives in schools such as cooking and home economics which did not have an employment pay-off, an example of one that still exists is the relatively fewer opportunities for teenage girls in full-time employment-based training compared to the opportunities in traditional trades still available to boys.

> uncritically to boys' education. As a result, when boys are included, their needs are assumed, and initiatives designed on the basis that removing girls' disadvantage is the primary goal of educating boys…
>
> During the period 1975 to 1997, while the focus of gender discussion in education was unambiguously on girls' achievement in schools, the limitations of this approach were not readily apparent. Strategies during this period did seek to value traditionally female areas of endeavour, such as raising families, however the underlying logic of these programs was that women were disadvantaged in income and status as identified by an analysis of power. This analysis is not an adequate basis for a boys' education policy. In moving to embrace boys' education under the umbrella of gender the narrowness in the policies has become more evident.[58]
>
> The model that we used for girls' education was based on political questions. The question was different, in my view. The girls' stuff was a political question about the role of women in society, about a political way of changing the perception of women's access to education. In many ways, it was giving girls confidence to do well. To put that model on top of the boys, and think that you can do it that way and fix the boys up—this terrible desire to 'fix the boys up'—seems to be very dangerous.[59]

3.49 Surprisingly, in a number of States, witnesses, when asked, could not provide evidence of quantitative research to support the introduction of the 1997 *Gender Equity Framework*.[60]

3.50 The factors limiting boys' educational achievement do not exactly parallel those that affect girls.

> Initial concerns about girls that were given a whole lot of attention were that women were invisible in the curriculum, girls were a bit invisible in schools and girls were being encouraged towards fairly restricted career outcomes. I do not think any of those things particularly apply to boys…it is not simply a matter of taking over the same solution and thinking, 'We'll just copy what was done in the girls area.' Another example, which is a quite interesting and

58 Men and Boys Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, *Submission No. 166*, p. 12.

59 Professor Faith Trent, Faculty of Education, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 877.

60 *See for example, Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 830-831; 963-965; and 1135-1136.

> difficult one, is their curriculum issue. There was a lot of effort put into persuading more girls to do maths for the vocational pay-off of that. In a lot of ways, that was not a hard thing to convince parents and girls to do—there was an advantage to be gained from doing maths, medicine, and so on.
>
> In relation to boys, the issue of subject choice and where they should be going is more difficult and more subtle… I think boys could do with more personal development or humanity subjects than they get or like doing. Persuading both boys and their parents that this is a good direction is not the same sort of issue as persuading girls that doing maths and medicine is a good thing.[61]

3.51 Recent research in South Australia which examined 1,800 boys' views on declining rates of achievement and retention indicates clearly that educational policy and teaching practice needs to look far beyond current gender equity approaches to boys' education issues.[62] The research points to the need for major changes in the culture of schooling and the way it is organised to effectively address the conflicts and contradictions boys experience between their school lives and lives outside school. The boys don't see this major problem for them as a gender issue and the girls essentially feel the same way but generally are more compliant because they have fewer other options.[63]

> You asked whether it is a gender equity issue. It is more an alien in the classroom issue…There is a much greater gap between life in school and life outside school than probably there has ever been before. The kinds of notions of adulthood that are portrayed in the wider society are often rejected in the school environment. Up to 80 per cent of these kids work up to 20 hours a week, they go to school and somebody gives them a lecture on how to get a job! We kept finding all these sorts of things. …All they were getting were these mixed messages. Then if they said, 'Well, we don't believe that,' they were seen to be behaving rudely, being rude, challenging authority, et cetera, with many of the teachers in many of the schools.[64]

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61 Professor Lyn Yates, Faculty of Education, University of Technology, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 322.

62 Slade, M., and Trent F., "What the boys are saying: An examination of the views of boys about declining rates of achievement and retention", *International Education Journal* Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, *and see Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 874-888.

63 Slade, M., and Trent F., "What the boys are saying: An examination of the views of boys about declining rates of achievement and retention", *International Education Journal* Vol. 1, No. 3, 2000, pp. 216-7, *and see Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 884-5.

64 Professor Faith Trent, Faculty of Education, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 878.

3.52 A great deal has been achieved for girls since *Girls School and Society* was first published. For example, today the proportion of boys and girls who complete secondary schooling has more than doubled and now more girls than boys participate in senior secondary schooling. However, the greatest gains for girls have been reaped by girls from higher socio-economic backgrounds and some factors, such as subject choice, access to technical training, the concentration of female employment in traditional occupations and lower earning capacity, persist today and continue to limit girls' opportunities. Clearly, the work to achieve full equality of opportunity and access in education and employment for girls is not completed. However, while it continues to address the on-going needs of most girls, the *Gender Equity Framework* does not adequately articulate and address boys' educational needs.

3.53 The national equity agenda in education should include a range of social indicators, in addition to the employment and education indicators. Other indicators, such as rates of attempted and completed suicide and self-harm, drug and alcohol abuse, petty crime, violent crime, rates of imprisonment and homelessness tend to have distinct gender patterns suggesting gender (and, at the local level, school) specific strategies are required, along with gender specific but interconnected policy frameworks.

A boys' education strategy

3.54 Many submissions and witnesses have attested that boys respond to structure and clearly articulated purposes in learning and to easily understood methods of assessment. It makes sense to apply these principles and state publicly and explicitly in positive terms what we expect of boys in a boys' education strategy and how these expectations of boys will be measured in terms of what they know, what their physical and interpersonal skills are and where they end up after leaving school.

3.55 *The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* sets broad directions for schooling with the intention that each citizen has "the necessary knowledge, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society."[65] *The National Goals for Schooling* imply that it is appropriate to use a much wider range of indicators of the effectiveness of education than are employed in the existing gender equity policy documents. For example:

65 http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/adelaide/adelaide.htm.

> 1. …In particular, when students leave school, they should:…
> 1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential roles as family, community and workforce members.
>
> 1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgment and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things came to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives , and to accept responsibility for their own actions.
>
> 1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life….
>
> 3. Schooling should be socially just,…[66]

3.56 In addition to essential knowledge and skills, the *National Goals for Schooling* embody a long list of implicit values, of which a respect for democracy and human rights, equality of opportunity, the essential dignity of each individual and equality before the law are just a few examples. Australia should be less reticent about teaching and promoting these civic and human values. Teaching them more explicitly and comprehensively in our schools would promote the strength and unity of our society and democracy and help diminish intolerance and inequality of opportunity.

3.57 Within the parameters set by the *National Goals for Schooling* the *Gender Equity Framework* needs to be recast as an overarching framework for parallel boys' and girls' education strategies. The overarching gender equity strategy would guard against the adoption of approaches that undermine the achievement of boys or girls.

3.58 This approach casts the educational objectives positively for boys and girls as opposed to the negative approach for boys implied in most of the current policy material — for example, about boys not being violent, not monopolising space and equipment and not harassing girls and other boys.

3.59 The *National Action Plan for the Education of Girls 1993-1997* should be revised to include positive goals and values to be promoted by education which will be evaluated against a range of social as well as employment and educational indicators. Similarly, a new boys' education strategy should include positive goals and values to be promoted by education and

66 *see The Adelaide Declaration on the Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/adelaide/adelaide.htm, the full text is at Appendix F.

also evaluated against a range of social, employment and educational indicators. Australia would then have clear and positive educational objectives for both boys and girls which allow for the differing educational and social needs of boys and girls (and different sub-groups of boys and girls) to be addressed without dismantling or discarding current gender equity goals.

Recommendation 1

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education, Science and Training act to have MCEETYA revise and recast *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools* into a new policy framework which is consistent with *The Adelaide Declaration on the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century* and reflects the positive values expressed in that document:

- **the framework should provide an overarching policy structure for joint and distinctive boys' and girls' education strategies which—**
  - ⇒ **address boys' and girls' social and educational needs in positive terms;**
  - ⇒ **allow for school and community input to address local circumstances;**
- **the achievement of the goals and values expressed in the framework and the boys' and girls' education strategies should be evaluated against a range of social, employment and educational indicators; and**
- **these indicators should be used by MCEETYA to inform changes in policy and practice to ensure the social and educational needs of boys and girls are being met.**

Implications

3.60 Some of the most obvious changes in Australian society over recent decades are those relating to the role and status of women and technological change. Shifts in the employment share of industries and the types of jobs in the labour market show up clearly in statistical measures but are less visible to school students and job seekers who have to negotiate a labour market with a different balance of opportunities to those their parents or teachers experienced.

3.61 For both boys and girls employment conditions and social relationships have changed dramatically from those that prevailed only two or three decades ago. The gender equity strategies and programs have, as a by-product of their original purpose, affirmed and guided girls through these changes while little has been done to help boys understand and negotiate the same changes. We need to rethink our approach in line with Recommendation 1.

4 Putting it into practice: Curriculum and pedagogy

4.1 Curriculum, from the Latin for 'course', is the content or subject matter that is taught. Pedagogy, from the Greek words for 'boy' and 'guide', refers to the art or science of teaching or the techniques used to teach students. The notion of a teacher guiding students through a course of study has more contemporary relevance than the content driven, 'drill and skill', approaches that characterised schooling until the last few decades of the 1900s.

4.2 Good teachers have always, through sound and supportive teacher/student relationships, guided students through what they need and want to learn. This chapter considers the importance of relevant curricula and engaging pedagogy in promoting learning as well as the methods used to assess student achievement.

Curriculum and pedagogy

4.3 If the definitions of curriculum and pedagogy are clear, the separation of the two in classrooms is not. While the curriculum is the content that education departments mandate must be taught, classroom teachers have significant responsibility for, and control over, how the curriculum is presented and delivered. In practice, an inspired and talented teacher can energise dull content and find ways to link it to real life while a mediocre or unmotivated teacher can compromise the appeal of the most relevant and imaginative curriculum by poor delivery.

4.4 The research at Flinders University by Slade and Trent indicates that boys are aware of and reactive to what they view to be irrelevant curriculum and poor teaching. Boys see curriculum and pedagogy as inseparable from each other and from other aspects of schooling.

> When the boys talk about both the work and teachers being boring, irrelevant, and repetitive, they do this as though these were inseparable aspects of the one process that they simply call *'school'*. This includes school organisation and its culture; the length of lessons, the day, the school week, the term, and so on, as well as homework, uniforms, attendance and behaviour expectations of teachers.[1]

4.5 Boys like to be able to see how what they are learning relates to life outside or beyond school and may find it difficult to engage with what appears to irrelevant subject matter.

> The curriculum has to be relevant. The idea of teaching some of the things that we have learned, and maybe have never used since school, is very difficult to get across to kids these days who want to see how it applies to their lives. Boys, in particular, cannot make the connection between what they are doing and how they can use it.[2]

4.6 There is a group of boys who, when they are bored by the subject matter or its presentation, are more likely than girls to react in a challenging way.

> The response from the boys to each of these is similar, namely disaffection, making resistance seem necessary, which compounds the problem, leading to resentment, anger and retaliation. The display of their response seems to be all that differs from boy to boy. For a few it is a minor irritation that is easily dealt with through compliance, but for many, the compulsion to respond, directly or indirectly, becomes an obstacle to achievement.[3]

4.7 Of course, having a relevant and interesting curriculum that is taught well is just as important for girls as it is for boys. However, boys are more likely than girls to respond to dull subject matter or uninspiring teaching in an overt and challenging way that will disrupt their own and others' learning.

Curriculum

4.8 The school curriculum in each State and Territory is unique but they are generally structured on several levels. Usually, an overall framework sets

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1 Trent, F. and Slade, M., *Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males*, June 2001, p. 33.

2 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, Perth, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 931.

3 Trent, F. and Slade, M., *Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males*, June 2001, p. 31.

the values, purposes, and principles underpinning the curriculum and the learning outcomes that students are expected to achieve in the Key Learning Areas (KLAs). The syllabi for particular courses of study within each KLA fit under these umbrella documents.

4.9 The States and Territories have been very active in the area of curriculum redesign and review in recent years. The direction of change is towards outcomes-based education, that is, more explicitly stated expectations of what students should know and what students should be able to do. Unlike content-based approaches, outcomes-based learning recognises that not all students commence their learning at the same point or progress at the same rate and it allows teachers more flexibility to adopt approaches to suit their students and circumstances.[4]

4.10 Another feature common to outcomes-based curriculum frameworks is a focus on the knowledge and skills students will need to succeed throughout life.[5] The knowledge and skills are trans-disciplinary[6], cutting across the eight KLAs which are used to organise the curriculum. Outcomes-based approaches aim to embed the necessary trans-disciplinary knowledge and skills within the teaching and assessment of all subjects. After a trial involving 160 government and Catholic schools, South Australia implemented a new curriculum based on these principles in 2001.[7]

> …what we have incorporated in our curriculum is a recognition that just learning science, maths, studies of society, geography, history, whatever we might call subjects, is no longer enough for kids to be able to learn effectively, interact effectively with their peers, with adults and then as a preparation for post-school life. We have centred, to a large extent, our curriculum around what we are calling essential learnings. It is those five things that are absolutely key to, we think, the ability to succeed in schooling and the ability to continue learning throughout life.
>
> …we are looking at issues of identity, we are looking at issues of communication, we are looking at issues of interdependence, even if boys continue with the narrow cluster of subject choices, that if

4 A number of curriculum framework documents can be accessed on State and Territory education and curriculum authority websites.

5 *see for example*, SA Government, *Submission No. 154*, pp. 18-19, *and see*, Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168.1*, p. 7.

6 Queensland calls them *New Basics*, South Australia and Tasmania call them *Essential Learnings*, Western Australia calls them *Learning Area Outcomes*.

7 SA Government, *Submission No. 154*, p. 19, 120 government schools and 40 Catholic schools.

> these are attended to within the way that we teach science and the way that we teach mathematics, then we will start to address some of the issues that are of concern.[8]

4.11 Education Queensland is conducting a five year trial of its New Basics Framework in 59 schools throughout Queensland. The project is similar in concept to the new South Australian curriculum.

> Curriculum delivery focuses on the New Basics, four clusters of practices that are essential for survival in the worlds that students have to deal with. These four areas of trans-disciplinary learning include: Life Pathways and Social Futures; Communications Media, Active Citizenship and, Environments and Technologies.[9]

4.12 These new approaches have the potential to offer a much wider range of learning experiences in both primary and secondary schooling than has traditionally been the case. By creating tasks that cross a range of KLAs and that are related to real world issues, more realistic and relevant learning and assessment tasks are possible.[10] One of the schools the Committee visited, Eagleby State School in Queensland, was benefiting in this way from its participation in the New Basics Project.

> Because we are a trial school for the New Basics we are looking at trans-disciplinary work. We try to find what we want to do and then what disciplines of knowledge will help to support children develop something in which they will be able to share through some form of exhibition of their knowledge. That is also great for the boys. They know that there is that end point and they know that, in time, they will be able to tell everyone what they know and what they have learned. It is also great for the girls. So it is very purposeful. I think boys, in general, need those strong purposes and reasons behind what they are doing.[11]

4.13 The Committee believes that outcomes-based approaches to curriculum and pedagogy, if implemented well, have the potential to significantly enrich the learning experiences of all children as well as improve boys' interest and engagement. However, change at the curriculum framework level must be supported by a significant commitment to in-service training

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8 Ms Jennifer Stehn, Executive Director, Curriculum, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 824.

9 Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168.1*, p. 7.

10 Ms Maree Hedemann, Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 570.

11 Mr Kevin Leathwaite, Principal, Eagleby State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 535.

for teachers to support them in the implementation if it is to have any significant impact on students' achievement.

4.14 Appropriate curriculum is necessary to motivate boys and to engage them with learning. The curriculum frameworks generally provide classroom teachers with opportunities to vary the content and delivery to suit the particular needs of their students but these opportunities have not always been used to select content and activities that suit particular groups of boys or girls. The opportunities and flexibilities available to classroom teachers may include: the choice of texts studied; the application of technologies to learning; modes of instruction; the selection of the topic used to illustrate a concept or theme; and assignment and project topics and modes of presentation. This flexibility can be used by teachers to negotiate content and methods of instruction that appeal to the boys and girls and maximise the engagement and motivation of all students. Some illustrative examples are outlined below.

Pedagogy

4.15 The outcomes-based curriculum frameworks pay particular attention to pedagogy by emphasising that teachers need to adapt what they do in classrooms to meet the needs of their particular students and their school community. Again the New Basics Project in Queensland is illustrative:

> …a big issue for boys from lower socioeconomic groups, for example, is that they have literacies when they come to school, but they are not necessarily the skills based literacies. We need to acknowledge, value and build on some of those literacies. So part of that project is going to be for teachers to become familiar with some of the home/community literacies that the boys are interested in. But that sort of thing is really important for girls as well.[12]

4.16 In practice, at Eagleby State School, valuing the home-based and community literacies that are part of their students' experiences meant including a range of non-traditional materials in the literacy program.

> They have had rich experiences, but that has not necessarily given them the literacy skills that they require to ensure their success at school. So we need to look at those students coming in and use what they have. If they have been exposed to junk mail, bills, show bags and other sorts of texts, we need to include them because

12 Ms Maree Hedemann, Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 573.

> they may be the only texts that they have seen in the past. So we include those texts within our program to help make that link to book literacy…
>
> It is about valuing what is there; not seeing these children as having a deficit. If you look at it as though they have a deficit, you then have expectations about what they are capable of doing.[13]

4.17 South Australia reported improvements in student engagement and a positive response from boys during the trials of its new curriculum framework.

> One of the schools… focused on the middle schooling project where they were trialing and focusing on the essential learnings with the draft SACSA framework materials. There was a glowing report from the school about the engagement of those middle schooling students when the focus was on things like identity and futures. It energised and excited the students, so there was a really good relationship with the subject, and the big focus for the school is the relationships and supporting the boys to be able to hang on in there and conduct themselves with others more fruitfully in the classroom.[14]

4.18 The Committee supports this focus on more relevant learning tasks and a better connection with the world outside school as ways to improve student engagement and boys' learning. It seems to be a contemporary revival of some basic pedagogical principles that have not been as widely practiced as they could have been.

> Historically, dealing with boys' underperformance has involved focusing on remedial classes and at risk students. Preferred teaching methods with these groups have long been known; hands-on, varied, real life tasks, core teachers with good relating skills, humour, negotiation and a sense that somebody actually cares about them.[15]

4.19 It is curious that education has continued to stress these qualities in remedial and special education while seeming to forget or overlook their importance in the mainstream:

> …the progressiveness of the 1970s, while it was quite good in many ways, led to a style of teaching that became more or less

13 Mr Kevin Leathwaite, Principal, Eagleby State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 528-529.

14 Ms Shirley Dally, Manager, Gender Equity Curriculum Policy Directorate, South Australian Department of Education, Training and Employment, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 825.

15 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant, *Submission No. 153*, p. 6.

> process permissive. Now the researchers are saying, 'Direct instruction, clear instruction, limit your curriculum, don't try to do too much,'…[16]

This is particularly important for boys.

Learning styles and gender

4.20 The discussion around appropriate curriculum and pedagogy for boys often assumes an acceptance that boys and girls prefer different learning styles. However, it is important to qualify this generalisation. Some boys will be comfortable with, and favour the learning styles preferred by most girls while some girls will favour learning styles more commonly associated with boys. While good teachers exploit students' preferred learning styles to engage and motivate them, they also aim at developing the full range of capacities in each student.

4.21 For example, using Howard Gardiner's theory of multiple intelligences it is possible to describe learning styles and some general gender preferences for each as follows:

- **Verbal linguistic** learning styles are usually preferred by girls as girls tend to talk more and have larger vocabularies than boys.
- **Mathematical logical** learning styles are preferred by most boys who like a logical approach to instruction and opportunities to think logically to solve problems.
- **Musical rythmic** intelligence is generally evident in both boys and girls and most young boys enjoy musical activities.
- **Spatial** intelligence is thought to be a boys' strength with their ability to mentally rotate objects and excel in target directed activities being strong 'boys zone' activities.
- **Kinaesthetic** learning or physical learning is popular with boys as many boys like to be able to move as they learn. While boys develop fine motor skills later than girls, boys tend to develop better gross motor skills early.
- **Naturalistic** intelligence is the ability to understand the environment. Boys enjoy activities related to the natural environment and tasks using sorting and classifying skills.

16 Mrs Sylvia Walton, Principal, Tintern Schools, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 230.

- **Interpersonal and Intrapersonal** skills are areas that girls are generally more comfortable with than boys and boys will benefit from activities that develop these skills.[17]

4.22 It is important to recognise that even where boys and girls exhibit a preference for the same learning style there are likely to be individual and gender based differences.

> An example may be male and female students exhibiting similar verbal linguistic preference. The girls would probably exhibit better ideational fluency, have better verbal memory, have quick verbal responses under pressure, use longer sentences, have a better vocabulary, verbalise thoughts and feelings, use intonation to express ideas and take poetic licence, talk more about relationships and people and read fiction. While the boys with a similar learning style will tend to write and speak in shorter sentences, ask more questions of their teachers, talk more about sport and politics, read to follow instructions rather than listening to follow, use vocabulary competitively and will read more non-fiction.[18]

4.23 In practice:

- boys tend to need more explicit teaching than girls and tend to prefer active, hands-on methods of instruction;[19]
- structured programs are better for boys because they like to know what is expected and they like to be shown the steps along the way to achieve success;[20]
- while girls will more readily respond to content, boys respond more to their relationships with their teachers;[21]
- activities help boys establish rapport with their teachers[22]; and
- boys respond better to teachers who are attuned to boys' sense of justice and fairness and who are consistent in their application of rules.[23]

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17 *See* Ms Jenni Griffith, *Teaching Boys, Developing Fine Men*, 21-22 August 2000, Conference Papers, "Workshop 1, Learning Styles", Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, p. 97.

18 Mr Greg Griffith, *Submission No. 126,* p. 4.

19 Early Childhood Education Council of NSW, *Submission No.* 123, p. 3.

20 Ms Maree Rix, Head Teacher, English, James Cook Boys Technology High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 717.

21 Mrs Carol Richmond, Principal, Roseville Primary School, Sydney, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 671.

22 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, Perth, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 940.

23 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, Perth, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 929.

4.24 Effective schools and good teachers respond to the different learning styles of their students. The Committee agrees that traditional schooling, whether primary or secondary, tends to favour passive learning and often does not cater well enough for those students who prefer interactive and experiential learning styles.[24] Traditional secondary schooling frequently does not offer enough variety or stimulation to engage the large cohort of boys and girls who 20 years ago would have left school at Years 9 or 10 to seek employment.

What works in practice

4.25 Just as curriculum and pedagogy merge in practice, good pedagogy is absolutely dependent on the establishment of effective teacher / pupil relationships. The Committee visited and took evidence in a range of schools as well as receiving a great deal of information in submissions and publications on effective classroom strategies for boys. Without exception, these strategies are about establishing effective teacher / student relationships and promoting trust and communication between teachers and students.

4.26 A number of researchers, including Dr Peter West, Dr Ken Rowe and Dr Katherine Rowe, endorse the following as a list of strategies that work and support the learning needs of boys:

- Focus on support for literacy across the curriculum, and especially professional development for teachers
- Early diagnosis and intervention for those 'at-risk' of literacy under-achievement
- Highly structured instructions and lessons, with an emphasis on challenge and frequent changes of activity,
- Greater emphasis on teacher-directed work in the classroom in preference to 'group' work
- Clear objectives and detailed instructions but simple instructions; provide explicit criteria for presentation of work
- Short-term, challenging tasks and targets with frequent changes of activity
- Establishment of assessment and monitoring systems designed to identify under-achievement in key skills across the curriculum, as well as in individual subjects
- Regular personal interviews for the purposes of target-setting
- Positive reinforcement: immediate and credible awards for quality work, increased effort and / or improved behaviour

24 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, p. 18.

- Providing opportunities for extra tuition / revision
- Planned program of differentiated personal and social development
- Meaningful work experience placement aimed at informing students about changing roles in adult and working life.[25]

4.27 The Committee was presented with numerous examples of successful strategies to engage boys which are consistent with this list. Some of these are outlined in this section of the report to stimulate further thought and discussion by teachers and parents. However, it is important to remember that every child is an individual and that general statements here about boys and girls should not be read to apply to every boy or every girl. At the general level, research supports three major principles that work for boys and girls:

- Focus on support for ***literacy*** across the curriculum, remembering that girls typically respond to *the personal*, whereas boys are more likely to respond to *the physical*;
- Provide frequent changes in ***structured activity***; *verbal* for girls, *visual* for boys;
- Boys respond positively to ***structured challenges*** and *encouragement*, while girls respond positively to *encouragement* and *popularity*.[26]

4.28 The practical instructions established in the Victorian study on auditory processing difficulties referred to in the consideration of literacy in Chapter 5, are applicable in every classroom: attract attention, use short clear sentences, pause between sentences and monitor for compliance.[27] With boys it also helps to explain the purpose of the work, how long it should take, the standard expected and how it will be assessed.

> We had very short lessons—boys have to have very short lessons, I have found. The girls class would have four, maybe five, lessons in the two-hour morning block we have in our school. I would have anything from 12 to 20 lessons—very short sharp lessons where there was bang, bang, bang, one thing after the other….

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25 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, p. 18; Dr Peter West, *Report on Best Practice in Boys' Education*, April 2001; others who supported more emphasis on explicit teaching and catering to a broader range of learning styles include: Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program, University of Newcastle; *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1050; *and* Professor Lyn Yates, Professor of Teacher Education, University ofn Technology, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 326.

26 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, p. 18.

27 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, p. 2, *and see* Chapter 5, Hearing and Auditory Processing Difficulties.

> …The boys had to have very short-term, very achievable goals. They had to know what they were going to achieve immediately, not in a week's time, not in two days time, but straight there and then. Everything was a lot more hands-on; the things they did were a lot more 'get out and do it'… Everything was made 'real life': I tried to explain why they needed to learn this and where they would use it in the future when they left school.[28]

> I find it is very important with boys in particular, to really explain the sequence of activities that they're going to be involved in, the purpose of them, why they're doing them and how they are going to be assessed on part of it… the boys want to know, how are you judging me on this? What are the components you're looking for? What competencies do I have to demonstrate? And, for boys in particular, you have to link that assessment back to the original planning with the kids about what the purpose of the whole thing was in the first place.[29]

4.29 Genuine praise, challenge and positive reinforcement for effort, achievement and appropriate behaviour are effective motivators for boys.

> I reckon that if you do something good and they say, 'Yes, that's good but see if you can do better next time,' that sort of helps you along because they are giving you a kind of challenge. I reckon people respond better if they are being put under a bit of pressure of challenge. But if you do something good and they just say, 'Oh, yes, you should have done better than that,' it is just negative reinforcement. I reckon that is not good.[30]

> The boys loved to have their work displayed and praised. Just because they are 13-year-old boys who like football and go outside and push and shove each other does not mean that they do not like praise. They like to show their work and take it up to the office to admin and have it rewarded and praised.[31]

> What was important was the recognition of competency, and developing people so that they were competent in social interactions and competent in what they did so that the praise, when it was given, could be actually taken on. Otherwise, with

28 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 1231-1232.

29 "What works for boys", *Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2000, p. 27.

30 David Richardson, Student, Trinity College, Evanston South, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 784.

31 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1232.

> praise or any kind of recognition—we went through that feely thing that even if kids smiled you would say, 'That was really good'—the child would know intrinsically if it was not good and the praise was false.[32]

4.30 All students, boys in particular, require clear rules and stated expectations about appropriate behaviour. Ideally, expectations and the operation of the rules and punishments should be negotiated with the students.

> Always give 'a way out' for the boy who has done something wrong. They must do some sort of penance but know after their punishment they will be again treated fairly. I use the word 'penance' deliberately. The dictionary meaning of the word being 'a punishment agreed to, or offered to show you are sorry for doing wrong'.[33]

4.31 The Committee has the view that both competition and cooperation can play a productive role in boys' education. The use of competition, in particular, is an area where teachers tend to have strong views for and against[34] but it can be used productively in ways that don't harm children's confidence. Also, specific strategies can be used to encourage some boys who are less inclined to work cooperatively.

> We used a lot of competition. Competition seems to be a thing that people do not like a lot of. We used a lot of self-competition, where the boys plotted their own graphs of how they were doing in class and they would see their own results going up, which was very positive for them. They were not comparing themselves to the others; they knew where they stood with all the other boys in the class.[35]

> They love to be involved in competitive sorts of things. I use this in the classroom… In a lot of vocabulary building and spelling, they'll do time trials against themselves and graph their results, so they can see their improvement.[36]

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32 Mrs Catherine Williams, Deputy Principal, Roseville Public School, Sydney, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 685.

33 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Exhibit No. 156*, p. 6.

34 *See, for example*, Mrs Carol Richmond, Principal, and Mrs Catherine Williams, Deputy Principal, Roseville Public School, Sydney, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 683-684; *and see* Mr Brian Debus, Principal, Mrs Patricia Cox, Deputy Principal, Mrs Cheryl Crossingham, Miss Tracey Hopkins, Mr Bobby Willets, Classroom Teachers, Griffith Public School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 1159, 1165-1168.

35 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Gold Coast, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1233.

36 "What works for boys", *Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2000, p. 28.

> Boys needed to be in a cooperative situation… I had activities for them to go on with. Girls can be told, 'When you have finished your work, go on with something quietly,' and they will find something. With boys, no. So I had jigsaw puzzles, model cars, model trains—things like that that they built. The boys that would normally not associate with each other—the machos, let's say; the boys that are more involved with bullying—were getting with the quieter boys and they were actually helping each other and seeing each other's strengths in these cooperative activities that I had running when they finished their work. So it had a twofold result: they wanted to finish their work quickly so they could get on to these fun activities and it got them to work in a cooperative way.[37]

4.32 A number of teachers and schools make a deliberate effort to provide for boys to be physically active before and / or during lessons. Two schools that the Committee visited, Southwood Boys Grammar School, Melbourne, and City Beach High School, Perth, provide for a short period of activity before the school day commences.[38] Both these schools also placed emphasis on active learning as means both to develop relationships with teachers and to get boys to engage with learning.

> Boys need and want to move and they learn by doing. This must happen in the classroom in as many subject areas as possible. Teaching which allows movement and physical involvement suits boys' learning. We have built into our curriculum specific activities which boys enjoy. They are things like a hands-on approach in music, in art, in information technology, in design technology, in agriculture—we are very fortunate in having a farm attached to Tintern—in science and, of course, in sport and PE.[39]

4.33 Another way to use activity to stimulate boys' interest is to take lessons outside and get boys to act things out.

> She did *Richard I*, I think, or *Richard II*. She had the [boys] outside acting out certain parts of the play. There was a bit of concern from some teachers that they were out there playing, but the quality of their written literacy because of acting it out and being

37 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Gold Coast, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1232.

38 *See Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 954 *and see Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1233.

39 Mrs Lynette Henshall, Vice Principal, Head of Junior Schools, Southwood Boys Grammar School, Tintern Schools, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 221 *and see* City Beach High School, Perth, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 940; Elanora State School, Gold Coast, Qld, *Exhibit No. 156*, p. 6.

> in motion and being involved was quite phenomenal. Kids were producing pieces of work that they never produced before.[40]

4.34 Regular personal interviews and discussion to assist students to establish goals, monitor their progress, keep on track and develop a clearer understanding of why they are required to do things will assist some boys. The absence of goals as a factor in a lack of motivation is something that boys recognise and that at least one school the Committee visited, Wade High School in Griffith, NSW, has been attempting to address through student interviews and study skills sessions.

> It is really hard for us to decide, within a couple of years of our lives, what we want to do for the rest of our lives. Sometimes people pick subjects that they do not really like and they lose motivation to succeed. They think it is too hard and say, 'What's the point? I don't even know what I want to do.' Do you understand what I'm trying to say? It leads to nothing because they have no idea what they want to do past school.[41]

> We made that clear both at general meetings and also in the individual interviews. We feel that the boys—all of the students actually, but the boys particularly—have come in this year knowing that there is going to be a big leap from year 10 to year 11 in terms of the work that they are going to have to do outside school. That does not mean that they are all doing it, but at least when we were talking to them they would say, 'I know what I should be doing, but I can't do it.'…
> …I believe the interviews are having an effect. I think some of the good boys now really feel like they are being supported and listened to because, when Jan and I interviewed them, they were able to have a whinge about subjects that they were finding difficult and whatever. Hopefully, when we follow up next term with the small [study skills] groups, that will have some impact.[42]

4.35 The Committee believes there is great value in sharing information on, and raising awareness about, effective teaching strategies for boys. Publications such as the University of Newcastle's *Boys in Schools Bulletin* do an excellent job in this respect but education departments could do more to promote particular teaching strategies that are effective for boys.

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40 Mr Wayne Philp, Head of Senior School, North Campus, Trinity College, Evanston South, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 807.

41 Ryan Rodgers, Student, Trinity College, Evanston South, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 790.

42 Ms Jennifer Hill, Deputy Principal, Wade High School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 1199 & 1200.

4.36 Teachers benefit from inspiring and empowering professional development that shows how they can make a difference, for boys and for all students. Underlying each of the above examples of successful practice is high quality teaching inspired by a commitment to the students and a belief that what teachers do makes a significant difference to the social and academic outcomes of their students.

4.37 Australian and international research concludes that the influence of classroom teachers on the learning outcomes of students exceeds all other factors including school effects and socio-economic factors. In fact Australian research concluded that effective schools are only effective to the extent that they have effective teachers.[43]

> …the key message to be gained from the school effectiveness research…, is that schools and especially **teachers and their professional development *do* make a difference**, and that it is not so much what students bring with them that really matters, but what they experience on a day to basis in interaction with teachers and other students in classrooms.[44]

4.38 This research-based evaluation is entirely consistent with the Committee's observation of the characteristics of the highly effective schools it has visited: a balanced educational program, involvement of the community, strong school leadership, and highly skilled and highly committed teachers, all of whom have high expectations of their students. While many schools share these characteristics, the Committee is aware that not all schools are strong in all these areas.

43 *See* Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, pp. 10-14; *and see* Ms Jennifer Gale, Director, Office for Educational Review, Department of Education, Tasmania, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1105.

44 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, p. 15.

Recommendation 2

The Committee recommends that the major focus of pre-service and in-service teacher education should be on equipping teachers to meet the needs of all boys and girls. This must include raising teachers' awareness of the differences and commonalities in the learning styles of boys and girls and the teachers' influence on student outcomes and helping them develop balanced, effective and practical teaching strategies.

The Committee also recommends that the Commonwealth, State and Territory governments jointly fund additional professional development for practising teachers for this purpose, particularly targeting strategies that work with boys.

Single-sex classes

4.39 There has been a lot of media attention focussed on the widespread experiments with single-sex classes during the conduct of this inquiry. The Committee is aware that, in some quarters at least, there is an expectation that it will either endorse or recommend against single–sex education in this report. The Committee's position on this issue is more equivocal but the Committee is encouraged that many schools have experimented thoughtfully with single-sex classes and other approaches in an effort to secure better outcomes for their students. The examples of sound pedagogical approaches above are drawn from both coeducational and single-sex schools and classes.

4.40 Research on Victorian Certificate of Education results between 1994 and 1999 shows that both girls and boys in single-sex schools outperform their counterparts in co-educational schools.[45] However, the Committee is not convinced that this would justify re-structuring public schooling on single-sex lines. Research has also concluded (*see above*) that class teachers have much greater influence on student outcomes than other factors. Therefore, additional public expenditure would be better spent on professional development and resources that empower teachers to be as effective as possible.

4.41 The Committee believes that what takes place in a classroom has far more influence on the outcomes of boys or girls than whether it is a single-sex or coeducational classroom. The Committee has visited schools that are achieving excellent educational outcomes for both boys and girls

45 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, p. 4.

irrespective of the sex of the class teacher or whether the classes are single-sex or coeducational. These schools and teachers are successful because they focus on establishing and maintaining sound teacher / student relationships and delivering a high quality educational program that meets the needs of all the children attending that school.

4.42 Single-sex classes have been tried as a means to promote girls' interest and achievement in mathematics and science. Often the trials were abandoned, not because they didn't work for girls but because, in that context, they were not positive for boys.

> When I trialled some single-sex classes—when we were promoting girls in maths and science—the results were very good for the girls, but the boys' results went straight down. As soon as we put the boys all in a class together, the results just plummeted. So we had to throw out the single-sex classes for the sake of the boys, because they suffered while the girls' results increased.[46]

4.43 A possible explanation for the poor performance of boys when single-sex classes were trialled in the past is that particular attention was paid to girls' needs in maths and sciences while nothing different was done to meet the needs of the residual group of boys in the boys' classes. This explanation is consistent with the explanations for disappointing outcomes in some trials of single-sex classes intended to support boys where teaching styles were not adapted to take advantage of the single-sex classes.

4.44 The Committee spoke to teachers in several schools about trials of single-sex classes. While most were successful the results were not universally positive and it is instructive to look at the differences between the successful and less than successful examples.

> In terms of their results, it was reasonably successful, and in terms of them being switched on to learning, I think it was quite successful. It depends though on the teacher, I guess. The boys had a good year with me because we were very hands-on. With the English curriculum, I tailored it as much as I could to cater for the interests of boys. I had books where the boys were the heroes, like *The Outsiders* which is about gangs and so on. When we did films, we went to Movie World and we did hands-on stuff. They wrote film scripts and we got in there….I know that that success was not repeated in all of their classes. Some of the male teachers and some

46 Ms Helen Jamieson, Principal, Woodridge High School, Brisbane, QLD, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 553.

> of the females did not necessarily like the idea and they thought that the classes did not work.[47]

4.45 Other schools reported that the freedom to select content that boys were more likely to engage with was an advantage of single-sex classes and contributed to their success.[48]

4.46 The factors that support success are not necessarily to do with separating the boys and the girls but are related to how well the needs of the resulting classes are analysed and met. Where boys and girls are separated and little else is changed the results tend to be disappointing.

> …When people hear that there has been success, they then immediately think, 'Okay, single sex classes, there we go,' and they do nothing else, and nothing else changes. The assessment does not change, the learning style and the teaching style do not change,…
> What some schools are disappointed in is, yes, they have gone and done that, and nothing has changed. You walk into that classroom, it is the same teaching, everything is there, so they are wondering why they are not achieving those results. I think people really need to be informed and really thrash out exactly why they are actually going to use these classes in the first place, and then set about finding research, finding what others have done and really being much more informed before they go ahead and actually trial it, and reasons why are you doing it.[49]

4.47 Where single-sex classes and schools are successful it is because the school leadership and the class teachers have set clear objectives and found ways to adapt the content and style of the teaching to meet the needs of the students. This is true whether the single-sex class is a class of boys or girls. For example, Elanora State School in Queensland, established two single-sex Year 7 classes, a boys' class and a girls' class, while maintaining four Year 7 coeducational classes. There was a focus on improving the boys' behaviour and engagement with learning.[50] Evaluations on student

47 Mr Dion Locke, Year 12 Coordinator, Mabel Park State High School, Brisbane, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 556.

48 *See* Mr Bobby Willetts, Executive Teacher, Griffith Public School, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1161; Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1235; Mr Dion Locke, Year 12 Coordinator, Mabel Park State High School, Brisbane, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 556; Ms Evelyn Voshege, Manager Student Support Services, Mooroolbark Secondary College, Victoria, *Exhibit No. 51*.

49 Ms Barbara Watterson, Director of Professional Development and International Projects, Fremantle Education Centre, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 977.

50 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1234.

progress were conducted in a number of areas, including reading, spelling, mathematics and behaviour. Positive results were achieved for both the boys' class and the girls' class including a significant improvement in the target area of the boys' behaviour and engagement.[51]

4.48 The school planned the trial carefully and tested the students to establish their preferred learning styles. It found that two-thirds of the boys were kinaesthetic (physical) learners and one-third were visual learners whereas three-quarters of the girls were auditory learners.[52] This knowledge informed teaching practice which was credited with the improved behaviour, engagement and academic performance of the boys.

> As the class teacher, I think it is irrelevant whether it is a male teacher or a female teacher… I very much doubt that the boys being in a class by themselves made the changes. I think it was a change in my attitude, in my teaching strategies and in my expectations of what I did allow them to do, behaviour-wise, and the activities that I structured for them.[53]

Elanora State School believes that the main value of the trial it conducted is in using the knowledge acquired to assist other teachers to develop more effective strategies for teaching boys.[54]

Assessment and evaluation

4.49 Assessment is the measure of students' success or failure in achieving the objectives of the educational program. Evaluation is the review of the effectiveness of educational programs with a view to improving them to better meet their objectives.

4.50 Assessment is inseparable from curriculum and pedagogy. The curriculum dictates the content that will be assessed and the mode of assessment can influence the pedagogy as the teacher aims to equip the student to succeed at the assessment tasks. Different modes of assessment and assessment tasks will influence the teaching.

> In Queensland, one of the reasons why we have had such a good retention rate compared with others is the fact that we have had

51 Mr Barry Love, Deputy Principal, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1231 *and Exhibit No. 156*, p. 7.

52 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1234.

53 Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 1231-1232.

54 Mr Michael Kelly, Principal, Elanora State School, Qld, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 1235-1236.

> school based assessment and not external examinations. That form of assessment allows kids to work progressively. It has also meant that teaching pedagogy in practice in Queensland has had to be looked at more carefully. If you have school based assessment, teachers themselves have to be accountable. They are the ones who have to carefully look at what we are asking kids to do.[55]

Assessment and pedagogy do interact and balance and variety are necessary in both.

4.51 When it was relevant to the discussion of other issues, aspects of assessment have been considered elsewhere in this report. The growing importance of literacy in science and mathematics, and the implications for assessment and student outcomes were considered in Chapter 2. The effects on students of differing modes of assessment are not well understood and in this Chapter and Chapter 6 the Committee recommends that research be done on the influence of assessment systems and other factors on school retention and student attitudes and engagement (*see* Recommendations 3 & 15).

4.52 Assessment is an important issue in boys' education for two reasons. First, the methods of assessment, their relevancy and interest, will affect boys' motivation and engagement with learning. Second, assessment needs to be an accurate measure of their achievement in a particular area of study and that measure should not be dependent unnecessarily on knowledge or skills that are more appropriately assessed in another Key Learning Area.

4.53 Assessment structures in Australia range across the spectrum of possibilities from systems that are wholly school-based, systems that combine school-based assessment with external examinations to those that rely solely on external examinations to assess particular subjects.

4.54 Differing modes of assessment advantage and disadvantage groups of boys and girls. It is generally understood that boys do better on tests and examinations and that girls tend to do better on continuous assessment.[56] However, these general findings are not necessarily constant for all boys or all girls. For example, Victorian data indicates that boys from lower socio-economic backgrounds tend to get better results under continuous assessment than they would achieve in external examinations. Conversely, boys from higher socio-economic backgrounds are likely to achieve better

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55 Ms Maree Hedemann, Senior Education Officer, Education Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 573.

56 *see* Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Submission No. 164,* p. 4, *and Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1251.

results in external examinations than they would achieve under continuous assessment.[57]

4.55 The outcomes-based curriculum frameworks are changing the types of tasks that students are being required to undertake for assessment, particularly in those jurisdictions with more flexible school-based systems. An example is the Rich Tasks being trialled in Education Queensland's New Basics Project which is influencing practice in other locations.

> [Rich Tasks are] specific activities that students undertake that have real-world value and use and that are significant in terms of students' local communities. Rich Tasks require all students to extend their repertoires of practice to encompass those that are often treated as being more appropriate to one gender the other. Rich Tasks that require mastery of a range of knowledges and skills applied to real life and high relevance situations are considered to suit boys better than do contrived tasks. The Rich Tasks also offer opportunities for more equitable forms of assessment that cater for a more diverse range of learning styles benefiting both boys and girls.[58]

> The work in the high school years, with the Exhibitions projects which we started with 20 students in year 9…is really starting to show results. Students are saying things like, 'Well, I know I don't like sheet work,' 'I like to actually express what I am feeling and thinking,' 'I like to share my views with other students,' 'I like to have control of my learning.' They are comments that we have heard from students that are significantly different from some of the learnings that students have traditionally had. So what we are attempting to do in our high school years is not to bring about structural change but to bring about cultural change in terms of the way learning proceeds.[59]

4.56 The inclusion of assessment tasks developed around relevant real-world learning experiences that are related to students' communities offers a potential partial solution to boys' disengagement from learning. The Committee has one reservation about this approach: the subject content and purpose of the tasks will need to be a significant attraction to induce

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57 Mr Jeremy Ludowycke, Spokesperson, Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 27.

58 Education Queensland, *Submission No. 168.1*, p. 8.

59 Mr James Colborne, Executive Director, School Education Division, ACT Department of Education and Community Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1331, the Exhibitions projects in the ACT are modelled on the Rich Tasks.

some boys to overcome their reluctance to engage in some of the social and language components.

Recommendation 3

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth fund further research into the impact of different assessment methods on the measured relative attainments of boys and girls.

Conclusion

4.57 The theoretically separate issues of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment merge in classroom practice. This is true in both school-based assessment systems, where teachers are directly involved in all three elements, and in external examination systems where teachers must also direct their teaching to develop their students' examination skills and techniques.

4.58 The Committee believes that whatever assessment systems are used they must accurately measure and report on student achievement in a range of intellectual and social skills they will need throughout life. Sound assessment systems should do so without advantaging particular groups or inadvertently testing competencies they are not primarily intended to assess.

4.59 While quality educational programs and appropriate assessment methods are essential, the quality of teaching is critical. Adequately training and resourcing teachers needs to be the highest priority for education authorities.

5 Building strong foundations: Literacy and numeracy

5.1 Literacy and numeracy are the most important foundation skills upon which most further learning depends. Poor literacy and numeracy achievement is linked to: early school leaving; lower rates of entry to further education; higher rates and longer periods of unemployment; the type of work and earnings.[1] There are also strong correlations between poor literacy and social problems such as crime, rates of imprisonment and substance abuse.

Numeracy

5.2 Educators in other parts of the world often speak of mathematical literacy, however the Australian use of the term 'numeracy' places mathematics in the context of home or working life.

> Numeracy is essentially the effective use of mathematics to meet the general demands of life at home, in paid work, and for participation in community and civic life. Thus numeracy is:
>
> - distinct from literacy;
> - more than number sense;
> - not only school mathematics;
> - and cross-curricular.[2]

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1 *see* Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997.

2 Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers (AAMT) Inc. and Education Department of Western Australia. *Numeracy + Everyone's Business.* Report of the Numeracy Education Strategy Development Conference. Adelaide, (1997).

Gender differences in numeracy achievement

5.3 Nationally, assessments at Years 3 and 5 show few and very small differences in achievement in numeracy between girls and boys.[3] Where there are slightly better results for boys in the 'number' strand, for example in Victoria and Queensland, this is matched by slightly better results for girls in 'chance and data'. In Year 5 there appears to be a wider spread for boys across performance levels.[4]

5.4 For junior secondary school students across Australia there is little difference in numeracy skills between males and females and there was little change in the average levels of attainment for boys and girls over the period 1975 to 1995. Boys' achievement in numeracy was marginally higher than girls' but the difference had not changed over the 20 year period. Over the same period, there had been a small improvement in the percentage of students attaining mastery in numeracy.[5]

5.5 In the OECD Programme for International Student Assessment, Australia was one of only six countries with no significant gender differences in mathematics achievement for 13 year olds. Australia was also one of only five countries with equivalent results for boys and girls in advanced mathematics at Year 12, although there was a gap in favour of males in Year 12 physics and in general mathematics and science tests for non-specialist students. However, many countries had gender differences up to twice as large as Australia.[6]

5.6 The overall picture is that in Australia significant performance differences in mathematics between boys and girls appear not to exist, as the differences found are small. Despite this evidence, the popular stereotype, that boys are better at mathematics than girls, persists[7] and mathematics is widely considered to be a 'boys' subject'.

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3 DEST, *Submission No. 117.2*, pp. 18 & 19.

4 Collins, C., Kenway, J., and McLeod, J., *Factors influencing the educational performance of males and females in school and their initial destinations after leaving school*, July, 2000, p. 49.

5 Marks, G. and Ainley, J., *Reading Comprehension and Numeracy among Junior Secondary School Students in Australia*, LSAY Report No. 3, ACER, 1997.

6 Lokan, J., Greenwood, L. and Cresswell, J., *15 – Up and Counting, Reading, Writing, Reasoning … How literate are Australia's Students*, The PISA 2000 Survey of Students' Reasoning, Mathematical and Scientific Literacy Skills, ACER & OECD, 2001, p. 33.

7 *see* Doig, B., *Summing up: Australian numeracy performances, practices, programs and possibilities.* ACER, 2001, p. 9.

Effective numeracy teaching

5.7 Although the evidence does not identify a crisis in numeracy for either boys or girls, there is still a significant number of students who are not achieving to their potential.

5.8 Research on early numeracy teaching shows that effective practice requires:

- a clear focus on concepts and thinking;
- an emphasis on valuing children's strategies; and
- encouraging children to share their strategies and solutions.[8]

5.9 Professional support and training for teachers to encourage them to employ a wide range of teaching strategies is important. Allocating a regular time to numeracy and providing a structured program with explicit teaching are key features of most successful strategies.

Literacy

5.10 As discussed in Chapter 2, the research shows that, on average, boys do not perform as well as girls in each aspect of literacy, reading, writing, listening, viewing and speaking. The gender differences are greater in the expressive modes of literacy, writing and speaking, than they are in the receptive modes of reading, listening and viewing. Gender differences are greater for children from lower socio-economic groups.[9] The links between early literacy achievement and post-school outcomes and the evidence on the relative literacy attainment of boys and girls have been considered in more detail with the significance of other measures of educational attainment in Chapter 2.

5.11 For some boys, being able to work on a computer may encourage them to engage with learning tasks or motivate them to spend more time or put more effort into literacy tasks.[10] There is also evidence that, on average, boys are performing better than girls at information technology related

8 Doig, B., *Summing up: Australian numeracy performances, practices, programs and possibilities.* ACER, 2001, p. 14.

9 DETYA, *Submission No. 117*, pp. 5-6.

10 Mr Bobby Willetts, Executive Teacher, Griffith Public School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1164.

tasks and that proportionately more boys are enrolling in this subject area in senior school.[11]

5.12 There are obvious vocational benefits for the greater number of boys who do well in the information technology areas. However, the Committee does not believe that this discounts the importance of addressing under-achievement and the gender differentials in the underlying basic literacy skills of reading and writing. While the Committee did not receive specific evidence to support the view, it would not expect that the vocational benefits derived from skills in information technologies would be flowing to many boys with low literacy and numeracy achievement.

The importance of early literacy

5.13 The importance of developing strong foundation literacy and numeracy skills in the early years of schooling cannot be overstated. These foundation skills are the most reliable predictor of longer term educational outcomes and personal and economic wellbeing. Poor achievement in literacy and numeracy at 14 years of age has been clearly linked with early school leaving.[12] The association between literacy achievement in particular and early school leaving is stronger for boys than for girls.[13] Poor literacy and numeracy achievement is also linked to: lower rates of entry to university and TAFE; higher rates and longer periods of unemployment; the type of work that is accessible; and, ultimately, earnings.[14]

> …good literacy and numeracy skills work for young people at every major juncture: the transition to Year 12, progression to higher education, selection to TAFE…they also work for young people in the transition from school to employment in terms of providing access to a wider range of occupations. Poor skills on the other hand, limit choices at every major point. This includes the type of work young people can enter.[15]

11 Dr Julie McLeod, Lecturer, Faculty of Education, Deakin University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 154.

12 Marks, G. N. and Fleming, N., *Early School Leaving in Australia: Findings from the 1995 Year 9 LSAY Cohort*, LSAY Research Report No. 11, ACER, August 1999, p. 9, *and see* Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, p. 3.

13 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, p. 8.

14 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, pp. 11, 14, 19, 25, 31 & 33.

15 Lamb, S., *School Achievement and Initial Education and Labour Market Outcomes*, LSAY Research Report No. 4, ACER, July 1997, p. 31.

5.14 Data published by the OECD in 2000 confirms that the association between poor literacy achievement and unemployment is very strong, particularly for early school leavers. For young people who have not completed upper secondary school, the probability of being unemployed is three to four times higher for those with low literacy skills compared to those at the middle levels of achievement. Those with low literacy skills are between 11 and 25 times more likely to be unemployed than early school leavers with high levels of literacy achievement.[16] This chapter looks at the reasons for, and appropriate responses to, boys' lower average achievement levels.

Reasons for boys' lower literacy achievement

5.15 Boys' lower average level of literacy achievement is not a result of the absence of boys, or the over-representation of girls, at higher levels of achievement.[17] Boys' lower average achievement is a function of the fact that a higher proportion of boys compared to girls are performing at middle to lower levels of achievement.

5.16 A number of factors have been advanced in evidence to the Committee to explain the different distributions of achievement between boys and girls: developmental differences; behavioural factors; genetic differences (in the sense that a higher proportion of boys have learning difficulties or cognitive or hearing impairments); a tendency for more boys than girls to favour the mathematical, logical, in preference to language-based modes of thinking; changes in pedagogy; and the 'feminisation' of primary teaching. Many submissions to the inquiry assigned the cause of boys' differential achievement narrowly and simplistically to only one or two of these possible explanations. The reality is far more complex.

Developmental factors

5.17 Developmental differences in language and social maturity between boys and girls start to emerge in early childhood with girls, on average, developing ahead of boys.[18] Schools and teachers must work with students

16 OECD, *Literacy in the Information Age*, 2000, p. 167, *see* Curtain, R., *How Young People Are Faring 2001: Learning and Work and In Between*, Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2001, p. 4.

17 *see* Professor Peter Hill, Deputy Dean, Centre for Applied Education Research, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 508; *and see* Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p. 41.

18 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, Australian Institute of Family Studies, p. 25.

as they are when they come to school. Therefore, the Committee has not attempted to explore, or advance an opinion on, the relative importance of inherent natural factors (such as the influence of genes and hormones) over social factors (such as differences in the way boys and girls are raised) in explaining the developmental differences between boys and girls.

5.18 However, there are physiological developmental differences between boys and girls which have a bearing on learning. For example, laterality focus, which is necessary to be able to read from left to right[19], the ability to represent shapes[20], and auditory processing capacity[21] tend to develop later in boys.

5.19 The differential in favour of girls against the National Literacy Benchmarks is just one manifestation of the developmental differences. A longitudinal study on the links between temperament and emotional and behavioural development, by the Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS), and recent doctoral research[22], confirm that boys are more likely than girls to experience difficulty adjusting to the first year of school.

> …teachers reported boys had more difficulty adjusting to school. They showed poorer task orientation, were less socially competent, were more prone to hyper-activity and aggression, and some seemed less 'ready' for the demands of the classroom in the early years of school. Their ability to control or regulate their own behaviour was seen as somewhat behind that of girls.[23]

Behavioural factors

5.20 The significance of the early literacy and school adjustment differentials between boys and girls is in the links both have to behavioural problems and school engagement later, particularly for boys. The AIFS Temperament Project found that the children who were reported to have early aggression problems and whose problems were still present at 9-10

19 Dr Annah Healy, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education) QUT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 597.

20 Dr Annah Healy, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education) QUT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 602.

21 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, pp. 2-3.

22 *see* Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D., and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, Australian Institute of Family Studies; *and* Ms Kay Margetts, *Submission No. 145 and Transcript of Evidence*, p. 93.

23 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, p. 25.

years of age (Grade 4) were more likely to be boys, more likely to get into trouble at school and more likely to have difficulties with learning. Of the children whose anti-social behaviour persisted into adolescence, most were boys and many had learning difficulties as well.[24]

5.21 Research by Professor Peter Hill and Dr Ken Rowe also supports the conclusion that behaviour is strongly correlated to learning and gender, even at a level where attentiveness represents much less problematic behaviour than those studied in the Temperament Project.

> Of the predictors of student ***Literacy Achievement***, the most salient was students' attentiveness in the classroom. By far the major proportion of the variance in student ***Attentiveness*** was found to be at the student-level and the most influential predictor of ***Attentiveness*** was ***Gender***, with female students being significantly more attentive than male students.[25]

5.22 The AIFS Temperament Project included a number of subsidiary studies on learning progress and literacy. The first study, on reading and spelling in Grade 1, found that struggling readers:

> …tended to be of lower intelligence than normally reading children (although still within the normal range) and that they were more likely to have a higher level of behaviour problems, especially attention deficits and hyperactivity. They were also children who had been difficult to manage during the pre-school years.[26]

5.23 When reassessed in Grade 2, two-thirds of those children who were struggling readers in Grade 1 were still not reading at a level appropriate for their age. Those who had caught up were more likely than the others to have better phonological skills. Those who were still struggling tended to have weaker phonological skills and were also more likely to be inattentive and disruptive. The implications of this finding for teaching strategies are discussed below. Half the sample in this study were later included in a study of children in Grade 6 and 70 per cent of the children

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24 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 27.

25 Hill and Rowe (1998); Drs Ken and Kathy Rowe, *Submission No. 111.1*, p. 7; *and see Exhibit No. 36,* pp. 1-2.

26 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 38.

who had been struggling readers in Grade 2 were found to be still reading at a below-average level.[27]

5.24 In a second subsidiary study in the AIFS Temperament Project of children in Grade 2, 16 per cent of the sample (roughly 4 children in every classroom) were very much behind in their reading and were classified 'reading disabled' (RD) in the study. Slightly more than half of the RD children were boys while 40 per cent of the RD boys and 15 per cent of the RD girls also had behaviour problems. The behaviour problems were more likely to be hyperactivity, attention difficulties and conduct problems.[28]

5.25 A third subsidiary study was able to conclude that the RD children with behaviour problems in Grade 2 had made significantly poorer progress by Grade 4 than the RD children without behaviour problems. It also found that of the children with behaviour problems who were reading well in Grade 2 almost half exhibited better classroom behaviour by Grade 4.[29]

> …the early histories of children with behavioural difficulties (many of whom also had [reading disabilities]), showed that they could be distinguished from non-problem children by a history of difficult temperament, and problems with behaviour as far back as toddlerhood…for some children, early behavioural difficulties lead them into school learning difficulties. Without some help in managing their behaviour, before they begin school, there is a risk of longer-term problems.[30]

5.26 The evidence suggests that in some children poor behaviour and learning difficulties may be coincidental and, in others, one problem may lead to the other. For some children, behavioural difficulties lead to learning difficulties while for others the learning difficulties lead to behavioural problems.

> From an anecdotal point of view with children in the hospital who come in with behavioural problems, as soon as their literacy gets

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27 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 39.

28 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 40.

29 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* pp. 40-41; A 5th subsidiary study found "The best predictor of recovery for boys [to be reading at an appropriate level for age at Grade 6] was the absence of persistent behavioural problems.", p. 42.

30 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 41.

> sorted out they will come in and suddenly they are okay, they are not a problem in school.[31]

5.27 In relation to children's behavioural difficulties and parenting styles the AIFS Temperament Project concluded that:

> …parenting styles of low warmth, high use of punishment and low monitoring of the child's behaviour, were associated with externalising behaviours [aggression, oppositional behaviour, hyperactivity and attention problems], and with substance abuse.[32]

5.28 The Australian Association of Social Workers submitted that poor parenting and / or domestic violence is often a factor when children develop behavioural problems.

> There is some evidence that children from homes with domestic violence have attention difficulties. They may not actually have attention deficit disorder, but they have problems concentrating or problems with hyperactivity. Anxiety and depression are often conditions that exist alongside that sort of hyperactivity, as well.
>
> Drug use and abuse has had an impact on parenting and therefore we are seeing behavioural problems in younger children as they enter school. It has implications for how we intervene early with those children…the first three years of life is really the crucial time for children's learning and development. Some of the children entering school come… from families in which there has been horrendous drug abuse and lack of attachment and domestic violence.[33]

5.29 Early intervention to deal with behavioural problems in pre-school children, especially those related to attention, concentration and self-control, is essential. Appropriate early intervention will assist these children to adjust better to school and will help prevent behavioural problems contributing to the development of learning problems in the early years of schooling.

5.30 There is a need to raise community and parental awareness of the effect certain parenting styles may have on learning and behaviour and the correlation between behavioural problems and learning problems. Information should be developed for the child-care sector and for pre-

31 Dr Katherine Rowe, Paediatrician, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 123.

32 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000,* p. 53.

33 Mr Paul Wyles, Member, Australian Association of Social Workers, *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 1076 & 1079.

school teachers and general practitioners to help them to assist parents of pre-school children with behavioural problems. Where these problems are substantial, the aim should be to encourage child-carers, teachers and doctors to refer the parents to appropriate services before the children start school. The emphasis, where possible, should be on developing consistent, appropriate parenting skills and behaviour management strategies for parents without resort to medication.[34]

Recommendation 4

The Committee recommends that as part of a strategy to raise community and parental awareness of the effect certain parenting styles may have on learning and behaviour and the correlation between behavioural problems and learning difficulties; the relevant Ministers should:

- **review the available Australian qualitative and quantitative research on behaviour and learning;**
- **develop information for inclusion in a package for new parents on the effect of particular parenting styles on children's behaviour and learning; and**
- **develop an information package or packages, for General Practitioners, child-care workers, pre-school teachers and others in contact with parents of pre-schoolers, which includes a guide to services to help parents whose children have behaviour and attention problems.**

Hearing and auditory processing difficulties

5.31 Hearing difficulties and auditory processing problems have emerged in evidence from a wide range of sources as significant impediments to literacy learning for many children. While the significance of hearing difficulties is obvious they are not always detected early. Auditory processing problems are a more subtle and less widely understood factor. Auditory processing difficulties may exist in children who can hear well but who have difficulty processing what they do hear. These children will be able to recall less of what they have heard than other children. Typically, more boys than girls are affected.

34 The Committee acknowledges the growing awareness of the importance of diet and nutrition and their potential to affect children's behaviour.

5.32 Hearing and auditory processing problems are often detected after children have been referred to paediatricians with disruptive, inattentive behaviours and learning difficulties.

> When such children can hear well, it is recognised that they have difficulty in processing what they can hear. This ability to recall auditory information is typically measured by the length and complexity of a sentence and the number of pieces of information (e.g. digits) that are recalled accurately. Such ability increases rapidly between the ages of 3 and 7 years, and many parents and teachers intuitively adapt the length of sentences according to a child's age.[35]

5.33 A child with a delay in the development of his or her auditory processing capability may appear 'not to listen' or appear to be 'unable to hear'. If no allowance for the problem is made by parents and teachers the result is that the child may fail to acquire important fundamental literacy skills.[36] The AIFS Temperament Project also found that auditory discrimination is one of the predictors of a child's reading ability.[37]

5.34 A 1999 Victorian study[38] assessed a screening tool to help teachers identify students at school entry with auditory processing difficulties and to evaluate the effect of teacher training on children's achievement when appropriate strategies for auditory processing difficulties are used. Children with hearing difficulties, as opposed to auditory processing difficulties, were excluded from the study. The study identified a significant gender dimension to this teaching and learning issue.

> Seven per cent of children at school entry had a digit span of 2 digits (or less) and a sentence length of less than 8 words. An additional 15% were considered 'at risk' of literacy under-achievement since they either had a digit span of 3 digits or a

35 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, pp. 1-2.

36 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, p. 2.

37 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, p. 38.

38 Rowe, K.S., Pollard, J., Tan, L. and Rowe, K.J., (2000) *Auditory processing effects on early literacy and behaviour: Evidence for the value of auditory screening of children on school entry*, Paper, Second International Conference on Child and Adolescent Mental Health, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, 6-10 June 2000.

> sentence length of 8 words (or less). Boys constituted 70% of these two at risk groups.[39]

5.35 Information on gender differences in hearing from data gathered by otoacoustic emission tests on 3,000 Australians was presented by representatives of Australian Hearing.[40] An otoacoustic emission test "measures the reaction time of an ear; how quickly the ear can respond to a stream of sounds such as speech".[41] The data gathered from the tests show that, after the age of four, males have measurably less acute hearing than females. The measurable differences in hearing can be detected by the otoacoustic emission test before hearing damage becomes apparent to the individual and would be detectable on a conventional audiogram test.

> The overwhelming fact …is that from about the first decade of life the ears of boys are effectively older than the ears of girls. They process sounds more slowly, they provide less information to the brain to be analysed.[42]

> If you are trying to learn language, having difficulty processing the basic information is going to mean that there is less you can do with that information in the same time period than someone whose sound analysis is fast… For example, if you take a typical boy and a typical girl, we are suggesting that if the teacher is speaking normally the girl and the boy will be able to hear the first sentence but the boy may still be figuring out what was said when the second sentence comes along, whereas the girl will have taken it all in, thought about the mental connections and be ready for the next sentence.[43]

5.36 This is both a health and an educational issue. The otoacoustic emission test results for teenagers and young adults, both males and females, reveal a much more rapid decline in hearing than in older people, principally as a consequence of the advent and widespread use of personal stereos from the late 1970s and early 1980s. However, more young males are doing more damage to their hearing than young females.[44]

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39 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, p. 3; *and see* Mr Peter Dicker, Psychologist, *Submission No. 64*, p. 1.

40 The National Acoustic Laboratories.

41 Dr Eric LePage, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 416.

42 Dr Eric Le Page, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 416.

43 Dr Narelle Murray, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 417.

44 Drs LePage and Murray, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 417-418.

> There is a basic biological reason that does show up in other studies… but we are saying that environmental effects—the things that have long been regarded as preventable, namely noise—are a big factor. We are saying that, given our findings, it is not reasonable to expect that boys, on average, will absorb class teaching material as readily as girls.[45]

5.37 Hearing damage is cumulative and irreversible. The relatively greater hearing damage that children and teenagers accumulate today compared to 20 years ago is likely to be one of the factors contributing to inattentiveness and disengagement, particularly for boys.

5.38 The otoacoustic emission test results also have implications for addressing social disadvantage. While the specific studies have not been done, correlations are apparent between the relative hearing damage and educational attainment of different groups of people. Research is required on the relationships between both hearing damage and the levels of educational attainment of Aboriginals, and hearing damage, educational attainment and crime.

> …Prisoners [have] hearing scores, which are five times greater than the [normal] ageing effect for every 10 years [of age]. The male-female ratio is twice the ageing effect, being Aboriginal is four times the effect...[46]

5.39 The Victorian research, reported by Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, examined the ability of children (with apparently normal hearing) to listen to and recall information. The Australian Hearing data, reported by Drs LePage and Murray, deals with the amount of auditory information that the brain actually receives. The two reports are not concerned with precisely the same thing but both are credible, scientific and objective evidence that, on average, boys' capacity or ability to receive and process auditory information is less than that of girls.

5.40 A differential in auditory processing capacity already exists between boys and girls when they commence school. While some, or even most, of the boys may catch up with the girls developmentally (the auditory processing capacity) the boys, on average, are simultaneously accumulating more hearing damage (the auditory receiving capacity). Research is required on the cumulative effect of hearing damage on the development of language and literacy skills and the relative impact it has on males and females.

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45 Dr Eric Le Page, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 420.

46 Dr Eric Le Page, Australian Hearing, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 420.

5.41 Practical classroom strategies which address auditory processing problems were trialed in the Victorian study referred to above.

> Teachers in the 'trial' schools were provided with: (1) professional development regarding normal development of auditory processing, (2) training in the administration of the auditory screening protocols, and (3) practical classroom management and intervention techniques.[47]

5.42 Specific training was provided in the following strategies:

- attract the child's attention;
- use short sentences ('chunked'), maintain eye contact and use visual cues;
- **pause** between sentences and, if repeating is required, restate simply, provide regular encouragement and improve self esteem;
- monitor the child (eg. if 'blank' look response, stop and begin instructing again; and
- establish hearing, listening and compliance routines.

5.43 The effect of this intervention in the trial schools, which amounted to one hour's professional development for each teacher, was that the progress in acquiring literacy skills by the boys tracked parallel to the progress of the girls. In the reference schools, the boys' progress in literacy was slower than the girls' and they were more inattentive.[48] The Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training has implemented the findings from this study as a component of its *Early Years Literacy Program*.[49]

47 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Auditory Processing Effects on Early Literacy and Behaviour*, Background paper on address to a Students with Disabilities Conference, Melbourne, August 2000, *Exhibit No. 36*, Appendix 3, p. 2.

48 Dr Katherine Rowe, Paediatrician, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 118.

49 Drs Ken and Katherine Rowe, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 118 *and see* http://www.sofweb.vic.edu.au/eys/resources/audproc.htm.

Recommendation 5

The Committee recommends that:

a) all State and Territory health authorities ensure that kindergarten children are fully tested for hearing and sight problems; and

b) the Commonwealth and State and Territory governments jointly fund the implementation of the strategies used in the Victorian study on auditory processing in primary schools throughout Australia. Implementation should include:

- **professional development for all primary school teachers to raise awareness about the normal development of auditory processing in children;**
- **the provision of the relevant auditory screening tests and training to equip teachers to administer preliminary tests with referral to specialised support where needed; and**
- **professional development for teachers in practical classroom management and teaching strategies to address the needs of children with auditory processing difficulties.**

The importance of phonemic awareness and phonological skill

5.44 Phonemes are units of sound in language (eg. the sound of 'b' in the word 'bat') and phonological skill is the ability to recognise, recall and process sounds in language (eg. at the elementary level being able to recognise if two words sounded the same or different). Phonemic awareness is necessary to the development of phonological skills. Both are essential foundational literacy skills without which children will struggle to learn to read and spell.

5.45 The importance of phonemic awareness and phonological skills is supported by research and the observation of teachers. The Australian Temperament Project confirmed the importance of phonological skills in the development of reading and spelling skills in children.[50] Eagleby State School in Queensland has observed that the children from its pre-school, which targets pre-literacy skills in children, cope better in Year 1 than children from other day care centres.

50 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000, see* pp. 38-42; *and see Preventing and Overcoming Reading Failure: Recent Research and Proven Programs,* Hempenstall, K. and Ryan, P., 2000, *Exhibit No. 58.*

> The children are introduced to books [and] the language that the teachers use in the classroom because they are not familiar with that sort of language at home…We do a lot of phonemic awareness also, in the sense that the children… are taught to be aware of the fact that words are made of sounds and they are made aware of the types of sounds. We teach them syllables, onset and rime and rhyming words, what is a word, spaces between words—all those basic things that I think a lot of children will have when they come to you. But we have identified that a lot of our children don't have these things.[51]

5.46 Those pre-school children who develop strong phonemic awareness and other pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills do so through activities with their parents, grandparents, other adults and older children. Talking, singing, listening and reading to children, talking to children about the pictures in books, encouraging children to draw, count, measure things and make up rhymes are some of the many ways parents help their children develop phonemic awareness and other foundational literacy and numeracy skills.

5.47 For some children, and for a greater proportion of children from less affluent backgrounds, the foundation literacy and numeracy skills are not as well developed as they could be when the children start school. It has been argued that it is significant for the development of pre-literacy skills in boys that the ways adults talk to and interact with infant girls are more conducive to the development of language skills than are the ways that they tend to interact with infant boys.[52]

5.48 In extreme cases, some five year olds commence school knowing little of books and with extremely under-developed oral language skills. The community of Parkes in NSW has responded by providing all new mothers with a book, *Toby'sTroubles*, "about a baby whose mother reads to him whenever he is unsettled or in strife".[53] Other books in the locally produced series are provided at other times such as immunisation with the idea that they will raise the parents' awareness of the benefits of reading to their children.

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51 Ms Patricia Wilson, Acting Deputy Principal, Eagleby State School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 532; The 'onset' is the first consonant or cluster of consonants in a syllable and the 'rime' is the remainder of the syllable, eg in a one syllable word such as 'train', 'tr' is the onset and 'ain' is the rime.

52 Professor Erica McWilliam, QUT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 594; *and see* Dr Annah Healy, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education) QUT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 599.

53 *see* "City where the kids can talk the talk before they walk the walk", *The Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 June 2002, pp. 1&4.

5.49 Children with under-developed pre-literacy skills are at an immediate disadvantage compared to children who start school with strong language skills, and an awareness of books, print, letters and numbers. Parents should be encouraged to do those things with their children that will enhance learning but the provision of good quality pre-literacy programs in pre-schools will help children whose parents cannot or do not provide such encouragement to learn in early childhood.

> What I would really love to be able to do would be to work with preschools where they get [children] between three and five, which is when they are really ready, and to put greater emphasis in those preschools on the structures of oral language to get those in place and [children's] concepts about print. It would take very little to get our preschools much more effective in that area and to ensure that the most needy of our children got that preschool education... in our most needy schools it is taking an additional six to nine months to get them up to the level where we expect kids to be.[54]

5.50 It is so important to encourage the development of phonemic awareness and phonological skills in children before they get to school that governments should be more active in promoting actions parents, child carers and pre-schools can take to help children develop these skills. The program being trialed in Parkes where the parents of newborns are given explicit encouragement to read and to talk to their children is an instructive approach.

54 Professor Peter Hill, Deputy Dean, Centre for Applied Education Research, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 520.

Recommendation 6

The Committee recommends that:

a) the Commonwealth, in conjunction with the State and Territory governments, coordinate a public information program comprised of the following elements:

- **information for all new parents on the importance of developing early language skills and the games and strategies which parents and child carers can use to develop these skills, with follow-up at key stages in their pre-school years;**
- **basic information on the way that adults traditionally have interacted with boys and girls stressing the importance to parents of developing pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skills in both boys and girls while recognising their differences; and**
- **a periodic, low intensity, media campaign to raise and maintain community awareness about the need to talk and play with babies and young children in ways that develop their pre-literacy and numeracy skills.**

b) the Commonwealth, with the State and Territory governments, work with pre-schools and childcare centres to ensure that there is adequate awareness of, and attention to, pre-literacy and pre-numeracy skill development in boys as well as girls.

Phonics and the acquisition of literacy skills

5.51 Phonics refers to the relationships between the component sounds of a language (phonemes) and its written symbols (orthography). Methods of literacy instruction vary in the emphasis they place on the importance and explicit teaching of phonics and a controversy continues between the proponents of phonics-based approaches to teaching literacy and 'whole language'. 'Whole language' is often misrepresented as a phonics free approach to teaching literacy and is commonly associated with 'whole word recognition' or 'Look-Say' which emphasises the memorisation of words by sight.

5.52 Integrated models which include a strong emphasis on phonics instruction with relevant and meaningful reading appear to be the most successful, especially for children with reading difficulties.

> Current research findings lead us to believe that a heavy emphasis on systematic phonics instruction combined with the reading of natural language texts is the most effective and efficient way to

> approach both initial reading instruction for the majority of learners and remedial instruction for low-progress readers. This view of reading, which acknowledges the simultaneous integration of orthographic, phonemic, syntactic and semantic cues, is referred to as an interactive model. In this model, learners are directly and explicitly taught to apply whole word recognition skills and phonic knowledge skills to decode words. These skills are then applied and practised to develop automaticity through the reading of a variety of meaningful, connected texts at an appropriate level.[55]

5.53 In this context whole word recognition "refers to the ability to identify familiar words without the need to analyse their component parts"[56] and does not imply that phonic word attack skills are unnecessary.

5.54 Some manifestations of the 'whole language' approach to teaching literacy emphasise the use of sentence context as the primary method for identifying unfamiliar words and under-emphasise the development of phonic word attack skills. This latter approach disadvantages the significant proportion of struggling readers, mostly boys, who are less able to infer spelling / sound patterns if they are not explicitly taught. Concern about under-emphasising or ignoring the importance of phonic word attack skills was the subject of a number of submissions to the inquiry from parents and teachers.[57]

> Some low progress readers with poor phonic word attack skills can and do rely on other strategies to read text which are less efficient but, none the less, effective to some degree. Some readers may even be able to reach a functional level of reading while maintaining relatively poor phonic word attack skills, by acquiring a very large lexicon of sight words, for example. *As a general teaching strategy for reading, however, this is not to be recommended - it is far too risky.*[58]

5.55 A former primary teacher with many years experience offered the following observations which are consistent with recent research.

55 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 2.

56 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 3.

57 *see* Mrs G. Stanbridge, *Submission No.37*; Mr Don Trent and Ms Jennifer Cooper, *Submission No. 77*: Mr G. A. Truslove, *Submission No. 177*; Ms Elizabeth Clarke, *Submission No. 182*; Ms M. Storey, *Submission No. 194*.

58 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 4.

> Spoken words (abstracts) are converted to print through a code, the symbols of which are also abstracts. Unlike the learning of a number, which is also represented by an abstract, the teaching of reading cannot proceed from the concrete to the abstract. The brain must convert one abstract into another abstract form…
>
> The assumption that a child will mentally 'photograph' whole words and be able to read them is fallacious, and the belief that a child will read simply as a natural progression from speaking the language and because he/she sees print constantly is childish simplification. Knowledge of the code is the essential key to reading, for it allows the child to focus on detail – pal or pat? dear or clear? modern or modem? Children learning to look and say whole words are only getting an impression of reading.[59]

5.56 It is clear that phonological skills are important in learning to read and to spell. Some children, whose earlier experiences have not adequately developed phonological skills, will require more explicit teaching of phonics or sound/letter relationships than others.

> This phoneme awareness may more readily be invoked in children whose earlier experiences have included a focus on the structure of the spoken word, albeit in larger units such as rhymes, syllables, onset and rimes. Some children do not develop this awareness unaided and without assistance may remain…reliant on memory of the letter landscapes, or contextual guessing strategies. Such readers are doomed as the demands of a rapidly increasing visual vocabulary become overwhelming in middle to upper primary school…[60]

Systematic phonics for remedial instruction

5.57 The Macquarie University Special Education Centre in Sydney has developed a very effective, research-based, remedial literacy program called MULTILIT (Making Up Lost Time In Literacy). MULTILIT provides intensive, systematic, reading instruction which focuses on phonic word attack skills, sight word recognition (of the most frequently occurring words in print), and the practice (and tutoring) of these skills through

59 Ms Elizabeth Clarke, *Submission No. 182.2*, p. 1.

60 *Preventing and Overcoming Reading Failure: Recent Research and Proven Programs*, Hempenstall, K. and Ryan, P., 2000, *Exhibit No. 58*, p. 4; *and see* Wheldall, K., and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 4, "The primary factor preventing the vast majority of low-progress readers from improving their reading performance is their poor word decoding skills. They are unable to match letters with their corresponding sounds to decode words. In other words, their phonic word attack skills are poor."

reading natural language in text appropriate for the student's age and reading level.[61]

5.58 Other important features of MULTILIT include a non-categorical approach to instruction (pedagogy is not determined by the nature of the reading disability or delay but after an appraisal of the student's current level of functioning in literacy) and Positive Teaching, which accentuates the positive rather than reprimanding inappropriate behaviour. MULTILIT also includes strategies for improving reading accuracy and comprehension which have proven effective even when used for Year 7 and 8 students by trained Year 11 and Year 12 peer tutors.[62]

5.59 MULTILIT is the instructional method used by the *Schoolwise* program at the Exodus Foundation, which takes struggling Year 6 and Year 7 students for half a day in the mornings for two terms. The students return to their schools in the afternoons. On average, the students selected for *Schoolwise* were about four years behind in their reading and related skills when they commenced the program.[63]

> It is very positive teaching. The strategies are designed by Macquarie University. The way we work it is that we employ Macquarie trained teachers to do the teaching and we have a team of family therapists. We do all the caring and they do the teaching.[64]

> We had one child going 'Oh, it is the black stuff you read.'… The way the program works is that they are measured as to where they are at, and they are given a task which is slightly above where they are at, but they can achieve it. Then they get hooked on achieving. To me it is just remarkable. We have seen the most remarkable changes, just as kids begin to feel that they can actually cope.[65]

5.60 In less than five months on the program the *Schoolwise* students made average gains of 15 months in reading accuracy, 11 months in reading comprehension, and 14 months in spelling. This is six times the rate of progress that these students were likely to have made without the

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61 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 4.

62 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, pp. 5-6 & 34-35.

63 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 24.

64 Rev. Bill Crews, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 480.

65 Rev. Bill Crews, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 481.

MULTILIT intervention.[66] There were also significant corresponding shifts in students' emotional wellbeing.

> One of the things they get measured for is depression. On the first intake of kids we took years ago, on a Zeligman scale, I think it was, where 24 is profoundly and suicidally depressed, the average of the kids we got was 23. Just teaching them to read dropped the average from 23 to 15, with a lot of them not being depressed at all.[67]

5.61 The *Schoolwise* / MULTILIT success has been replicated in other contexts, including primary schools, for children covering the age range from Year 2 to Year 7. For the vast majority of students the gains are maintained 6 to 12 months after the two term intervention ceases. However, further progress without continued intervention is, for most, less than normal while a small proportion lose some of their gains.[68] The latter group would clearly benefit from continued MULTILIT type intervention and support.

> …the often heard view that remedial instruction for students beyond Year 2 is ineffective may have *been* true, but this is a criticism of the ineffectiveness of past programs, not a necessary truth. We can rehabilitate older low-progress readers… with effective programs based on contemporary, empirically validated best practice if we have the will and the resources to do so.[69]

5.62 The knowledge and practical instructional techniques developed in MULTILIT by the researchers at Macquarie University should inform and enhance initial and remedial literacy instruction throughout Australia and form the core of remedial reading programs in primary and high schools.

Phonics and Reading Recovery

5.63 Reading Recovery is one of the mainstays of Australia's early intervention efforts for struggling readers and is limited to young children in Year 1. It targets the poorest 10 to 20 per cent of readers in Grade 1, of whom two-thirds are boys, for one-on-one tutoring. Reading Recovery does teach phonics but it does not always have the 'heavy emphasis on systematic

66 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, pp. 24-25.

67 Rev. Bill Crews, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 481; *and see* Wheldall, K., and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, pp. 32-33.

68 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 26.

69 Wheldall, K. and Beaman, R., *An Evaluation of MULTILIT: Making up lost time in literacy* — Executive Summary, Macquarie University Special Education Centre, 1999, p. 30.

phonics instruction' which research indicates is the most effective method of initial and remedial instruction.

5.64 Research commissioned by the New Zealand Ministry of Education found that, compared to normally developing children, children selected for Reading Recovery showed significant deficiencies in phonological processing skills prior to entry into the program. Alarmingly, the study also found clearly that participation in Reading Recovery did not eliminate the deficiencies in phonological processing and failed to bring these children up to average levels of reading performance.[70]

> …those children who made some modest gains in reading performance after Reading Recovery had significantly better phonological processing skills than the children who made minimal gains.[71]

5.65 Other research has concluded that Reading Recovery is more effective when it is augmented by more intensive and explicit instruction in phonological processing skills.[72]

Recommendation 7

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth-funded literacy programs should be required to adopt an integrated approach which includes a strong element of explicit, intensive, systematic phonics instruction.

When programs such as Reading Recovery are used they should be augmented by explicit, intensive phonics instruction as part of regular classroom teaching.

Phonics approaches in schools

5.66 The weight of the research supporting the effectiveness of teaching phonics explicitly is supported by the observations of teachers who adopt these methods. For example, the Spalding Method (an American package)

70 Chapman, J.W., Tunmer, W.E. and Prochnow, J.E., "Does Success in the Reading Recovery Program Depend on Developing Proficiency in Phonological Processing Skills? A Longitudinal Study in a Whole Language Context", *Scientific Studies in Reading*, No. 5, (2001), p. 158; This study also confirmed the correlation between poor literacy progress and behavioural problems, *see* p. 167.

71 Chapman, J.W., Tunmer, W.E. and Prochnow, J.E., "Does Success in the Reading Recovery Program Depend on Developing Proficiency in Phonological Processing Skills? A Longitudinal Study in a Whole Language Context", *Scientific Studies in Reading*, No. 5, (2001), p. 171.

72 *see* Iversen, S.A. and Tunmer, W.E., "Phonological Processing Skill and the Reading Recovery Program", *Journal of Educational Psychology*, No. 85, 1993.

is one of a number of packaged phonics systems for teaching literacy being used in Australia. The Committee visited three schools which use Spalding, two public schools on the outskirts of Hobart and an independent boys' school in Eastern Melbourne, as well as another independent school in Brisbane which uses another very structured phonics-based approach for remedial instruction.

5.67 The independent schools which have adopted explicit phonics instruction tend to relate the decision to teach phonics to boys' general preference for structured, explicit activity-based learning.

> We have found that boys particularly respond to this kind of structured learning… and to providing them with the means for logical thinking. Through providing them with rules and teaching them a code as we do, they are able to apply a bit of logical thinking and work it out for themselves.[73]

> Spalding's highly structured, step-by-step, research based approach seems particularly suited to boys way of learning.[74]

> [Letterland and Spalding] have a very strong phonemic or phonological basis, which we know from the research is absolutely necessary. The methods, particularly the Spalding method, utilise what is known as direct instruction… The essence of the approach is that nothing is left to chance. That is the problem half the time these days. Nothing is left to chance. No assumptions are made. Children are given explicit instructions, clear goals, small steps, and lots of practice and repetition, all of which ensures a high level of success.[75]

5.68 The Tasmanian Department of Education is making Spalding available as one of a number of strategies and programs schools may use as part of its effort to improve the literacy attainment of the State's lowest achievers. The Committee visited two public schools on the northern outskirts of Hobart which are using Spalding and was struck by the passionate enthusiasm of the teachers for the method and what it enabled them to achieve with their students.

> Basically, Spalding has provided a key element to our whole school literacy plan—it is one element. It really looks at teachers being able to focus on teaching children all the elements that make

73 Mr Gavin Swallow, Senior Teacher Literacy, Cannon Hill Anglican College, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1240.

74 Mr Andrew Mullins, Headmaster, Redfield College, *Submission No. 80*, p. 26.

75 Mrs Lynette Henshall, Vice Principal, Southwood Boys Grammar, Tintern Schools, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 221.

up language and bringing it all together for them. For our students, we have seen really good learning outcomes from that work. It allows teachers to be explicit and it ensures that children are able to build on their learning step-by-step through scaffolding on what they already know, challenging them and taking it on to the next level.[76]

I have been at Bridgewater for nearly six years so I have seen a really huge change. I have seen both teaching practices in the time that I have been there. When I first started at Bridgewater, if we were asking the children to do some writing of their own, narrative writing, the comment would be, 'I'm not doing that,' or they would produce about a quarter of a page of writing and say, 'That's it; no more.' The change in the children has been incredible. They see themselves now as writers. They are really willing to join in, to write, and they are just writing so much more and enjoying what they are doing. It is just incredible.[77]

The reason I did the Spalding training was because I worked with the children at Bridgewater in my first year there as a support teacher, and I made no difference—and I mean none—and I could not have worked harder, but I did not have the right method. I tried everything that I had been taught and picked up as a teacher. But from the beginning of the year to the end of the year I made no difference. Then across my desk came this invitation to do a course that involved phonics and I thought, 'I will try this because everything else I have used has failed.' So I did that course and came back and thought my kids are not going to understand this, it is too hard… but they did. If you break it down into the parts, and you build it up methodically, you do stacks of repetitions, stacks of practice until they get accurate, then you move on. Yes, at the end of the year I had made a difference when I had not the year before. Now some of the boys are keeping pace chronologically. They have a lot of years to catch up. But some of those children—not all of them in my group—are starting to keep pace chronologically. In other words, this year they will have gone a year ahead in their spelling and reading, and they never did that before.[78]

76 Mrs Lynne James, Principal, Herdsmans Cove Primary School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1086.

77 Mrs Della Pyke, Teacher, Bridgewater Primary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1088.

78 Mrs Susie Eade, Teacher, Inclusion Students, Literacy Support, Bridgewater Primary School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1091.

5.69 Teachers at the two schools also remarked on the success of Spalding instructional methods at keeping boys on task and motivating them to achieve.

> [Boys] do not seem to be as good with communication as girls as they are developing, and… perhaps Spalding's strength is the fact that it almost says to boys, 'Here is a formula, and this is how you apply it.' So it is, for them, 'All right; I can actually take this. It does not have to be intuitive as there is structure to our language. If I learn these rules and I apply it this way, therefore I can do it,' and I do not think we have done that with our language before with boys. We do it in maths, but I do not think we do it in literacy, and Spalding does give you that sort of structure.[79]

> I have also found that it is often the boys who are struggling in the English area. What I have noticed is that a lot of the problem seems to be with actually engaging their attention. Their behaviour problems stem from their concentration. I think boys like to be actively engaged in things, and the Spalding method, because it provides a multi-sensory approach where they are listening, saying and doing constantly, focuses their attention so that they do not have the opportunity to wander around and get bored and frustrated because they are not learning. For me, that is where it has really made a difference: with focusing the boys.[80]

> The difference we see in the boys is the behaviour. Unfortunately lots of the behaviour problems are from boys. I have two of the most difficult kids in the school, and we just don't have those behaviour problems from them during English time.[81]

5.70 The research supporting the more explicit teaching of phonics, especially in remedial literacy instruction, does not appear to be receiving sufficient attention by most education departments. There is a view that explicit phonics instruction and encouraging children to develop a love of reading and literature are mutually exclusive.

> There is still an argument—some people are pro Spalding, some people are pro language. I believe that the two can blend quite well and I do not like the argument that some people are on one

79 Mrs Susie Eade, Teacher, Inclusion Students, Literacy Support, Bridgewater Primary School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1091.

80 Ms Alison Bailey, Teacher, Herdsmans Cove Primary School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1091.

81 Mrs Della Pyke, Teacher, Literacy Support, Bridgewater Primary School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1091.

> side of the fence and some are on the other. You can do both really well. You can have wonderful whole language activities where the children are being really creative and writing freely, but they need the Spalding component first. If you can't write a sentence you can't write a story.[82]

5.71 Although the research appears to have already answered the question the debate occurring in some schools is replicated at all levels in education.

> The fact that Tasmania has picked up some of these commodity products…in relation to teaching literacy has been severely frowned upon by a high proportion of the literacy fraternity, both in our own state and in other states. It is certainly not universally accepted. It is criticised for dumbing down literacy teaching and, for some people, reducing literacy to simply teaching children to read and write… that is absolutely not true at all. We are trying to ensure that all children have foundational skills so that they can move on to the level of critical literacy, enjoying literature and participating in all of those very rich and wide definitions of literacy that we would all want to see. But we have to accept the fact that there are some children who are simply not going to get to that point without very explicit and very structured teaching. That is still an unpopular view amongst many people… At an official level we have been fairly successful in getting that approach accepted into a lot more schools than would have been the case five years ago, but I would not want to give the impression that it is universally agreed to—it certainly is not.[83]

5.72 It is not Spalding that the Committee is promoting but the elements of the literacy programs it has observed in a number of schools which are contributing to their success in literacy. In both the Tasmanian schools Spalding was one element, albeit a major element, of a whole school approach to raise teaching and learning expectations and performance. What Spalding and other similar approaches offer is that they are multi-sensory (see, hear, say, write), they are sequential and structured with clear teaching and learning objectives that are readily understood by teachers **and students**, they explicitly teach phonic word attack skills and they encourage children to verbalise their thinking. It must be emphasised that while intensive, explicit teaching in phonics is considered a

82 Mrs Della Pyke, Teacher, Bridgewater Primary School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1089.

83 Ms Alison Jacob, Deputy Secretary, Department of Education, Tasmania, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1103.

fundamental and essential ingredient, it is not sufficient on its own and needs to be part of a holistic, integrated approach to literacy.

Recommendation 8

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth, State and Territory education authorities ensure that teacher education places much greater emphasis on the pedagogy of teaching literacy and numeracy. Further, pre-service training in teaching literacy should involve an integrated approach which includes explicit, intensive, structured phonics as an essential element in early and remedial literacy instruction.

Recommendation 9

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth, State and Territory funding for teachers' professional development be increased on a dollar for dollar basis and that it be directed towards a greater focus on literacy and on early diagnosis and intervention to assist children at risk. This should involve developing skills in intensive phonics instruction as part of an integrated approach to teaching literacy.

Reflecting on teaching practice

5.73 In both of the Tasmanian schools, and the other primary schools with effective literacy programs visited, a whole of school strategy is in place and teachers have opportunities to review, discuss and reflect on their own practice. For example: Bridgewater Primary School, Tasmania, has monthly team planning sessions and the implementation of Spalding included training, modelling and mentoring[84]; at Eagleby State School, Qld, mentoring and the lesson planning structure involves all teachers in supporting each other[85]; at Roseville Public School, NSW, a non-teaching Deputy Principal and additional support funded by the P&C coordinate a whole school approach to identifying and addressing student needs in learning and social development[86], and Broadmeadows Primary School, SA, has a buddy system which requires teachers to examine and reflect on their practice as part of their ongoing professional development.[87]

5.74 The importance of providing teachers an opportunity to reflect on their own teaching practice to create a continuous improvement loop is crucial.

84 *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1093 & 1098.

85 *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 532 & 536.

86 *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 673-5.

87 *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 752.

> A really good teacher can be a coordinator, coach and mentor to other teachers and improve their literacy teaching. In the average primary school, they need to have one teacher who can do that in the early years and they have to work in the morning because that is when they do their literacy block… The only way you will improve teaching is through coaching and mentoring… you can talk to teachers until you are blue in the face but, if you want to change them, you have to go into their classroom while they are teaching and work alongside them, coaching and mentoring them.[88]

5.75 In Victoria, the implementation of the professional development package to raise teachers' awareness of auditory processing difficulties in children included additional teacher support in each primary school allocated on a per capita basis. The role of this additional teacher is to be a literacy coordinator and coach, model and mentor to the other teachers to ensure that professional development in literacy strategies becomes embedded in teacher practice. At the same time Victoria also funded a Reading Recovery teacher to provide Reading Recovery for 20 per cent of the Year 1 cohort in each school with an adjustment according to need. The total cost to Victoria of both initiatives was approximately $50 million.[89]

5.76 Victorian primary schools represent about 25 per cent of all Australian primary schools, therefore the cost to implement both initiatives nationally if neither were already occurring would be approximately $200 million. However, elements already exist in other states and territories. In conjunction with the teacher professional development recommended above and a greater emphasis on systematic phonics instruction, the Committee believes the universal provision of a literacy coordinator and phonics enhanced Reading Recovery or alternative intensive assistance program in Australian primary schools would significantly improve the literacy achievement of under-achieving Australian children.

88 Professor Peter Hill, Deputy Dean, Centre for Applied Education Research, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 515.

89 Professor Peter Hill, Deputy Dean, Centre for Applied Education Research, University of Melbourne, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 515.

Recommendation 10

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth in conjunction with the States and Territories, ensure funding for the provision of a Literacy Coordinator and an early intervention intensive literacy teacher in every Australian primary school, the proportion of a full-time equivalent load depending on the size of the school and the measured level of literacy need.

Post-elementary literacy support

5.77 Most of the effort to improve literacy outcomes has been directed to elementary and early primary education. While this is entirely appropriate the Committee is concerned about the relative lack of targeted literacy interventions beyond Year 1 and the fact that there are a significant number of high school students whose literacy skills are not up to the increasing verbal reasoning and literacy demands of the secondary curriculum. The more intensive literacy demands of the secondary curriculum were considered in more detail in Chapter 2.

5.78 The research at Macquarie University (*see above*) has proven that later interventions can work with young people who have not acquired adequate literacy skills by Years 7 and 8. While for some young people, the support may need to be offered outside their normal school environment to help break negative patterns of expectations and behaviours.

> We have had lots of fights with departments, basically because they do not like the idea of kids being taken out of the schools, 'fixed up' and brought back in. They would like it all to happen within the school system… We have found that with some kids it just cannot. You really need to take them out into a new environment where there is a different attitude shown toward them, because often what the environment decides a kid is, is what that kid becomes. If they go into a different environment that is positive, they will respond.[90]

5.79 There are other students with less extreme requirements for support but who do need further support to cope with the literacy demands of secondary school. Unfortunately, the subject focus of most secondary school organisations hinders the development of school cultures where all

90 Rev. Bill Crews, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 482.

teachers feel a responsibility for the development of students' operational literacy, verbal reasoning and written communication skills.

> …in the schools that I have taught in [literacy across the curriculum] has been rhetoric. Some people are very committed to that ideal, but more often I hear comments like, 'This kid can't write an essay, what are you blokes doing in English?' I hear that far more than, 'In maths or science I have a responsibility to teach the metalanguage of my subject.'[91]

5.80 It is to the social, educational and economic advantage of all students for education to develop higher order language skills across all subject areas. As indicated in Chapter 2, the increasing literacy demands of the senior curriculum do contribute to the under-achievement of some boys. Further, these are skills that most employers will expect students to have. The first requirement is to put in place post-elementary intensive, systematic, reading and literacy support programs for those students who need them. The second requirement is for pre-service and in-service teacher education to support secondary teachers across all subject areas to further develop students' subject specific and general operational literacy, verbal reasoning and communication skills in their classroom teaching.

5.81 The Commonwealth already provides funds intended to support disadvantaged middle school students under the Literacy and Numeracy Program. It is the Committee's view that the Commonwealth needs to ensure this money is effectively used to assist students with needs identified by the Literacy Benchmark Tests.

Recommendation 11

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth ensure that existing funding under the Literacy and Numeracy program to support students in the middle years is used effectively by the States and Territories to provide intensive literacy support programs for disadvantaged students whose need for them is identified by the Literacy Benchmark Tests.

91 Ms Frankie Maclean, Assistant Principal, Palmerston High School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1313.

Recommendation 12

The Committee recommends that teacher pre-service and professional development programs assist teachers with practical strategies to develop secondary students' operational literacy and communication skills across all areas of the curriculum.

Class sizes

5.82 The advantages to students of smaller class sizes is generally accepted and the NSW Teachers Federation included a call for smaller class sizes in its submission to the inquiry.[92] The first report of the Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in NSW, Chaired by Professor Tony Vinson, has recommended a phased reduction in NSW class sizes to 20 students or less for Years K to 2, commencing with disadvantaged schools.[93] In its 2002-2003 budget the ACT Government announced the inclusion of Year 3 in an existing program to reduce ACT class sizes to a maximum of 21 students for Years K to 2 by 2004.[94] In its 2002-2003 budget, the Victorian Government reaffirmed an earlier commitment to reduce the average class size in Years Prep to 2 to 21 students by 2003.[95]

5.83 The clearest and most comprehensive evidence of the benefits of reduced class sizes was provided by Tennessee's Project STAR (Student / Teacher Achievement Ratio). Project STAR was a controlled scientific experiment in which students entering Kindergarten in 1985 were assigned at random to a small class (13-17 students), a regular class (22-26 students) or a regular class with a full-time teacher's aid. The experiment ran over 4 years, from K to Year 3, involved over 6,000 students in 329 classrooms at 79 schools which had been controlled for a wide range of between-school differences. Students remained in the same type of class for the four year duration of the experiment and their achievement was comprehensively tested at regular intervals. All students returned to normal classes in Year 4 and were followed up over subsequent years.[96]

5.84 Tennessee's Project STAR established that students in the small classes performed better on all achievement measures in all subjects than the

92 NSW Teachers Federation, *Submission No. 148,* p. 7.

93 *Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, First Report, May 2002, p. 85.

94 ACT Budget Paper No. 2, 2002-2003, p. 15, *and see*, Mr James Colbourne, Executive Director, School Education Division, ACT Department of Education and Community Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1328.

95 2002-2003 Victorian Budget Statement, p. 70.

96 Finn, J.D. and Achilles, C.M., "Tennessee's Class Size Study: Findings, Implications, Misconceptions", *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 1999, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 97-98.

students in the regular sized classes. The presence of a teacher's aid in regular sized classes did not result in significant differences in student achievement compared to regular size classes without a teacher's aid. The small class advantage was the same for boys and girls but the benefits were substantially greater for minority students and students attending inner-city schools (at risk students). The small class advantage remained for all subjects in subsequent years through to Grade 7, long after the students had returned to regular classes in Grade 4.[97] Further analysis of the STAR data confirmed that the benefit accruing to students of being in a small class in the early years was greatest for students who entered small classes early and spent the most years in small classes. Students who had entered small classes in Kindergarten and remained in small classes for the maximum 4 years through to the end of Grade 3 were at Grade 8, on average, almost a full school year ahead of children who had been in regular classes through those years.[98]

5.85 The advantage of small classes accrues through the positive effect that a small class has on students' behaviour and engagement with learning, positive behaviours which persisted into the later grades when students were place in regular classes. This finding is consistent with the Australian Temperament Project conclusion that early negative behaviours in children tend to persist and that these children are more likely to have learning difficulties.[99]

> Small class sizes are academically superior not because they encourage new approaches to instruction but because teachers can engage in more (perhaps even *enough*) of the basic strategies they have been using all along. More profound changes occur in students' behaviour. The small-class setting promotes students' participation in learning, including students who would be unwilling to participate if they were part of larger class…
>
> In a small class, every student is on the firing line. It is difficult or impossible to withdraw from teaching-learning interactions in a small-class setting.[100]

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97 Finn, J.D. and Achilles, C.M., "Tennessee's Class Size Study: Findings, Implications, Misconceptions", *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 1999, Vol. 21, No. 2, pp. 98-99.

98 Finn, J.D., Achilles, C.M. and Boyd-Zaharias, "Enduring Effects of Small Class Sizes", *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 103, No. 2, April 2001, p. 172.

99 Prior, M., Sanson, A., Smart, D. and Oberklaid, F., *Pathways from Infancy to Adolescence: Australian Temperament Project 1983 -2000*, p. 27.

100 Finn, J.D. and Achilles, C.M., "Tennessee's Class Size Study: Findings, Implications, Misconceptions", *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis*, 1999, Vol. 21, No. 2, p. 103.

5.86 Tennessee's Project STAR proved that class sizes of 17 students or smaller in the early primary years are beneficial to all students and that the benefits accrue disproportionately in favour of disadvantaged students. It would be reasonable to expect that the costs of reducing class sizes so dramatically would be partially offset by a reduced requirement for remedial and behavioural intervention in the short to medium term and, perhaps fully offset by improved economic, educational and social outcomes for disadvantaged students in the longer term.

5.87 Unfortunately, smaller class sizes do not come cheaply. The NSW Department of Education and Training estimated the staffing cost to NSW of reducing class sizes to not more than 20 students in Years K to 2 at $225 million.[101] Using ABS and Victorian government budget figures it is possible to estimate that the additional cost of moving beyond the current class size targets to class sizes of 17 in Prep to Year 3 is about $190 million in Victoria alone, without allowing for the provision of additional classrooms.[102] Extrapolating either estimate suggests the cost of reducing class sizes in Years K to 3 to not more than 17 students throughout Australia would be more than $800 million per annum. While the Committee believes that this target may not be achievable in the medium term, a more modest reduction in class sizes should be attempted.

5.88 In the Committee's view, the positive impact on students of reducing class sizes well under the present or near term projected levels would be dramatic and would enhance the impact of the other recommendations in this report to improve literacy teaching and learning. The evidence indicates that the benefits would transmit to better learning and behaviour across all learning areas throughout primary and secondary schooling, well beyond the years targeted for significant class size reductions. It would be a gender neutral intervention that would lift the educational achievement of all students while it would benefit disadvantaged students the most.

5.89 The expenditure necessary to make major reductions in early primary school class sizes is justified by the improved educational and social outcomes and resulting long-term savings. The Committee hopes that public discussion and support of this issue will encourage governments to find the resources necessary to implement the following recommendation.

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101 *Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, First Report, May 2002, p. 85.

102 ABS Schools Australia Cat No 4221; Victorian Budget Estimates: Statement 2 - Department of Education and Training, p. 26, Victorian Teacher Salary - $54,202 plus 30% on costs x 2,650 additional teachers.

Recommendation 13

The Committee recommends that the State and Territory governments reduce class sizes in Years K to 3 to not more than 20 students by 2005. The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth support this by assisting to meet the additional capital cost of reduced class sizes (in proportion to its current share of capital funding).

Conclusion

5.90 There are several reasons for boys' poorer performance in literacy compared to girls. These reasons are not fallacy or folklore. The appropriate ways to address boys' literacy difficulties include examining current education policies, raising teachers' awareness, promoting better teaching and assessment strategies, adequately addressing behavioural and developmental barriers and providing smaller class sizes in early primary school to maximise the benefits of good teaching. The strategies recommended in this Chapter will enhance the literacy achievement of all children but will provide the greatest benefits to those children, boys or girls, who are most in need.

6 Making the connections: Schools, teachers and role models

6.1 Measures of educational participation and performance, such as school retention rates, rates of truancy and expulsion, levels of achievement and admission rates to tertiary education provide evidence of the educational alienation of many students, especially boys. For example, the Middle Years Research and Development Project (MYRAD) in Victoria[1] and research on motivational factors affecting ACT secondary students[2] both confirm a significant decline in positive attitudes and / or factors between Year 7 and Year 9 for both boys and girls.

6.2 Chapter 2 considered a range of participation and performance measures in education and a range of social and economic indicators. High school students without sound literacy skills are more likely to become alienated and disengaged from learning. The importance of literacy and measures to ensure that all children acquire adequate literacy skills were considered in Chapter 5. However, poor literacy, while a major factor, is not the only factor contributing to boys' disengagement and under-achievement. This chapter considers other factors that emerge, particularly during the high school years, and contribute to boys' disengagement from learning. It also gives a number of examples of approaches schools are using to address these issues.

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1 *see* Australian Secondary Principals Association, *Submission No. 81*, p. 9.

2 Martin, A.J., *Improving the Educational Outcomes of Boys — Interim Report*, June 2002, p. 74.

Relationships

Peer relationships

6.3 Peer influences are important for all young people, becoming increasingly significant during adolescent years. Their influence varies from student to student, depending on a number of factors such as personality, personal circumstances and the strength of other relationships. Peer influences can be either positive or negative in terms of attitudes towards school, the level of engagement or disengagement, and the level of motivation and/or achievement.

6.4 Young people need to feel valued and need to belong. A common symptom when this need is not being met is disengagement from learning or worse, hostility to school and society.

6.5 Schools and the wider community would normally provide a supportive role to families in meeting these needs in young people. However, where a young person's family is not supportive, school and peer relationships become more important than they already are. Where both the family and school connections have broken down the primary source of identity and affirmation becomes the peer group.

> Some boys at one end of the scale have insulation—I use the word 'insulation'—which is usually families. If you have that insulation in your life you can often be protected from a lot of societal pressures…Without some degree of insulation you will find boys, and girls as well, with coping problems in society. Gangs are an example of insulation…We need to understand that if we do not provide it as a system these kids will find a substitute somewhere else.[3]

6.6 Peer acceptance also appears to be a more important consideration for boys than it is for girls.

> From my experience…girls at that age, and they are in year 5, tend to have more of a preference to please the teacher. Whereas I find that the boys have more of a preference to please their peers. There is a greater social issue with boys, I think, to be part of a group.[4]

> Where the peer group turns negative or anti-learning as in the 'cool to be a fool' dynamic, schools face an uphill battle. As a

3 Mr John Fleming, Boys in Focus, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1031.

4 Miss Tracey Hopkins, Teacher, Griffith Public School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1161.

> group, boys are more concerned about power, status and independence…[5]

6.7 It is possible to employ peer influence to exert a positive influence over boys' behaviour and engagement with learning and to counter the anti-achievement attitude which affects some schools. In secondary schools, the most effective times to attempt to guide peer influence are early in the first year of secondary school before peer relationships are fully established in the new environment and at other times, typically outside normal activities or at the beginning of each year, when peer relationships are less stable.[6]

6.8 It is vital that we strive to build an environment which is affirming for boys. This involves promoting a culture

> …where leadership, success, acceptance of praise ,acceptance of authority and respect for tradition are permissible within the peer culture. Boys must [also] be taught to value empathy, sharing, nurturing and a sense of community, as well as the traditional values of strength, loyalty, leadership.[7]

6.9 The essential element in most of the strategies for turning peer influence in positive directions is creating a sense that boys belong and are respected and valued. The range of ways this might be done in schools is very broad and what is possible and appropriate will vary from school to school. Some effective examples include involving students in decisions about, and in creating, their physical environment and in setting class and school rules.

> …if you want boys and girls to actually look after something, they basically have to put some blood, sweat and tears into it in terms of doing it themselves. I can go and paint all the rooms for them, but they need to do that. Once they have had ownership and input into it, they are far less likely…to mess their own.[8]

> If you treat boys in a way that they feel is just and fair, you tend to earn their respect very early in the piece and that is what they are seeking… If you can set up a system that they perceive to be fair—and you have to do that in negotiation with them; they will not accept your imposing it upon them—and then you actually work that system in the way it has been negotiated and in the way you

5 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153,* p. 1.

6 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153,* p. 2.

7 Mr Sid Sidebottom, MP, *Submission No. 130,* pp. 15-16.

8 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, WA, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 933.

> have discussed, you win points very early in the piece from those boys. If you continue to maintain that system, then, even if a child steps outside the system, the others tend to say, 'Hang on, that's how it is; we've agreed…'.[9]

6.10 Mentoring programs where older students coach or mentor younger students can help build a sense of self-worth in the mentors while acting on peer culture in positive ways by giving students responsibility. Mentoring programs, such as peer reading, are also a subtle way to help boys develop their capacity to nurture others.

> We could not have told the boys, 'we are going to teach you how to nurture, we are going to teach you how to care, we are going to show you how to be responsible. They would have all as a group said 'hang on, we don't want to do that sort of stuff. That's not for us, boys don't do that'. But those things came without them really realising it.[10]

6.11 Guiding the influence of peers towards positive attitudes is important for the majority of students, not just the problem boys or those boys who are at risk of disengaging or turning against school. However, the need to redirect, or find a substitute for, the negative influence of peers is greatest for those young people, usually boys, who are already engaged in destructive behaviours.

Boys in Focus

6.12 One example of a program for boys in this category is the Boys in Focus program which aims to create a positive peer environment for the most difficult to manage boys in a western Sydney high school. Essentially, the program aims to establish loyalty and trust within a group of boys before introducing activities that build on group loyalty and trust to develop responsibility, honour and leadership skills. At an appropriate time for the particular group opportunities are taken to provide information and discuss matters, such as drugs, that meet the specific needs or interests of the group. As the group bond develops, individual boys become answerable to the group in a structured way that is independent of any disciplinary action the school itself might take for inappropriate behaviour. The program aims to establish an alternative peer group that, by trusting, valuing and caring for boys and teaching them how to cope

9 Mrs Cheryl Crossingham, Teacher, Griffith Public School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1171.

10 "Into the Maxi Taxi" *Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 4, 2000, p. 10.

with their own circumstances in a constructive way, successfully counters the negative influences for their loyalty and attention.[11]

> Initially I actually was against being involved in the program. I fought it pretty harshly for the first three months or so… most of the guys living in my street were drug dealers or stole cars and things like that. Those were the sorts of guys who I wanted to be like. It was funny when I finally got put in front of some other guys who were just as tough, who were just as strong, who were basically everything I wanted but who also cared and were a lot of fun to be around. That really appealed to me, that whole team atmosphere and the sense of community.[12]

6.13 The school system currently is not good at supporting programs like Boys in Focus. Some high schools in disadvantaged communities could easily use two or more full-time coordinators for programs like Boys in Focus but there is no provision to find, train and assign such people to schools that need them. Boys in Focus was developed and run by a teacher with an otherwise full teaching load who later found the support of the local controller of the Police and Community Youth Club (PCYC). The involvement of the PCYC became instrumental in the development of the program because it provided access to a bus and opportunities for other activities.[13]

6.14 The success of programs like Boys in Focus is totally dependent on the passion and commitment of the people that develop and coordinate them. It would be possible to document and duplicate the Boys in Focus model, fund it and train people to run it elsewhere. However, it is unlikely to work unless the teachers replicating it believe that the boys can be retrieved and have sufficient commitment to that end to see it through.

> …the situation for the apparent school refusers or failures almost always comes down to someone caring about them enough to find out what it is they need…The one in Camden involved older boys becoming mentors to younger boys. That would never have happened without that teacher taking the older boys through a lot of orienteering, saying, 'You can do it if you choose.' There was a lot of building up of their capacity to make a difference in their own lives which, for the school refusers, is a big factor. It often

11 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1036-40.

12 Mr Gregory Allott, Team Leader, Boys in Focus, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1034.

13 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1035.

> comes down to the relationship—or you could call it the charismatic nature—or how the teacher creates the spark.[14]

Teacher/student relationships

6.15 The relationship that a teacher establishes with students is important for all students although the need for the teacher to establish a connection with individual students is more important for boys, and particularly critical for difficult boys. There is widespread agreement among good teachers on the necessity of establishing a good relationship with boys and the adage that 'boys learn teachers not subjects'. It is equally true that good teachers primarily teach students, not content. Both are consistent with the views of boys themselves.

> I think successful teachers are genuine, and the boys know immediately if you are a genuine human being or not. If you are showing them who you really are and bringing your own worldly experiences to the classroom and giving them an opportunity to know you as a person, that is really important, which I suppose springboards off what [was said] before about developing relationships. A successful teacher has empathy with each and every student for a variety of reasons, and they understand the background of each of these students.[15]

> What I want most is a teacher coming here as a teacher of students, first, and a teacher of mathematics, English, or physics, second. They have to be able to relate to students, and they have to be very fair. They have to have fair dealings with the students with very clear boundaries but within those boundaries a very open, close association with kids.[16]

> …particularly where boys feel nurtured—I find they respond well to English teaching…. but delivery is really critical. I think an understanding and compassion but also a liking of boys is necessary because a lot of teachers find some boys confronting. If you are comfortable with robust boys, it makes a huge difference and, if you can build links with them in other aspects of life, that pays dividends too. If you know that they are good footballers and

14 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 447.

15 Ms Jeanette Terry, Teacher, Canberra Grammar School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 283.

16 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 929.

> you can tap into that because you have seen them play or whatever, that gets a very good connection going.[17]
>
> It is a case of 'Show us you care.' If they know that you care about them as individuals and if you tell them some funny stories, that is good teaching…[18]
>
> I think that she was a really skilled teacher, but also one with a real zest for teaching—a real love of it. It came through, and that is where the respect came from for the boys, because she really loved what she was doing and it showed through…When you say to them, 'I am pulling you into line for your own good, because I care about you,' then you have got a whole new scope for talking to them, and a whole new way to talk to them. Their eyes come up and you get through to them then. But to just berate them doesn't work. This teacher was the same—she would take them aside and speak to them on their own. By the time they walked back into the classroom they still walked back in with their dignity, and then the lesson went on.[19]

6.16 Boys' views on the characteristics of good teachers were remarkably consistent across Australia. Very few boys thought the sex of a teacher had any bearing on a teacher's suitability to teach boys. Well above all else, boys place high importance on the ability of teachers to relate to them as individuals.

> A teacher should be good with the students and have a personality which makes the students talk to them.[20]
>
> I do not like very strict teachers who just focus on school work. I think teachers that take the time out to talk to the students have more humour and can deal with more different types of students. That is what makes a good teacher.[21]
>
> A good teacher is one that can relate to the kids that they teach. They have got to have a general knowledge of what they are

17 Ms Frankie McLean, Assistant Principal, Palmerston High School, NT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1313.

18 Dr Michael Slocombe, Principal, South Campus, Trinity College, SA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 814.

19 Mr Bobby Willetts, Executive Teacher, Griffith Public School, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1174.

20 Nick Kacevski, Student, James Cook Boys Technology High School, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 696.

21 Stan Sklias, Student, James Cook Boys Technology High School, Sydney, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 710.

> teaching, of course, and they have got to be able to communicate well with whoever they are teaching. If a student has got a problem in class or out of class, the teacher should be able to go, 'That's okay, if you want to do this'—try to encourage you a little bit more—or say, 'No, that is not really the way to go.' Just someone you can get along with really easy.[22]
>
> Someone who listens to you when you have got a problem.[23]
>
> She gives everyone a fair go. When you walk into the classroom, she doesn't think, 'Oh, this guy's going to be in trouble,' or anything; she will wait to see how well you go first. And she will make the class fun, sort of… You get along well with her, and it makes a big difference. She is an easy person to talk to.[24]

6.17 Good teachers instinctively know that they need to develop relationships based on mutual respect and trust with their students, irrespective of the gender of the teacher or the student.

School structures which promote positive peer cultures and relationships

6.18 The most effective strategies for promoting positive peer and teacher / student relationships usually adopt a whole-school approach. The particular strategies and structures used vary greatly from school to school and there is no necessarily correct approach. However, it is encouraging that a number of schools are trialling different approaches with a view to improving teacher / student relationships and maintaining / enhancing student engagement in the learning process.

6.19 Some strategies, such as middle school structures, are organisational and may even involve physical accommodation changes in line with middle schooling ideals. Other approaches to student welfare and behaviour operate on Glasser choice theory which emphasises that students (and teachers) are responsible for their own behaviour and that their behavioural choices have known consequences. Of course, middle schooling ideals are consistent with choice theory approaches to welfare and discipline and they can comfortably coexist in the same school.

22 Chad Neylon, Student, City Beach High School, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 946.

23 Theodore Backhouse, Student, City Beach High School, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 946.

24 Samuel Allinson, Student, Wade High School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1182.

Middle school structures

6.20 Middle school organisational structures aim to create a physical and organisational environment that supports the establishment of sound peer and student / teacher relationships through Years 7 / 8 to Years 9 / 10. The actual school years included will depend on school and system parameters[25] but the objective is to create smaller group structures within the school to enhance students' social development.[26] Smaller group structures, by supporting a sense of belonging, are also thought to support the academic engagement of students over those years where boredom and disengagement set in.

6.21 Typically, a middle school approach to school structures would provide for separate schools, or sub-schools within a larger school, dedicated to the middle school years. This enables a less traditional approach to curriculum and school organisation which focuses on the social and developmental needs of the students rather than subject groupings.

6.22 As far as possible, and to a much greater extent than in a typical high school, class groupings in a middle school are consistent from subject to subject and possibly from year to year. A small core team of teachers teaching the same class for a majority of the time mitigates against student anonymity and allows the development of better teacher / student relationships.[27] Having fewer students also assists the teachers to build better relationships with the students.[28]

6.23 Some middle schools accommodate classes in a home room which is not used by other classes, to give students their own space[29] and to minimise the disruption caused as students move from place to place according to the constraints of a traditional timetable.[30] Disruption and discontinuity can also be minimised by timetable structures characterised by a reduced number of longer periods per day.[31] Another organisational strategy tried is to accommodate teachers in staffrooms by year level so that they relate to each other on the basis of the social environment and the students they teach rather than the subjects they teach.[32]

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25 Traditionally high school starts in Year 7 or in Year 8 depending on the jurisdiction but some independent schools are including Year 6 in middle school.

26 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153*, pp. 3 & 4.

27 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153*, p. 4.

28 Western Australian Government, *Submission No. 120*, p. 17.

29 Mr Ian Lillico, Principal, City Beach High School, WA, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 929.

30 Western Australian Government, *Submission No. 120*, p. 18.

31 The Hutchins School, *Submission No. 44*, p. 2.

32 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 448.

6.24 Middle schooling ideals also encompass aspects of curriculum and pedagogy. They provide for greater student involvement in decision making on what is learnt and how learning is conducted and assessed. Appropriate middle school curricula aim to be more connected with students' personal and social interests, and appropriate pedagogies encompass a wider variety of active, cooperative and independent learning experiences.[33] With carefully planned middle school organisational structures, a wider variety of subject electives and choice within subjects can be compatible with the apparently conflicting objective of limiting the number of teachers that a student is taught by each week.

> Students now typically have six teachers per week [formerly as many as 11]; they will be exposed to a core team of three staff who teach them for some 70% of the week and who meet to discuss joint strategies for individual students and themes for cross-curricular studies.[34]

6.25 Middle school structures can provide opportunities to enhance student engagement and learning in a number of ways. An environment may be created that is conducive to improving both peer and teacher/student relationships minimising the scope for disengaged students to slip quietly and anonymously through school. The better relationships in turn create a stronger sense of belonging. Higher levels of student involvement and choice of learning and assessment build a greater sense of control over, and commitment to, their own learning. Student input and participation in decisions about school and class rules and aspects of their physical environment also promote a sense of belonging and commitment to the school and learning.

6.26 The learning and social benefits of implementing middle school ideals accrue to both boys and girls. Boys are more likely than girls to 'act out', disengage from learning or leave school altogether as an expression of frustration or boredom but boys seem to be more responsive than girls to the quality of their relationships with teachers. Therefore boys, and in particular boys at risk, are likely to be the most obvious beneficiaries of middle school reform. However, the improved learning and social environment will also help to arrest the decline in positive attitudes towards schools that some girls also experience through the middle years.

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33 Western Australian Government, *Submission No. 120*, p. 17, *and see* Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153*, p. 4.

34 The Hutchins School, *Submission No. 44*, p. 2, The middle school curriculum reforms also provided greater choice, especially for Year 8 students.

6.27 It is important to emphasise that particular school structures are not an end in themselves but are only useful if they improve relationships, help engage students and/or enhance learning activities.

> [Ken] Rowe strongly argues that initiatives that do not penetrate behind the classroom door are ineffective. To this end middle school reform only works to the extent that it attracts teachers who are prepared to change or improve the way they respond to students.[35]

Recommendation 14

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth government fund research to evaluate different approaches and strategies to maximise the engagement and motivation of boys and girls in the middle years of school.

Year 10 — middle or senior?

6.28 Traditional Year 7/8 to Year 12 high schools that are contemplating reforms based on middle school principles may need to consider carefully the position of their Year 10 students. For example, the number and proportion of Year 10 students who are combining school and work has grown significantly over the last 20 years (*see* Table 5.1 *below*) and this characteristic of the Year 10 student population, along with other factors, ought to be considered by schools with a significant proportion of working Year 10 students.

6.29 From 2002, a Northern Territory independent school, Kormilda College, has included Year 10 in its senior school because of a conviction that this was more developmentally appropriate for students in that age group. It explicitly recognises that during Year 10 most students turn 15 and (in the NT) are no longer required to attend school. The inclusion of Year 10 in the senior school is intended to promote the reality to students that success at Year 12 is built on good study habits developed earlier, and to get students to focus on Year 12 from the beginning of Year 10.

> In years 8 and 9, we can engage in holistic approaches to learning. But by year 10 the imperative of NTCE, or the International Baccalaureate that we also offer, requires fairly traditional and systematic study habits and methods. We find that being part of the senior school is part of creating that ethos of 'we are now seniors; we are now focusing on year 12,' and developing, if you

35 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Submission No. 153*, p. 4.

> like, that culture or tradition that 'the middle years have ended, we are now approaching senior school'. It is also trying to overcome the disengagement that occurs around years 9 and 10—for boys in particular.[36]

6.30 South Australian school boys are reported to believe that "Year 10 is a bludge year and it is filled up by the schools with boring stuff".[37]

> Years 8, 9 and 10 are a waste of time as far as they are concerned. They know they get serious at the beginning of year 11. They also know that the workload at that point is hell on earth and it cannot be managed.[38]

6.31 This view deserves serious examination by State and Territory education departments as the problem does not appear to be confined to South Australia. It resonates with the observations of a Deputy Principal at Wade High School in Griffith, NSW, who was concerned about the discrepancies in the performance of students between their NSW School Certificate examinations at Year 10 and their half-yearly results in Year 11.

> … in the New South Wales system, there is one facet of the curriculum that is really counterproductive to boys achieving well in years 11 and 12, and that is the School Certificate examination. Able students can basically coast through junior school, walk into those exams, score in the nineties quite easily without studying—I have had several boys say, 'I did no study and I got 89 or 90 in the School Certificate exams'—and then they get into year 11 or year 12 and think that is going to continue, and it does not. That is a really major problem that needs to be addressed… I do not think those exams are sending the right messages to our able students.[39]

6.32 Wade High School is having some success in addressing this issue by interviewing students and their parents in Year 10 in preparation for the transition to Year 11 and then, during Year 11, conducting follow-up interviews with students. However, it is an additional support provided to students above the normal responsibilities of the staff involved.[40] No doubt many other schools are adopting similar or varied approaches to

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36 Mr Stephen Kinsella, Principal, Kormilda College, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1279.

37 Mr Malcolm Slade, Research Assistant, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 882.

38 Mr Malcolm Slade, Research Assistant, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 882.

39 Ms Jennifer Hill, Deputy Principal, Wade High School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1200.

40 Ms Jennifer Hill, Deputy Principal, Wade High School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1200.

involve students and parents in more effectively bridging the gap between Year 10 and Year 11.

6.33 The inclusion of Year 10 in senior schooling with Years 11 and 12 and redistributing the senior school workload more evenly over the three years might be a part of the resolution of some of the issues discussed above and in the section on senior school structures below. Such approaches may help reduce the conflict between school and other aspects of students' lives and help ensure participation, engagement and retention rates are maintained.

6.34 The inclusion of Year 10 in senior schooling would have major implications for some States and Territories in respect of external Year 10 examinations and changed accommodation arrangements for Year 10 students. However, it is an approach that deserves consideration.

Senior school structures

6.35 As discussed in Chapter 2, the social and economic environment experienced by secondary students today is quite different from that prevailing 20 years ago. This is particularly true for senior students, a large proportion of whom now combine part-time work with study (*see* Table 5.1). The combination of part-time work with full-time secondary education, and the change in the size and social composition of the senior high school student cohort caused by the rise in retention rates, are together responsible for major changes at senior secondary level that schools need to address directly.

Table 5.1 Part-time employment of secondary students 1982-2002

	Age 15 (Y10)	Age 16 (Y11)	Age 17 (Y12)
June 1982 No. Employed	33,400	32,600	16,200
June 1982 No. Attending School	224,100	157,400	87,000
June 1982 Proportion Employed	14.9%	20.7%	18.6%
June 2002 No. Employed	60,100	88,900	68,800
June 2002 No Looking for Work	19,300	12,600	8,200
June 2002 No. Attending School	255,500	229,400	181,600
June 2002 Proportion Employed	23.5%	38.8%	37.9%

Source *ABS Labour Force Status, 15-17 Year Olds Attending School.*

6.36 The magnitude of the change is clear from the data in Table 5.1. The proportion of young people 16 and 17 years of age (broadly equivalent to Years 11 and 12) combining school with part-time work has doubled between 1982 and 2002 so that nationally almost 40% of Year 11 and 12

students are working part-time. In schools in areas where part-time employment is readily available the proportion of senior students working is higher.

6.37 A much higher proportion of young people stay at school compared to 20 years ago, and the number of Year 11 students in 2002 who combine part-time work with senior schooling (88,900) is over two and one half times the number that did so in 1982. The number of Year 12 students in 2002 who combine part-time work with senior schooling (68,800) is over four times the number that did so in 1982. Also, in June 2002 nearly 20,000 Year 11 and 12 students who were not working were looking for part-time work.[41]

6.38 The employment commitments of students represent significant personal achievements. The typical duties of a senior student working in a retail or fast food outlet may involve dealing with customers, handling goods and money and preparing, serving or selling food in accordance with health regulations. A significant number of teenage employees could add the supervision or management of other employees to this list of responsibilities.

6.39 There have been successive changes to the senior secondary curriculum to improve the range of subject options to appeal to a more broadly representative cohort of senior students. However, the physical, social and authority structures of most Australian secondary schools have not changed in ways that recognise and accommodate the changed expectations and the more complex work and social responsibilities that senior secondary students now have. The conflicts between life in school and life outside of school are, for some boys, so irreconcilable that they choose to leave.

> An example is a boy in a country town with three mates…he was heading to be an engineer… He stayed at school because he wanted to do Year 12… The other three left [and] got jobs in the town... One of them has a flat he shares with some mates and they are all adults in the town as far as he is concerned. He plays football with them. He says, 'I am a second-rate citizen in this town. I come to school and they tell me to change my shoes. I am not allowed to go home at lunchtime. I can't walk down the street at lunchtime. I have to sit in the classroom and do exactly what I am told. These people can take away my future.' Out there, they are earning money and they are being people and they are treated

41 An additional 0.2 to 0.6% of Year 10 to 12 students combine study with full-time work or about 400 to 1,000 students at each Year level, nationally.

> that way. I went back to that boy five months later and he had gone.[42]
>
> …by this stage they are driving cars, they are running complex social lives, they are very often working, they are often saving to do the things that they want to do, whatever they might be. In some cases in the rural communities they are actually supporting their families with that money, and yet that is not valued because you worked till 2 o'clock in the morning and you didn't get your assignment in on time. 'So what can we do with you? We'll put you on detention.'[43]

6.40 The research by Slade and Trent also highlights a range of other contradictions in senior schooling that boys say contribute to their disaffection. These include:

- School expects adult behaviour but doesn't deliver an adult environment.
- School pushes the rhetoric of education (e.g. fairness, justice, respect, flexibility, the celebration of difference etc.) but produces the opposite in practice.
- School is about getting most boys out of education.
- School is about preparing you for adult life, but adult life gets in the way of school; culturally celebrated achievements and rites of passage into adult life (e.g. participation in competitive sport, getting a driver's licence, owning a car, getting part-time work, providing for their own needs, helping to run a household, as well as establishing an adult identity, social life and sexual relationships) are negative influences on school achievement and on the preparedness of boys to stay at school.[44]

6.41 Girls also experience these conflicts.[45] The gender dimension to these issues in senior schooling arises because, on average, girls appear to cope better than boys do with the conflicts that school presents. This is partly due to more girls conforming because they have a narrower range of employment options. Other factors that may help girls to cope with the conflicts that school presents are that, generally, they are better organised

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42 Mr Malcolm Slade, Research Assistant, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 886.

43 Professor Faith Trent, Head, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 883.

44 Trent, F. and Slade, M., *Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males*, June 2001, p. 21.

45 Trent, F. and Slade, M., *Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males*, June 2001, p. 25.

than boys at that age, they tend to be more focused on the future and they are probably more tolerant of things being unfair.[46]

6.42 Being focused on the future and having goals to work towards is an important motivator for some students, and many students, boys in particular, who do not have clear goals, struggle to see the importance, relevance or value of school work.

> I have been involved… in interviewing all year 11 students this term. That included boys and girls. One of a few strong things that came out is that the boys who are really struggling—the ones who are floundering, the ones about whom we have sat down and said, 'This kid really is not coping with year 11'—are the ones that do not have any goals whatsoever. You will say to them, 'What do you want to do when you finish school?' and they will answer, 'I don't know.' 'Why did you come back to school?' 'I don't know.' 'Do you want to stay in Griffith for the rest of your life?' 'I don't know.' They have absolutely no idea of why they are doing what they are doing and why they are where they are... Quite a few of them said to us in the interviews, 'I have trouble getting motivated to study. I can't see any point in it.'[47]

> Many of us did not know where we were going at that age, and they do not, and therefore they are not prepared to make the investment in an environment that they find difficult, unpleasant and very often treats them with less respect than they would get working in McDonald's at 2 o'clock in the morning…[48]

6.43 These conflicts are mitigated for boys by teachers who are willing and able to establish relationships based on mutual respect and whose actions demonstrate a genuine commitment to the rhetoric of education.[49] However, teaching is not the only reason for boys' disaffection with senior schooling. Senior schooling, which in this context may need to include Year 10, needs to be recast in a fashion that fully recognises and accommodates the circumstances of contemporary students and dispenses with some traditional requirements that may be no longer relevant or useful. Some questions that might be usefully asked are:

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46 Professor Faith Trent, Head, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 883.

47 Ms Jennifer Hill, Deputy Principal, Wade High School, Griffith, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1199.

48 Professor Faith Trent, Head, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 883.

49 Trent, F. and Slade, M., *Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention: The perceptions of adolescent males*, June 2001, pp. 21 & 29.

- To what extent should students have input into educational programs?
- Could assessment processes be partially negotiable within a suite of options that enable students of the same course to simultaneously select different modes of assessment to measure the same learning outcomes?

  ⇒ Universities permit student choice in assessment in some courses.
- Is there sufficient flexibility to negotiate homework and assignment due dates to recognise the other commitments students have?

  ⇒ Many workplaces vary deadlines and expectations in recognition of the prevailing circumstances of individual employees.
- Should enrolment in post-compulsory education necessarily require compulsory attendance at school in study periods and at lunchtime?

  ⇒ ACT senior secondary colleges do not compel students to attend but set minimum class attendance requirements for each unit of study.
- Are other school rules negotiated and expressed in a way that involves students and recognises their adult responsibilities in other spheres of activity?

  ⇒ Rules made by students are more likely to be observed by students (*see* Discipline Structures *below*).

6.44 The structure of secondary schooling and modes of assessment vary significantly around Australia. The ACT and Tasmania have Year 7 to 10 high schools and senior secondary colleges for Years 11 and 12. However, the ACT has school-based assessment whereas in Tasmania some subjects are externally examined. NSW has Year 7 to 12 comprehensive high schools with a combination of school-based assessment and external examination but these are supplemented by a variety of selective high schools, single-sex schools and senior secondary colleges. Queensland has Year 7 to 12 comprehensive high schools with school-based assessment. Western Australia has school-based assessment in Year 8 to 12 high schools with some Year 8 to 10 middle schools and Year 11 and 12 senior secondary colleges. South Australia and the Northern Territory have Year 8 to 12 high schools with school-based assessment. Victoria has comprehensive Year 7 to 12 high schools with a combination of school-based assessment and external examination.

6.45 The impact of these structural factors and modes of assessment on school retention and engagement with learning have not been thoroughly examined. It would be very useful to conduct research aimed at discovering the extent to which the differences in Year 12 retention rates for both boys and girls in different jurisdictions are attributable to:

- the range and type of courses offered;
- assessment systems;
- the availability of alternatives such as Year 10 and Year 12 courses at TAFE;
- the school environment in high schools versus senior colleges (e.g. relationships with teachers, rules regarding attendance, dress, and behaviour);
- behaviour management; and
- other relevant factors.

6.46 The results of this research could then inform future changes to curricula, school structures and assessment processes.

Recommendation 15

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth fund comparative research into the influence that different school structures, curricula, assessment systems, the availability of alternatives to senior school (such as TAFE), behaviour management and other factors have on the apparent retention rates and attitudes to school of boys and girls.

Choice theory discipline and welfare structures

6.47 A clear, consistent and caring approach to student discipline and welfare is a necessary part of maintaining a positive school environment and positive relationships. Different schools approach this in different ways.

6.48 One approach used to transform the learning and social environment of some schools involves adopting Glasser choice theory discipline and welfare structures for managing student behaviour. Such methods are based on the principle of students taking greater responsibility for their own behaviour and for making decisions about their behaviour which result in either positive or negative consequences.[50]

6.49 This type of system cannot simply be implemented by applying the same template to every school. To work effectively a choice theory system will require a commitment on the part of all the teachers in the school to operate the system consistently and in accordance with an agreed series of graded responses to offences against the school rules. It is also important

50 Browne, R. and Fletcher, R., *Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues - behaviour, values and relationships*, 1995, p. 32.

that both the rules and the series of graded responses to persistent breaches are widely understood and are developed with the genuine involvement of students, parents and teachers.

6.50 Choice theory systems do require significant professional development for all teachers in a school to ensure that they understand the system and make the necessary commitment to operate it consistently. Students also need to be very clear about the way a choice theory system will work and this is best done through their involvement in its development, implementation and adjustment. Periodic in-servicing of teachers and student instruction on the operation of the system is necessary to maintain consistency of operation, student awareness and ensure that new teachers and new students understand how the system operates. A review of the system every two or three years is desirable to ensure that it continues to meet the expectations of students, teachers and parent. Periodic reviews help to maintain student commitment to the school rules.[51]

6.51 Canterbury Boys High School in Sydney has been operating a Glasser-style system successfully since 1988. Its implementation followed extensive consultation with students, parents and teachers about the existing problems and their expectations of a new system. Their expectations were that that a new system needed to be:

- easy to follow and easy to understand;
- positive and not punitive;
- based on a reward system;
- committed to promoting self-discipline and encouraging students to be responsible for their own behaviour;
- based on a whole-school approach to preserve consistency and universality;
- based on negotiation;
- centred on the classroom; and responsive to parental involvement.[52]

6.52 The high involvement of students in the development of the system lightens the burden of enforcement for teachers and senior staff.

> The change has been very powerful for the deputy and me, especially when we have to deal with those few students who are referred to us. 'We all know the rules' I say, 'I can't change the rules, even though I am the principal of the school. We all agreed

51 Browne, R. and Fletcher, R., *Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues - behaviour, values and relationships*, 1995, p. 36.

52 Browne, R. and Fletcher, R., *Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues - behaviour, values and relationships*, 1995, p. 33.

> these are going to be the rules.' And they really have no comeback, because they realise they are the community's rules.[53]

6.53 When a student is disruptive in class the initial response from the teacher must be consistent and measured, providing an opportunity for the student to acknowledge his or her behaviour and return to work. Further disruption should be met according the graded series of responses which might initially suspend the student's participation for that lesson and require the student to negotiate a plan of action with the teacher to avoid further trouble before he or she can return to the class.[54] This type of process avoids initial 'high stakes' confrontation and requires the teacher and student to meet and discuss the problem and negotiate a mutually acceptable solution. There is a focus on both what the student must do and what the teacher can do to support the student.[55]

6.54 Another important principle is that teachers are required to consult with colleagues and reflect on whether aspects of what they are doing are contributing to problems that arise in the classroom.[56] While this does not absolve students of the responsibility for their own behaviour, it does share the responsibility for making the necessary adjustments when this is appropriate.

6.55 In high schools choice theory discipline systems are most effective when accompanied by other reforms, such as the middle school reforms discussed above, that support better teacher/student relationships and give students more choice and control over what they study and how they are assessed. However, elements of choice theory are also effective in primary schools. For instance, the Committee saw that Eagleby State School in Queensland uses elements of choice theory in its behaviour management[57] and Griffith Public School in NSW involves students to positive effect in the formulation of class rules.[58] The Vinson Inquiry has also devoted attention to the value of student participation in school discipline structures and discusses a number of other examples.[59]

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53 Principal, Canterbury Boys High School, Sydney, NSW, as quoted *Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, Second Report, July 2002, p. 76.

54 Browne, R. and Fletcher, R., *Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues - behaviour, values and relationships*, 1995, p. 34.

55 *Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, Second Report, July 2002, p. 76.

56 Browne, R. and Fletcher, R., *Boys in Schools: Addressing the real issues - behaviour, values and relationships*, 1995, p. 34.

57 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 540.

58 *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1171 & 1172, *and see Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, Second Report, July 2002, p. 77.

59 *Inquiry Into the Provision of Public Education in NSW*, Second Report, July 2002, pp. 73-82.

6.56 No system in itself is a panacea. The effectiveness of any approach depends on the consistency, commitment, knowledge, experience and skill of the teachers and school leadership.

Tallebudgera Beach School — 3R Program

6.57 The Committee visited an alternative education setting at Tallebudgera Beach School on the Gold Coast in Queensland for children who are at risk because they are not coping in mainstream education. At the time of the Committee's visit, the program was staffed by three teachers and was catering for 15 students, 14 boys and one girl. To that point, since the 3R program began it had taken 43 students, only two of whom had been girls.[60]

6.58 The program is called 3R because it aims to **retrieve** students who are not coping, help them to develop **resilience** and then **reintegrate** them into mainstream schooling.

> …it is about retrieving kids from mainstream education who are having difficulties... It could be because they are verbally abusive, they are physically violent, they are completely non-compliant, or they are incapable of following instructions.[61]

6.59 Like Boys in Focus, 3R is intended to assist students at the most difficult end of the spectrum of behaviour. Most of these children are affected by one or more of a range of negative and damaging experiences. Of the students that 3R had taken during 2002 up until the Committee's visit in May: 33 per cent had experienced sexual abuse, 46 per cent had experienced physical abuse, 53 per cent were accessing, or had accessed, mental health services, 26 per cent were from families with a history of drug abuse, 93 per cent had experienced one or more suspensions from school[62], and 30 per cent of the students were on medication.[63]

6.60 The program is currently funded from the behaviour management budgets of the other schools in the Gold Coast South District. The program

60 Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 1212 & 1214.

61 Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1211.

62 3R Program: A Gold Coast South Initiative, *Exhibit No. 155,* p. 5.

63 Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1213.

managers hope to expand the program from its current focus on students 8 to 14 years of age to include young people 15 to 23 years of age.[64]

6.61 The students at the 3R program must be referred by their existing schools and the program ensures that students maintain a link with their school by requiring them to return there for at least one day each week. A learning plan is developed for each student in conjunction with the students' home school. The 3R teachers report weekly or fortnightly to the students' parents and home school on their behavioural and academic progress. The length of time a student remains at 3R and the time spent each week at the home school, may vary according to the needs of the student.[65]

6.62 After establishing teamwork and trust, the program focuses on building resilience and developing coping and cooperative skills in the students. A range of activities, which draws on the physical activities available through the Tallebudgera Beach School, is used to teach the necessary skills and build confidence and self-esteem. Reintegration usually occurs gradually by increasing the number of days each week that students attend their home school.[66]

6.63 The 3R program is highly successful. Of the 43 students it had assisted up to May 2002, 61 per cent were primary school students and 39 per cent were secondary students. Of the primary students, 96 per cent remained in school after 3R intervention. Of the secondary students, 59 per cent remained in school and a further 11 per cent were attending TAFE after 3R intervention. A range of improvements in the areas of behaviour and learning was reported for individual students who had participated in the program.[67]

6.64 The behaviour management procedures at 3R do not set out a list of rules but aim to present a set of values that underpin desirable attitudes and behaviours. A focus on student/teacher relationships and choice theory is apparent in the approach.

> **We aim to provide an environment and nurture relationships that assist our students to make the right choices.**
>
> ...
>
> **Consequences are seen as a learning tool, not as a punishment.**
>
> Students are encouraged to learn appropriate behaviours in the

64 Mr Ron Daniels, District Director, Gold Coast South, Education Queensland, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1210.

65 3R Program: A Gold Coast South Initiative, *Exhibit No. 155*, p. 1.

66 3R Program: A Gold Coast South Initiative, *Exhibit No. 155*, pp. 2-3.

67 3R Program: A Gold Coast South Initiative, *Exhibit No. 155*, pp. 5-7.

> light of known consequences. The student, who chooses to ignore requests for the inappropriate behaviour to stop, while being aware of the consequences, makes a conscious choice for the consequences to follow. Consequences will be reinforced and applied consistently.[68]

6.65 Consistency is one of the keys to the success of the program.

> …we are successful because as teachers we are incredibly consistent, to the nth degree, with these children, and that is what they have lacked in their lives—consistency.[69]

6.66 The continuing relationship between the student and the referring school is also important because it gives the referring school a stake in the outcome for that student.

> I think the most important thing is that we maintain the link with the schools. By not accepting enrolments directly from outside, but by coming through the school, we maintain that link between the host school and our school. That is absolutely critical because it means that the school has to maintain an interest in that student.[70]

6.67 Other important factors offered by the providers of the program to account for its success were: relevant curriculum, early intervention, the low student-teacher ratio, the support from schools, parents and other government and non-government agencies, and access to Tallebudgera Beach School facilities and expertise.[71]

6.68 The Committee was impressed by the commitment of the staff and the apparent success of the program but is aware of the need for further evaluation of this, and similar programs.

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68 3R Program: A Gold Coast South Initiative, *Exhibit No. 155*, p. 4 *and see* Mr John Graham, Coordinator 3R Program, *Submission No. 188,* pp. 16-17.

69 Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1220.

70 Mr John Graham, Coordinator 3R Program, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1228.

71 Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 1214, 1220, 1223; Mr John Graham, Coordinator 3R Program, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1216 *and* Mr Allan Rafton, Principal, Tallebudgera Beach School, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1224.

Recommendation 16

The Committee recommends that Commonwealth Government fund the assessment of existing programs being run by the States and Territories and community organisations to assist the most vulnerable and disengaged students with a view to the States and Territories expanding successful programs.

Teacher education

6.69 Developing higher quality interpersonal relationships between teachers and students will promote better learning and improve social harmony in schools. More emphasis on the skills teachers need in order to establish and maintain productive teacher / student relationships is required in pre-service and in-service teacher education. Recommendations specifically about pre-service and in-service teacher education in early and remedial literacy instruction were made in Chapter 5.

Pre-service and in-service training on relationship matters

6.70 In some schools, where there are difficult to manage students who may be abusive, or even violent, towards teachers and / or other students, establishing mutually respectful relationships between teachers and students throughout the school may have to overcome entrenched attitudes and behaviours on both sides. In these circumstances, strong school leadership, and consistent, whole-of-school approaches are almost essential to achieve success.

6.71 The implementation of middle school structures, more engaging curricula, discipline and welfare systems will not be fully effective if teachers are not committed to their implementation and equipped with the necessary skills to maximise the opportunities created.

6.72 The most difficult to manage students, who are a small minority of students even in the difficult schools, are usually boys. It is important to recognise that their problems usually originate outside school but that the community expects schools to successfully manage the symptoms. The Committee has been told by experienced teachers that they have not been adequately prepared to deal with young people who are damaged, angry and dysfunctional.

> Poor teachers and ordinary schools do not cause the problem. They contribute to the problem by failing to address the problem—and that, I think, is a very important issue. They do not create the problem, but they do contribute to the problem not being addressed. We continue to hope that hardworking and innovative teachers can magically, if you like, create microclimates of success in isolation, or we can support them through specific systems and training that operates in terms of developing microclimates of this type into wider school climates.[72]

6.73 The Ramsey review on teacher education in NSW found that pre-service teacher education in most institutions does not adequately address behaviour management issues and poorly prepares student teachers for the issues they will face in disadvantaged schools.[73]

6.74 Another issue arises from the way that some teachers respond to questions that challenge their authority or from their lack of interest in understanding the circumstances leading to a particular incident. It is at this level of daily interaction between teachers and students that boys most keenly feel the disjuncture between the rhetoric of justice and fairness in education and its inconsistent implementation.

> [Boys say] teachers get behavioural problems wrong because they don't ask how and why something happened, and with an open mind. Instead, '*they just pick on the boys with a reputation*'. Teachers would understand more if they would '*just listen to you*', and recognize all of the things that are going on.[74]

> We have spent our lives as baby boomers trying to get our kids to communicate, argue and discuss. When they do we say, 'Well, we really don't like that very much.' You only have to look at American sitcoms and see the interactions those kids are exposed to. They expect to have a right to have a say… Very often the response of teachers is that they become very defensive. That is the responsibility of teacher education. We have to do it differently in universities.[75]

6.75 Education departments should provide more in-service training opportunities for teachers to enhance their classroom management skills

72 Mr John Fleming, System Director, Boys in Focus, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1032.

73 Gregor Ramsay, *Quality Matters, Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices*, NSW, November 2000, p. 77.

74 Slade M., *Listening to the Boys*, Flinders University, 2002, p. 145.

75 Professor Faith Trent, Head, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, Flinders University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 884.

and their confidence to communicate with young people, and difficult young people in particular. When implementing new discipline systems or school structures schools should be sufficiently resourced to ensure that every teacher in the school receives the necessary in-service education and skills development. The Committee endorses the Ramsey review recommendations on behaviour management and, in particular, that:

> approaches in initial and continuing teacher education programs give priority to issues related to interpersonal relationships.[76]

Recommendation 17

The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education, Science and Training encourage university teacher education faculties to place greater emphasis on the development of behaviour management and interpersonal skills, particularly those that will support teachers to establish effective relationships with boys.

The Committee further recommends that more professional development be provided for this purpose for practising teachers.

Male teachers

6.76 There is a great deal of public and media interest in the decline in the number of male teachers in both primary and secondary schools. Nationally, the proportion of male primary teachers fell from 26.3 per cent to 21.3 per cent between 1991 and 2001 (*see* Table 5.2 *below*) and the situation is not likely to reverse itself in the near future. At the University of Western Sydney male primary teacher enrolments were only 15 per cent of the total in 1998[77] and some teacher education campuses report a proportion of male students in primary education as low as 10 per cent.[78] A survey of over 1,400 Year 12 students in Catholic schools in Sydney found that only five per cent of boys, compared to 15 per cent of girls, were considering a teaching career. Also, most of the boys considering teaching were considering secondary teaching.[79]

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76 Gregor Ramsay, *Quality Matters, Revitalising teaching: Critical times, critical choices,* NSW, November 2000, p. 81.

77 Mr David McCumstie, *Submission No. 94,* p. 5.

78 Mr Ed Lewis, Lecturer, Australian Catholic University, *Transcript of Evidence,* pp. 352 & 353.

79 Mr Ed Lewis, Lecturer, Australian Catholic University, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 354.

6.77 Nationally, the proportion of male secondary teachers declined from 49.5 per cent to 45.1 per cent between 1991 and 2001.[80] However, men are proportionally more likely than women to hold promotional positions.[81] Therefore, the proportion of male classroom teachers in both the primary and secondary sectors is lower than indicated by the ABS data.

Table 5.2 Male Primary Teachers — Govt and Non-Govt Combined — 1991-2001 Compared

State	NSW	Vic	Qld	SA	WA	Tas	NT	ACT	Australia
1991 %	25.4	26.0	28.2	28.4	27.0	22.4	25.0	16.9	26.3
2001 %	20.0	20.5	22.7	24.6	23.1	21.6	18.5	16.5	21.3

Source ABS Schools Australia, Cat No. 4221, 27 February 2002, Table 20, p. 26.

6.78 The level of public and media interest in the gender balance of the teaching force and submissions to the inquiry indicate a high level of public concern about the decline in the proportion of men in teaching, and in primary teaching in particular. The Committee shares this concern but rejects any suggestion that there is widespread discrimination by female teachers against boys or that female teachers cannot be excellent teachers for boys.

6.79 Nevertheless the ACT and Western Australian departments of education indicated that they would prefer a more even gender balance in their teaching workforce and Education Queensland is also looking at ways to attract more men into teaching. However, the gender balance of the pool of teachers to recruit from combined with a commitment to merit selection, which precludes discriminating in favour of any particular group, are difficulties for practical strategies to achieve a more even gender balance.[82]

Factors discouraging male teachers

6.80 A whole range of reasons has been advanced to explain why fewer men want to become teachers. Generally, the status of teachers in the community, salary, career opportunities and child protection issues are significant reasons advanced by teachers.

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80 ABS Schools Australia, Cat No. 4221, 27 February 2002, Table 19, p. 25.

81 Australian Education Union, *Submission No. 150*, pp. 17-21.

82 Mr James Colbourne, Executive Director, School Education Division, ACT Department of Education and Community Services, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1331 *and see* Mr John Garnaut, Director, Learning and Teaching, Education Department of Western Australia, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 970.

6.81 Central to the issue of status is the public image of teaching and teachers, who are very well aware of negative public perceptions.

> There have been 20 years of open season on teachers, and I am bipartisan about this. It is unsurprising that people draw the conclusions: (a) that they do not want to be teachers; and (b) that learning is not a valued characteristic in youngsters. This is because people who are in charge of governments of all stripes have got stuck into the profession, the organisations and all parts of them and teachers in general. People draw conclusions that not only is teaching unimportant and unattractive as a career; so are the things that teachers do.[83]

6.82 For a range of other reasons teaching is now perceived to be a difficult occupation and one where the financial rewards do not recognise the difficulty.

> Yes, status, money and the child protection issues are all very significant, but you hear so many people say, 'I wouldn't be a teacher for quids,' because it is such a tough job these days… It is getting more complex and a greater burden each year that goes by... We have all heard the stories: we used to just teach maths or English, but we have become father, we have become uncle, we have become big brother, policeman, social worker, and sometimes we are doctor or family planner.[84]

> There has been a perception of it being difficult, of morale being low, of there being poor remuneration. There has also been a lot of media coverage of the relationships sometimes between males and children, and those things are all impacting. Why put yourself in those situations? I am sure that affects the primary school a little more than it does the secondary school, but those are issues, and they come up very often.[85]

6.83 There is no doubt that child protection issues are a significant factor in men's attitude towards teaching, generally, and that this factor is magnified in relation to primary teaching. The community attitude towards male primary school teachers is a troubling paradox. People say they want more male primary teachers in schools while many harbour suspicions about men who want to work with children.

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83 Mr Denis Fitzgerald, Federal President, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 213.

84 Mr David Maclean, Deputy Principal, Palmerston High School, NT, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1318.

85 Mr Ian Morgan, Principal, New Town High School, Hobart, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1128.

> … something that was of great concern…was this business about physical contact with children and the possible allegations of child abuse…This was something they said they carried around with them daily, all of the time… one of the guys said he felt he was under scrutiny. He came as a casual teacher to take kindergarten, and all the mums and dads were there waiting. The principal introduced him and built him up in a big way but he really felt that he was under scrutiny. He wondered whether a first-year out female teacher would feel the same thing.[86]

6.84 The issue of teachers' salaries is a less complex factor than child protection but it is still difficult to resolve. Starting salaries for teachers are generally comparable to other public sector opportunities for graduates. However, once employed, salary progression and promotional opportunities for teachers do not keep pace with the opportunities available outside teaching.

> ...I worked hard at University to become an Honours Graduate with a distinction average and now, with 20 years experience on the job, I make about the average weekly wage. I see colleagues who need to bar tend to make ends meet. I see my 24 year old niece driving ferries on Sydney Harbour and making more money than me. Essentially a teacher's salary is only seen as an adequate second income for a family. Hence the dearth of males.[87]

6.85 The responsibility and complexity of contemporary teaching and the value to the community of good teachers warrants higher salaries for experienced teachers. In recognition of this, the Committee supports the payment of a significant additional allowance to skilled and experienced classroom teachers in recognition of their skill and as an inducement for them to remain in teaching. Whether and how this might be implemented is a matter for the State and Territory employing authorities but the Committee proposes it in recognition of the pivotal role and worth of teachers to the community.

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86 Mr Ed Lewis, Lecturer, Australian Catholic University, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 353 *and see Submission No. 22*, pp.4-6.

87 Mr Ian Carragher, *Submission No. 59*, p. 2.

Recommendation 18

The Committee recommends that State and Territory Governments urgently address the remuneration of teachers with the payment of substantial additional allowances for skilled and experienced teachers as an inducement for them to remain in teaching and to attract new teachers by offering more attractive career paths.

Teacher quality

6.86 The decline in the appeal of teaching as a profession is related to the difficulty of attracting sufficient high quality candidates to teacher education courses. Some education departments and organisations[88], and teachers themselves[89], expressed concern about the low tertiary entrance scores required for entry to teacher education, although there are early indications that this may be improving.

6.87 One analysis of the age profile of the teaching workforce estimated that 58 per cent of Australian teachers would be over the age of 41, and 28 per cent would be over the age of 51, in 2002.[90] It is inevitable that over the next 10 to 15 years tens of thousands of teachers will retire and replacements will need to be recruited. Persistent low entry requirements to teacher education courses over this period may result in a fall in the quality of the teaching workforce if employing authorities have to take nearly every graduate to ensure every class has a teacher.

6.88 The age profile issue is replicated in the staff of teacher training faculties[91], so the capacity to train teachers could come under serious pressure at a time of high demand for new graduates. It is essential that all governments take concerted action now to ensure that Australia's medium to longer term requirements for high quality teachers can be met. All governments need to act to develop strategies that lift the status and public image of teachers and MCEETYA should develop strategies to this end.

6.89 For its part, the Commonwealth Government could provide a financial inducement to attract quality students into teaching by providing HECS-

88 E.g. Commonwealth, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 17, NSW, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 314, Australian Education Union, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 214.

89 E.g. *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1319.

90 *A Class ACT: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, March 1998, p. 239.

91 *A Class ACT: Inquiry into the Status of the Teaching Profession*, Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee, March 1998, p. 241.

free scholarships to the top brackets of high school graduates. Further, these could be used to try and attract more males into teaching by offering equal numbers to males and females. These scholarships could operate in the form of a rebate of their annual Higher Education Contribution Scheme (HECS) liability while they are employed as teachers by a recognised teaching authority. Recognised authorities for this purpose would include State and Territory education departments employing teachers in schools, TAFE colleges and correctional facilities, and other major employers of teachers, such as the Catholic education offices and independent schools. The intention would be to make teacher education courses HECS-free for these students so long as they remain employed as teachers long enough to receive a rebate of their full HECS liability.

6.90 If implemented, this proposal should achieve a number of objectives. It would affirm the value and importance of teachers and teaching to the community. Also, it should improve the supply and quality of applicants for teacher education courses and provide a financial incentive to obtain and continue employment as a teacher, at least for several years until the HECS liability was substantially reduced or eliminated.

6.91 Academic achievement is not, of itself, an adequate measure of the quality of a teacher. This report has devoted considerable attention to the personal qualities, commitment and the interpersonal skills that distinguish excellent teachers. The admission processes for some other professional education courses attempt to screen applicants for motivational factors and personal qualities that are considered desirable in practitioners of that profession, medicine being an example. If personal qualities and motivation were ever important to any profession, it would be in teaching. The Committee recognises that adding requirements to the admission processes for teacher professional education may make it harder to attract more candidates. However, the selection of candidates for teacher education ought to aim to select those people likely to make the best teachers.

Recommendation 19

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth government and university teacher education faculties work together to develop admission processes for teacher education courses that evaluate relevant personal attributes in addition to academic achievement.

Do male role models matter?

6.92 Just as it is considered helpful for girls to see women in positions of authority and involved in activities outside traditional feminine roles, it is helpful for boys to see men supporting and caring for others and men who are at ease with women exercising authority. It is also important that boys and girls see men who value education sufficiently to be committed professionally as teachers. It is desirable, if not always possible, to have a balance of men and women teaching and in positions of authority in schools. This allows all students to be exposed to both men and women in leadership positions, and both men and women sharing authority and recognising the legitimate authority of others.

> …as far as the boys are concerned I think it is very important that they see balance in what is in front of them. We have made a specific decision to employ males. That is fine, but I also insist that Mrs Walton is seen taking a very constructive part in the assemblies because it is important that the boys also have a view of females in authority as well.[92]

> …it is important that we convey to boys that men value learning; not just later when you are in the work force…, but right now in that classroom in those early years. That is where we need to convince boys that men value learning. The best way to do that is to have men demonstrate that, obviously. You can imagine it is not quite as convincing for a female teacher to tell the boy that men value learning as it is for him to see men doing it.[93]

6.93 The Australian Education Union argued that excellent teaching style 'is not dictated by gender' but a range of attitudes and abilities including an 'understanding of gender construction and its impact on students and teachers'. The Union also argued that effective male teachers 'need to understand the construction of gender and motivations for violence, and be trained in ways to intervene to deal with inappropriate behaviour.'[94] Even if this is true it places too much emphasis on gender theory and too little on the importance of the relationship between the teacher and the student which is the foundation of good teaching. It gives too little weight to the value of positive male role models for boys.

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92 Mr Michael Blood, Head of Campus, Southwood Boys Grammar, Tintern Schools, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 231.

93 Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 1044.

94 Australian Education Union, *Submission No. 150,* p. 29.

6.94 Programs such as Boys in Focus, which very effectively retrieve boys at risk, succeed because of the emphasis on the relationships involved and by engaging boys in activities through which those relationships are built. The relationships are then a conduit through which the boys can be taught more appropriate behavioural responses to circumstances that arise.

> It is the relationship building that I see as the most significant aspect of the program. We were seeing boys crave these significant male models and go looking for the positive models that we have within our school rather than the negative models who often become the un-nominated leaders. So they look to the more positive, and it is a very powerful thing.[95]

6.95 An understanding of gender issues is important but the role modelling and teaching by males whose relationship and commitment to boys is genuine is the most important factor.

> We know that they watch us very closely, so the way we work with women, the way we talk to women, the way we can work as a colleague is something these boys are watching all the time because in the environments that they are from that is not the sort of relationship they are used to seeing. We are very aware of that sort of thing, that what we display to the boys is what they will want to take on board.[96]

6.96 The Committee observed the deliberate explicit teaching and modelling of respectful relationships and behaviour by a male teacher and a female teacher working together in a South Australian primary school classroom. Programs designed specifically to address violent behaviour in adolescent boys also rely, to some extent, on demonstrating respectful relationships.

> [We] developed a program for violent adolescent boys which has resulted in these boys choosing non-violent responses when they are angry… It has to be run by a male and a female and, in our case, a social worker. The reason for this is that the behaviour of most of the boys that we see is quite violent and they are often coming from situations of violence at home. It is very important that they see a man and a woman responding equally and non-violently to one another.[97]

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95 Ms Janelle Horton, Boys in Focus, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1033.

96 Mr John Fleming, System Director, Boys in Focus, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1034.

97 Ms Elizabeth Moleta, Member, Australian Association of Social Workers, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 490.

6.97 In supporting the presence of more men in schools, the Committee is not suggesting that female teachers should be displaced in favour of men or that women are not equally good teachers. The Committee agrees that the quality of the teacher is more important than the gender of the teacher — the position consistently taken by education departments, school principals and teachers' unions. However, many teachers recognise the positive effect that the right kind of men can have when they work with boys, but the emphasis is always on the right kind of men. For this reason, the Committee feels it is desirable for State and Territory education authorities to consider measures to attract more males into teaching.

6.98 The Committee proposes a merit based scholarship available to equal numbers of males and females who undertake teacher training. The scholarship should take the form of an annual rebate of the HECS liability of education course graduates who are subsequently employed as teachers by a recognised teaching authority. The Committee estimates that a beginning teacher with a four year Bachelor of Education degree would have received a full rebate of their HECS liability after about six to seven years of teaching. A beginning teacher with a three year Bachelor of Science degree followed by a Diploma of Education could expect to have received a full rebate of their HECS liability after about seven to eight years of teaching.

Recommendation 20

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth provide a substantial number of HECS-free scholarships for equal numbers of males and females to undertake teacher training. These would be based on merit and take into account other admission criteria developed in line with Recommendation 19.

The scholarships would operate as a rebate of the HECS liability while the recipients were employed by a recognised teaching authority.

Other male role models

6.99 Good male role models can sometimes be found among the parents or families of students, the male ancillary staff of schools and may also come from the wider community.

> If we have a low population of male teaching staff, it would be nice to have male mentors from the community working within the school. For example, our school based police officer is an excellent role model for our students. He is very proactive and

> very positive in the way he deals with our kids. He goes on the camps with them. He is out there in the water and they will offload on him and they will talk to him. When they are in the middle of nowhere with him, when they are not in an office, that rapport develops. They have a role model who they go to in the school.[98]

> At the previous school I was at, a few years ago now, we had a program where we got some fathers who were keen to help some boys who were disengaged. They came in and worked with us in the school. They volunteered their time and would come in and talk to the boys, sit down with them, maybe kick a football with them, maybe do some reading with them. They took an interest in them. We found that made a difference.[99]

6.100 The search for male role models for indigenous boys has to extend beyond teachers because there are so few indigenous male school teachers.

> There are a whole range of issues around indigenous boys. It is really important to find other role models who may not even be teachers—other indigenous people, indigenous men employed as gardeners in the school. They do not have to be teachers but good role models that are paraprofessionals, tutors in the schools. You can find good role models or indigenous men that provide supporting roles to schools…
> a lot of the indigenous Australian Rules football players come from the Northern Territory. If you hold workshops, there are more boys than you could ever poke a stick at coming to school on that day. But we are looking for local champions, because it is the social capital and social infrastructure that we need to build up in our indigenous communities to engage young people to stay in our schools.[100]

6.101 Structured Workplace Learning and Enterprise Education programs can introduce students to appropriate adult role models and mentors. These programs are popular with boys and their choice of work-placements often matches them with men who do provide appropriate guidance and instruction.[101] At Margaret River Senior High School in Western Australia

98 Ms Helen Jamieson, Principal, Woodridge State High School, *Transcript of Evidence,* p. 558.

99 Mr Kenneth Davies, Acting General Manager, School Services, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1260.

100 Ms Carmelita Dunne, General Manager, Indigenous Education Division, Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1260.

101 Mr Rollo Browne, Consultant in Boys' Education, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 449.

the students undertake work-placements for a continuous fortnight during their holidays. This period is long enough to see tasks through to completion while developing an understanding of the culture of work.

> I've seen so many kids come good out of it. Even those who people were quick to write off. There was one boy, who, if there was trouble he'd be one you'd first think of. He's now a qualified tradesman. We found an employer who knew him and with all our efforts he's turned into someone useful.[102]

6.102 The community is also involved in Margaret River Senior High School in other ways. Senior citizens coach reading and maths and volunteers from the local Fire Brigade, Ambulance, Police, and State Emergency Service staff leadership programs in the school.[103] The Machismo Project, at several Sydney high schools, also drew on the community to bring a range of people into schools doing activities with boys while providing support and information. Some of the artists, performers, drug counsellors and police assumed an important role as models for boys' thinking and behaviour.[104]

Involving fathers

6.103 A number of primary schools are successfully encouraging fathers (and stepfathers, grandfathers or uncles) to become involved in the school. This very effectively introduces boys and girls to a diverse range of men in a context that demonstrates that men value and want to encourage learning. Often the barriers to fathers' involvement are less real than imagined.

> …teachers are often under the impression that men are not in the picture. For example, we are talking to schools and saying, 'We want to start you on this project of engaging fathers. Do you think that's a good idea?' They say, 'Oh, sure, that's a good idea.' Then they say, 'But I don't think it's going to work very well here.' We say, 'Why not?' They say, 'Well, this is not an affluent area. A lot of families do not have fathers.' After quite a bit of respectful encouragement from us, some of the schools have drawn up a list of who has a man at home—dad or de facto or part-time father—and it has turned out, to the teachers' surprise, that the number of

102 "Turning Them Into Someone Useful", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2000, p. 8.

103 "It Takes A Village To Raise A Young Man", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2000, p. 6.

104 Ms Marie-Anne Maakrun, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 403 & 406 *and* Mr Matthew Brabant, Coordinator, Resources and Education on Alcohol and Drugs for Youth, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 720.

> kids who have no dad or no male figure around is very small, but in the teachers' perception it is a huge thing.[105]

6.104 There is an enormous range of ways that fathers can get involved in schools and sometimes all that is required to get them there is some encouragement and an opportunity.

> Dads are encouraged to serve in the canteen and we have a dozen fathers on the roster for this term. They have fathers day in the canteen where just dads are manning the canteen, but there are other days when the dads are working with the mums. Those same dads shift their time in their professions to allocate time to the canteen. I think the students really appreciate that and I know the dads get a lot out of it too.[106]

6.105 Other opportunities and strategies include inviting fathers to coach sports teams[107], attend fathers' breakfasts, and father and son camping expeditions.[108] Rangeville State School in Queensland organised a father-son and a father-daughter fun day on consecutive Sundays to encourage fathers to spend time with their children.[109] A large proportion did so on each weekend. Barnsley Public School in Newcastle, NSW, had a father-son night which was followed later by a father-daughter night and both events were well attended.[110] Both these ideas attest to the fact that involving fathers does not have to exclude girls.

6.106 Some other ways of involving fathers more directly target learning objectives like encouraging reading. Rangeville State School also invited fathers (or significant male adults) to read something of their choosing to students around 12 years of age. The father then led discussion about what he had read and the importance of reading and being literate in his life. Photos were taken on each occasion and were displayed in the room. The initiative was called Real Men Read.

> Not all fathers elected to read to the class. A small percentage of them simply came in and spoke about their life and how reading, for purpose and pleasure, impacted upon it.... One father (an army helicopter pilot) even read a piece of poetry that he had

105 Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program, Family Acion Centre, University of Newcastle, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1051.

106 Mrs Carol Richmond, Principal, Roseville Public School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 667.

107 *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 666 & 1155.

108 Mr Andrew Mullins, Head Master, Redfield College, *Submission No. 80*, p. 23.

109 Ms Deborah Mulligan, *Submission No. 90*, p. 3.

110 "Seventy Six Fathers Came Along With Their Sons", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 4, No. 1, 2001, p. 2.

> written himself. He then went on to discuss the cathartic effect writing can have if you suffer undue grief.[111]

6.107 This idea may successfully be applied to younger students as reading to young children is less stressful, and may be more beneficial, for the child than listening to them read aloud.[112]

6.108 Eagleby State School in Queensland trains parents and community members as teacher aids to assist with its literacy programs in addition to providing other programs for parents, during and after school hours, to assist them to support their children's learning at home.[113] These types of programs can provide excellent opportunities for some fathers, and grandfathers to be actively involved in school.

6.109 Coleambally Central School in NSW sometimes employs speaker-phone and mobile phone technology to involve fathers in discussions with, and about, their sons when they can't actually be present.

> Our aim this year has been to have a father or father figure at every meeting with any of our targeted kids. And that means any positive meeting or any negative meeting, any behaviour meeting. Sometimes the father's not physically present. Sometimes he's on the end of a bad phone out on the farm…and we're in the office with the kid and a speaker phone. The speaker phone is a way of us saying well there is a meeting on and the dad's here.[114]

6.110 For some boys the father is in contact with the school on a weekly basis to jointly involve them with aspects of a boy's Individual Education Plan (IEP), homework or work experience. The same school finds father figures for some students when appropriate. It finds them among members of staff, the bush fire brigade, APEX, Lions and the local churches.[115]

6.111 This section is a sample of ideas on involving fathers in schools and is not meant to be an exhaustive list of possibilities. What these ideas show is that it can be done, perhaps more easily than most people think. Another conclusion that can be drawn from some of the examples is that fathers are

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111 Ms Deborah Mulligan, *Submission No. 90*, p. 2.

112 "Perspective: Should dads be in the school listening to boys reading?", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, Vol. 3, No. 2, 2000, p. 2.

113 Mr Kevin Leathewaite, Principal, Eagleby State School, QLD, *Transcript of Evidence*, pp. 531 & 538, *and see* Ms Patricia Wilson, Deputy Principal, Eagleby State School, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 541.

114 Ms Cheryl Hallinan, Principal, Coleambally Central School, "Broadening Boys' Options", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, 1999, p. 8.

115 Ms Cheryl Hallinan, Principal, Coleambally Central School, "Broadening Boys' Options", *The Boys in Schools Bulletin*, 1999, p. 8.

just as keen to support their daughters as they are to support their sons and girls don't necessarily have to be excluded. Both boys and girls will benefit from the involvement and encouragement of their fathers as well as their mothers.

6.112 Finally, promoting programs to involve fathers in school is not a real or implied criticism of mothers, single mothers or women teachers. It is simply recognition that men can bring something different in addition to what is there and that their presence can be beneficial.

> We asked field workers to go and talk to the single women they worked with and ask them two questions: 'Do you have a boy at school? Does he need a man around?... If they said, 'Yes, we've got a boy at school,' then they were asked by female field workers, 'Do you think he needs a man around for things?' Sometimes they said, 'No. We've had violent relationships. We've seen plenty of men. We don't want to see any more.' But that was not the main response. The main response was, 'Yes.' They were then asked, 'What do you want him for?' They had a whole list of specific things. This was not about their love life; this was not about them needing a man. The focus was on the child, and that is the appropriate question: what does the child need? If you stick with that focus you can get out of that general debate about, 'Are you attacking single mums or are you trying to value fathers?[116]

Recommendation 21

The Committee recommends that education authorities use their websites and in-service workshops to promote successful strategies being used by schools to involve fathers and other men from the community as positive male role models.

Conclusion

6.113 The quality of the relationships between students, teachers and parents is crucial to achieving optimal educational outcomes for all students and this seems to be particularly so for boys. This chapter has considered a range of school structures, strategies and ideas that support the establishment and maintenance of good teacher / student relationships and develop

116 Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, *Transcript of Evidence*, p. 1057.

connections between schools and parents, particularly fathers who traditionally have had limited involvement. There is no ‘one size fits all approach’ and each school will have to adapt ideas and strategies to meet their students’ needs and the school’s particular circumstances. While the focus has been on building better relationships to support boys’ engagement with learning the Committee believes that these approaches have value for all students.

7 Conclusion

7.1 In addressing the inquiry's terms of reference the Committee has attempted to consider the main issues in a way that clearly reflects the evidence presented to it. Essentially, the Committee has concluded from this evidence and other research that boys' social and educational needs are not adequately addressed by the current *Gender Equity Framework*.

7.2 In seeking to address boys' under-achievement and disengagement from learning the Committee has identified a number of key areas for attention and made 24 related recommendations: the gender equity policy framework; curricula, pedagogy and assessment; literacy; student / teacher relationships; behaviour management; the presence of appropriate male role models in schools; and the appropriateness of the school environment to meet the needs of contemporary students. In one way or another, most of these issues are connected to the development and maintenance of positive student / teacher relationships and good teaching which motivates and engages all students.

7.3 The Committee notes two other areas of concern that have emerged in its consideration of the issues raised in this report: data collection and monitoring of the outcomes of Commonwealth funding.

Data collection

7.4 In undertaking this inquiry the Committee's attention was drawn again to the difficulty of obtaining comparative data sets from eight different State and Territory jurisdictions. An example mentioned in Chapter 2 is the absence of comparable, historical data on truancy, suspension and exclusion from school making it difficult to monitor the most vulnerable young people. The Committee recognises that MCEETYA has made substantial progress on data collection in recent years. For example,

Australia is developing nationally comparable data sets on literacy and numeracy achievement. However, there are still significant gaps which impede Commonwealth, State and Territory researchers and policy makers.

Recommendation 22

The Committee recommends that the Commonwealth review all aspects of published national education data to ensure its adequacy to comprehensively inform Commonwealth and State and Territory education policy.

The Committee further recommends that in the event that the States and Territories do not provide the necessary data, the Commonwealth consider making the Australian Bureau of Statistics responsible for its collection and compilation.

Recommendation 23

The Committee recommends that MCEETYA continue to work towards achieving greater consistency in their policy frameworks and greater uniformity in assessment processes so that results, including gender differences, are more readily comparable between States and Territories.

Monitoring Commonwealth funding

7.5 The Committee has made several important recommendations in this report that require the Commonwealth to make a financial contribution. However, the Committee is concerned that extra Commonwealth grants for education should not be offset by the reallocation of State and Territory resources elsewhere. Therefore, the Committee expects that the Commonwealth will ensure that the outcomes are monitored and that appropriate conditions are attached to Commonwealth funding to ensure that the States and Territories do not undermine, but actively support, the Commonwealth's commitment.

Recommendation 24

Where Commonwealth funding is provided in response to other recommendations in this report, the Committee recommends that the Commonwealth Government ensure that the outcomes are monitored and that appropriate conditions are attached to Commonwealth funding to ensure that the States and Territories do not undermine the Commonwealth's contribution by reducing their own financial commitment.

Mr Kerry Bartlett, MP
Chair
October 2002

A Conduct of the inquiry

Advertising the inquiry

The inquiry was advertised in a number of national newspapers during the period 7 to 14 June 2000. The Committee wrote to the relevant Commonwealth Ministers and to State and Territory Governments. In addition, the Committee wrote to over 150 parent associations, independent and Catholic education organisations, education research bodies, and relevant industry associations inviting them to make a submission.

On the readoption of the reference in 2002, all parties that had made a submission were invited to add to or update their submissions.

Evidence to the inquiry

The Committee received 231 submissions from 202 parties. These submissions are listed in Appendix B.

The Committee received 178 exhibits to the inquiry, which were provided as attachments to written submissions, offered during public hearings or sent to the Committee by other parties. These are listed in Appendix C.

Public hearings

The Committee held public hearings across Australia in Canberra, ACT; Melbourne and Ringwood, Vic; Sydney, Roseville, Griffith and Kogarah, NSW; Brisbane, Eagleby, Tallebudgera, Morningside and Woodridge, Qld; Adelaide, Elizabeth North and Evanston South, SA; Perth and City Beach, WA; Hobart, Tas; and Darwin and Palmerston, NT.

The Committee called 235 witnesses. Details of the hearings and witnesses who appeared are in Appendix D.

School visits

School forums and/or inspections were held at the following schools:

- Bridgewater Primary School, TAS
- Broadmeadows Primary School, SA
- Cannon Hill Anglican College, QLD
- City Beach High School, WA *
- Eagleby State School, QLD
- Griffith Public School, NSW
- Herdsmans Cove Primary School, SA
- James Cook Boys Technology High School, NSW *
- Palmerston High School, NT *
- Roseville Public School, NSW
- Southwood Boys' Grammar School, Tintern Schools, VIC *
- Tallebudgera Beach School, QLD
- Trinity College, SA *
- Wade High School, NSW *
- Woodridge State High School, QLD
- Yenda Public School, NSW

* Students from these schools participated in school forums which form part of the public record of the inquiry.

In total 124 students participated in the school forums. Details of the school forums and participating students and teachers are in Appendix D.

Transcript of hearings

At the public hearings and school forums combined, 1338 pages of evidence were recorded by *Hansard*. The transcript of evidence taken at public hearings and school forums, and copies of all written submissions, are available for inspection from the Committee Office of the House of Representatives, the National Library of Australia or on the inquiry website at:
http://www.aph.gov.au/house/committee/edt/eofb/index.htm

B List of submissions

No.	Individual/Organisation
1	Mr Michael Adams, SA
2	Mr David Butler, VIC
3	Mrs Wilma Vallis, NSW
4	Ms Robyn MacDonald, ACT
5	Mr Jerry Tyrrell, NSW
6	Professor David Plummer, NSW
7	Ms Andrea Heath, TAS
8	Mrs Pamela Holms, QLD
9	Mr David Hutchison, ACT
10	Ms Angela Pattison, NT
11	Mr David Ryan, WA
12	Ms Melanie Akhurst, NT
13	Ms Susanna Christie, NSW
14	Mrs Jean Gelman Taylor, NSW
15	Mr Graeme Wood, ACT
16	Mrs Susan Stewart, NSW
17	Ms Carolyn van Langenberg, NSW
18	The Institute of Men's Studies, VIC

No.	Individual/Organisation
19	Mr John Hocknull, QLD
20	Mr Glenn Marchant, VIC
21	Endeavour Forum, VIC
21.1	Endeavour Forum, VIC
21.2	Endeavour Forum, VIC
21.3	Endeavour Forum, VIC
21.4	Endeavour Forum, VIC
22	Mr Ed Lewis, NSW
23	Mackay West State Primary School, QLD
24	Scouts Australia, NSW
25	Brother Barry Lamb, NSW
26	Ms Jennifer Buckingham, NSW
27	Reading Recovery Centre, ACT Education and Community Services
28	Dr G C Lowenthal AM, NSW
28.1	Dr G C Lowenthal AM, NSW
28.2	Dr G C Lowenthal AM, NSW
29	Ms Louisa Legg, VIC
30	Ms Jude Foster, NSW
31	Mr Ron Gough, NSW
32	Ms Christine Crump, NSW
33	Mr Tony Butz, NSW
34	Major General W B Digger James AC MBE MC, QLD
34.1	Mrs Barbara James, QLD

No.	Individual/Organisation
35	Mr Andrew Humphreys, VIC
35.1	Mr Andrew Humphreys, VIC
36	Name withheld from publication
37	Ms Gwenda Stanbridge, NSW
38	Mr Malcolm Mayne, WA
39	Mr David Raj, NT
40	Mr J Highfield, NSW
41	Mr John Richardson, ACT
42	Ms Vivianne Byrnes, NSW
43	Mr Bill Campbell, NSW
44	The Hutchins School, TAS
45	Mr Ken Bushnell, TAS
46	Mr Walter Pless, TAS
47	St Joseph's School, QLD
48	Self-Help Ending Domestics (SHED), VIC
49	Public Policy Assessment Society Inc, ACT
50	Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc, WA
51	Mr Philip Altmann, SA
52	New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council
53	Mr Russ Trudeau, QLD
54	Queensland Catholic Education Commission
55	South Australian Association of State School Organisations Inc
56	Trinity Grammar School, VIC

No.	Individual/Organisation
57	Asquith Boys High School, NSW
58	Confidential
58.1	Ms Denise Parkes, ACT
59	Mr Ian Carragher, NSW
60	International Boys' Schools Coalition, QLD
61	Victoria Police
62	West Education Centre Inc, VIC
62.1	West Education Centre Inc, VIC
63	Ms Marie-Anne Maakrun, NSW
63.1	Confidential
64	Mr Peter Dicker, NSW
65	Hurstville Boys' High School, NSW
66	University of Technology, Sydney, Faculty of Education, NSW
67	Confidential
68	Name withheld from publication
69	Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of Catholic Schools, QLD
70	Fremantle Education Centre, WA
71	Coolbellup Socio Psychological Education Resource Centre, WA
72	Ms Linda Farrington, TAS
73	Dr Roderick Bruce, VIC
74	Elimbah State School, QLD
75	Boys in Focus Consultants, NSW

No.	Individual/Organisation
76	Mr & Mrs Graham and Helen Davies, ACT
77	Mr Donn Trent and Ms Jennifer Cooper, NSW
78	St Mary's College, QLD
79	Mr Patrick Toohey, WA
80	Mr Andrew Mullins, NSW
81	Australian Secondary Principals' Association Inc, VIC
82	Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals
83	Mrs Gail Petherick, NT
84	Dr Martin Mills and Dr Bob Lingard, QLD
85	Mr Peter Little and Mr Scott Gardner, VIC
86	Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University, Department of School and Early Childhood Education, VIC
87	Board for Lutheran Schools, SA
88	Barker College, NSW
89	Mr Neil Philbrook, Mr Mark DePledge and Mr Mark Collyer, SA
90	Ms Deborah Mulligan, QLD
91	Mr Craig Date, NSW
92	Roma Middle School, QLD
93	Mr Angus Tulley, ACT
94	Mr David McCumstie, NSW
95	Blue Gum School, ACT
96	St Brendan's College, QLD
97	The Scots College, NSW
98	Ms Kerry Davies, ACT

No.	Individual/Organisation
99	Chatswood High School Council, NSW
100	Mrs Frances Bradshaw, NSW
101	Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta, NSW
102	Rock Eisteddfod Challenge, NSW
103	Canberra Grammar School, ACT
104	Mr John McFaul, NSW
105	Barnardos Australia, ACT
106	Mr Stephen McMullen, NSW
107	Deakin University, Faculty of Education, VIC
108	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, VIC
108.1	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, VIC
108.2	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia, VIC
109	Dr Peter West, NSW
110	Mr Ray McAlister, NSW
111	Dr Ken Rowe and Dr Katherine Rowe, VIC
111.1	Dr Ken Rowe and Dr Katherine Rowe, VIC
112	Christian Brothers Queensland, QLD
113	Mr Dennis Foster, NSW
114	Mr Colin Craig, VIC
115	New Town High School, TAS
116	National Catholic Education Commission, ACT
117	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, ACT

No.	Individual/Organisation
117.1	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, ACT
117.2	Department of Education, Science and Training, ACT
118	Queensland Independent Education Union
118.1	Queensland Independent Education Union
119	Australian Council of State School Organisations, ACT
120	Ministry of the Premier and Cabinet, WA
120.1	Department of the Premier and Cabinet, WA
121	National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd, SA
121.1	National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd, SA
122	Dr Lori Beckett, NSW
123	Early Childhood Education Council of New South Wales
124	Dr George Burkitt, VIC
125	Ms Melissa Lyon, NSW
126	Mr Greg Griffiths, VIC
127	South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc
128	NSW Federation of School Community Organisations
129	Mr Roger Button, SA
130	Mr Sid Sidebottom MP, TAS
131	Centacare, ACT
132	Mr & Mrs Damian and Toni Ryan, VIC
133	Mr Peter Morgan, NSW
134	Penguin High School, TAS
135	Catholic Secondary Principals' Association of WA
136	Mr Ryszard Linkiewicz, NSW

No.	Individual/Organisation
137	Dr Lori Beckett, Ms Helen Hatchell, Mr Will Letts, Dr Wayne Martino, Professor Bob Meyenn and Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli, NSW
138	Festival of Light, SA
139	Queensland University of Technology, Faculty of Education
140	Ms Sabine Beecher, NSW
141	Mr Richard Eckersley, ACT
142	St Nicholas' Primary School, NSW
143	Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, NSW
144	Ms Anna Prosser, ACT
145	Ms Kay Margetts, VIC
146	MW Training Consultants, QLD
147	Tintern Schools, VIC
148	NSW Teachers Federation
149	Mr Gordon Wood, NSW
150	Australian Education Union, VIC
151	Mr John Coochey, ACT
152	Early School Leavers Working Party, VIC
153	Mr Rollo Browne, NSW
154	Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training, SA
155	Tasmanian Department of Education
155.1	Tasmanian Department of Education
156	Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW

No.	Individual/Organisation
156.1	Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW
157	Australian Hearing National Acoustic Laboratories, NSW
158	Independent Education Union of Australia, VIC
158.1	Independent Education Union of Australia, VIC
159	Ms Evelyn Voshege, VIC
160	Queensland Teachers' Union
161	Confidential
162	Minister for School Education, SA
163	Mr Michael Petrie, VIC
164	NSW Department of Education and Training
165	Australian Association of Social Workers, ACT
166	University of Newcastle, Family Action Centre, NSW
167	Mr Scott Thompson, VIC
168	Education Queensland
168.1	Education Queensland
169	Mr Byron Harrison, TAS
170	Mr Chas Cook, ACT
170.1	Mr Chas Cook, ACT
171	Mr D C Anderson, NSW
172	Mr Anderson Fernando, VIC
172.1	Mr Anderson Fernando, VIC
173	NT Council of Government Schools Organisations
174	Association of Women Educators Inc, QLD
175	Mr M G O'Dowd, QLD

No.	Individual/Organisation
176	St Leonard's College, VIC
177	Mr Geoffrey Truslove, WA
178	Victorian Government
179	Australia Council, NSW
180	Name withheld from publication
181	Flinders University, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology, SA
182	Ms Elizabeth Clarke, QLD
182.1	Ms Elizabeth Clarke, QLD
182.2	Ms Elizabeth Clarke, QLD
183	Ms Hannah Eichler, TAS
184	Mr John Bednall, WA
185	Dr Peter Clements, SA
186	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc
186.1	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc
187	Ms Maria Mansfield, NSW
188	Tallebudgera Beach School, QLD
189	Mr John Stephens, Mr John Morris and Mr Paul Richter, NSW
190	NT Aboriginal Male Health Reference Committee
191	Mr Michael Brisco, SA
192	Department of Education & Community Services, ACT
192.1	Minister for Education, Youth and Family Services, ACT
193	The Benevolent Society, NSW
194	Ms Margaret Storey, NSW

No.	Individual/Organisation
195	Mr Dennis Overton, NSW
196	Action for Autism, ACT
197	Ms Janelle Graham, NSW
198	Mrs D Weymiens, QLD
199	Ms Sam Beattie, ACT
200	Mr Phil Bachmann, VIC
201	Mr Malcolm Slade, SA
202	Mr Andrew Evans, NSW

C List of exhibits

No.	From	Exhibit Title
1	Mr David Hutchison	Various newspaper clippings
2	Professor David Plummer	The quest for modern manhood: masculine sterotypes, peer culture and the social significance of homophobia (paper by David Plummer)
3	Professor David Plummer	Policing manhood: new theories about the social significance of homphobia (paper by David Plummer)
4	Mr Ed Lewis	Men in Primary Teaching: An Endangered Species? (research project by Ed Lewis, Jude Butcher and Peter Donnan)
5	Mackay West State Primary School	Showcase Awards for Excellence 2000, Synopses of the 12 finalist programs (Mackay West State Primary School)
6	Scouts Australia	Scouting the Way to Success (publication, July 1997)
7	Scouts Australia	The Education of Young People: A statement at the dawn of the 21st century (publication)
8	Reading Recovery Centre, ACT Education and Community Services	Reading Recovery Program ACT: Information for Schools (1999)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
9	Ms Jude Foster	Case Conferencing - an effective means of managing ADHD (article from the Australian Family Physician Vol. 28 No.7, July 1999)
10	Ms Jude Foster	Struggling to Attention (article from the Sydney Morning Herald, 29 September 1997)
11	Endeavour Forum	Equal Opportunity: The Anti-Sexist Mythology (summary of report 1977)
12	Endeavour Forum	Debunking the Myths of Female Disadvantage (statistics)
13	Endeavour Forum	Paper presented at workshop on Women and Education, 3rd International Community Education Conference (by Endeavour Forum, 20 August 1979)
14	Endeavour Forum	The War Against Boys (article from The Atlantic Monthly by Christina Hoff Sommers, May 2000)
15	Endeavour Forum	How Schools Discriminate Against Boys (essay by Diane McGuiness)
16	Major General W B Digger James AC MBE MC	Project Australia: Caring for Youth (pamphlet) and Jacka's Mob (a narrative of the Great War by Edgar John Rule, 1933)
17	Major General W B Digger James AC MBE MC	Various newspaper and journal articles
18	Name withheld from publication	Newspaper article (from The Age 29 June 2000) and correspondence
19	Mr Bill Campbell	Boys in Schools (paper by Bill Campbell, 1998)
20	Mr Bill Campbell	Case Study: Uralla Central School

No.	From	Exhibit Title
21	Mr Walter Pless	A 'war' against US boys? (article from the Sunday Tasmanian, 2 July 2000)
22	SCEGGS Redlands	Improving Outcomes in Boys' Education: Where to Now? (National Conference, 1998)
23	Mr Scott Simpson	Gender Equity at Shoalhaven High School (paper by Scott Simpson)
24	Mr Philip Altmann	Teamwork for the 90's (article from Boys and Teamwork Vol. 1 Issue 1, 31 May 1998)
25	Mr Philip Altmann	Improving Boys' Learning: Technology as the Carrot (article from the Boys in Schools Bulletin)
26	Victoria Police	Correspondence
27	West Education Centre	Supporting our sons in school, an action guide for parents (booklet, 1999)
28	St Marys College	Strengthen Our Schools Programme (information sheets)
29	Darwin High School	Challenging the Boys: An outcome of the Boys and Literacy in the Middle Years of Schooling (information sheets)
30	Ms Gail Petherick	Steve Biddulp talk: the later maturity rate of some boys and how it affects educational outcomes (summary by Gail Petherick)
31	Ms Gail Petherick	Summary of a workshop by a visiting Sydney information technology lecturer: presented in Darwin (summary by Gail Petherick)
32	Mr Walter Pless	The Male Eunuch (article from the National Review, 3 July 2000)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
33	Ms Anna Prosser	Having their say: some young men's beliefs and attitudes about being a man (thesis by Anna Prosser, December 1999)
34	Barnodos Australia	Final report of the volunteer literacy tutoring program research project (prepared by Glenda Shopen and Anthony Liddicoat)
35	Mr Ian Lillico	Churchill Fellowship Report (by Ian Lillico, August 2000)
36	Dr Ken Rowe	Background papers and transcript of interview between Jill Kitson and Ken Rowe on ABC National Radio
37	Mr Colin Craig	Students at Risk: an Investigative Report (by Bill Sheridan, April 1998)
38	Mr Colin Craig	Final Report on 1997 - 2000 Program funded under DETYA School to Work Program (April 2000)
39	Mr Colin Craig	Colleges for Youth at Risk (article from the Campus Review, October / November 1999)
40	Mr Angus Tulley	Masculinities and Violence in a Co-educational High School (research paper by Angus Tulley, February 1997)
41	Dr George Burkitt	The Role of the Initiation in the making of Men (paper by George Burkitt)
42	Mr Greg Woodrow	Broadening the Definition of Masculinity (program outline)
43	Mr Ryszard Linkiewicz	Why Boys choose not to study Languages. A survey of elective choices made by boys in year nine (by Ryszard Linkiewicz

No.	From	Exhibit Title
44	Mr Richard Eckersley	The Search for Meaning (article from the Australian Quarterly Vol. 72 No.1 by Richard Eckerley, February / March 2000)
45	Mr Richard Eckersley	Taking the Prize or Paying the Price? Young People and Progress (Chapter 6 from Mental Health Promotion and Young People by Richard Eckersley)
46	Ms Fiona Game	Short piece of creative writing
47	NSW Teachers Federation	Various documents
48	Australian Education Union	Australian Education Union Policies and other documents
49	Minister for Education, Children's Services and Training, SA	Folder containing various brochures and documents
50	Australian Hearing National Acoustic Laboratories	Various articles (from the Medical Journal of Australia Vol. 169, December 1998)
51	Ms Evelyn Voshege	Newspaper and journal articles
52	Mr Andrew Humphreys	Correspondence on Victorian Technical Schools
53	Mr Andrew Humphreys	Extracts from Who Stole Feminism and War Against Boys (by Christina Hoff Summer)
54	Endeavour Forum	Overheads presented to the Committee at the public hearing on 25 October 2000
55	Endeavour Forum	If I was a Lady and other Picture Stories: a mature girl's guide to motherhood, occupation, education and pleasure (by Jan Schapper, Louise Gold, Joan Rosser and Maureen Cremeane, 1975)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
56	Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training	Working with Boys (project report Education Victoria, 1998)
57	Deakin University, Faculty of Education	Overheads presented to the Committee at a Public Hearing 25 October 2000
58	Tintern Schools	Preventing and Overcoming Reading Failure: Recent Research and Proven Programs (Future Learning Partnerships Conference, 4 October 2000)
59	NSW Department of Education and Training	Girls and Boys at School: Gender Equity Strategy 1996-2001 (NSW Department of School Education, May 1996)
60	NSW Department of Education and Training	Statistics: Grants for Government Schools
61	NSW Department of Education and Training	Statistics: Participation in Education and Training, NSW
62	Research Group on Men and Families	Kids Need Dads who … (pamphlet)
63	Research Group on Men and Families	Working Paper No.1. What does research say about helping boys achieve? (by Peter West, 1999)
64	Australian Hearing National Acoustic Laboratories	Hearing Loss Prevention Research 2000 (figures to go with presentation to Committee on 14 November 2000)
65	Australian Hearing National Acoustic Laboratories	The Contribution of Gender, Social Class, and Birth Order to Variation in Early Language and Communication (extract from paper)
66	Independent Education Union of Australia	Independent Education (Vols. 21, 26, 28, 29 and 30)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
67	Independent Education Union of Australia	Transcending Surveillance and Equal Opportunity: Teachers and Children Together Challenging Gender Relations (paper presented by Nola Alloway on 14 September 1996)
68	Independent Education Union of Australia	Windows on Welfare (report)
69	Endeavour Forum	Various newspaper articles
70	National Council of Single Mothers and Their Children	Violence and Childhood: How Persisting Fear can alter the Developing Child's Brain (paper by Bruce D Perry, 18 April 2000)
71	Mr Andrew Mullins	Various articles
72	Endeavour Forum	Higher Education Statistics (tables)
73	Australian Education Union	Teacher Registration (background paper)
74	Mr Chas Cook	Don't Panic! Where's that Bloody Rabbit? A Book on the Training and Employment of Australia's Youth (by Chas Cook, 1996)
75	Australian Academy of Boxing	Sports and Fitness Manual (by Dereck Herbert, 2000)
76	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	References to an earlier study by ACER on literacy prior to Year 3 and to research on male teachers in schools
77	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Statistics on the gender composition of OECD teacher workforces
78	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Statistics on the gender balance of staff in non-government schools, Australia

No.	From	Exhibit Title
79	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Reference to a study on students pathways to work & higher education and to research on the different extra-curricular activities of boys and girls
80	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Data on per capita expenditure for primary, secondary and tertiary sectors
81	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	OECD comparison table on progression to tertiary education
82	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Data correlating youth (un)employment and school retention
83	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	A copy of Professor Hill's work on teacher expectations and student outcomes
84	University of Melbourne, Faculty of Education	Data provided for the Committee by Professor Peter Hill
85	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia	International Boys' Schools Coalition Conference, 25 June 1998 (afternoon program)
86	Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia	Excerpt from a US newspaper to do with people entering teaching as a second career stage (27 November 2000)
87	Association of Women Educators	Journal of the Association of Women Educators (Vol. 7 No.1, May 1998)
88	Association of Women Educators	Journal of the Association of Women Educators (Vol. 7 No. 2, September 1998)
89	Mr Ed Lewis	Teaching - an appealing career choice for school leavers? (paper presented by Ed Lewis and Jude Butcher, December 2000)
90	Name withheld from Publication	Various reference material

No.	From	Exhibit Title
91	Name withheld from Publication	Appendix A to submission 180
92	Name withheld from Publication	Appendix B to submission 180
93	Name withheld from Publication	Appendix C to submission 180
94	Name withheld from Publication	Appendix D to submission 180
95	Name withheld from Publication	Appendix E to submission 180
96	Name withheld from publication	Appendix F to submission 180
97	NSW Department of Education and Training	Data on the percentage of male and female permanent teachers in single-sex high schools for the period 1996-2000
98	NSW Department of Education and Training	NSW Government's Collegiate Education Plan
99	NSW Department of Education and Training	Photocopy of brochures on the seven collegiate groups
100	NSW Department of Education and Training	Five Senior Colleges in the NSW Department of Education and Training (final report by John Polesel, Richard Teese and Kate O'Brien, October 2000)
101	NSW Department of Education and Training	Quality Matters. Revitalising teaching: Criticial times, critical choices (report and executive summary by Dr Gregor Ramsey, November 2000)
102	Eagleby State School	Literacy Program for Junior School (booklet from Eagleby State School)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
103	Eagleby State School	Guided Reading and Writing Planning (information sheets from Eagleby School)
104	Eagleby State School	Eagleby State School Results Year 2 Net
105	Name withheld from publication	Correspondence
106	MW Training Consultants	Boys Education and Training (statistics)
107	Education Queensland	Enterprising Futures for Boys in Regional Queensland (QUT research project)
108	International Boys' Schools Coalition	All about Boys (leaflet from Southport School)
109	Queensland Teachers Union	Gendered differences in participation and outcomes in Queensland Senior Secondary Schooling (paper by Erica Bell, August 1999)
110	Roseville Public School	Bullies are Losers at Roseville Public: A Zero Tolerance to Bullying (leaflet)
111	Roseville Public School	Developing Social Skills (paper by C Williams, Deputy Principal Roseville Public School)
112	Roseville Public School	Roseville Public School 2000 Annual Report
113	Roseville Public School	Parents and Teachers Opinions on Roseville Public School (presentation to teachers, 16 October 2000)
114	Ms Hannah Eichler	SOAPBOX Special Edition (newsletter)
115	Ms Hannah Eichler	Grapevine Letter No. 1 (newsletter)
116	Mr Roger Button	Education of Boys (overview by Roger Button)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
117	Mr Malcolm Slade	What the boys are saying: an examination of the views of boys about declining rates of achievement and retention (by Malcolm Slade and Professor Faith Trent)
118	Department of Education, Training and Employment	What's new in SA's curriculum? Community information for parents and caregivers on the new SA curriculum, standards and accountability framework
119	South Australian Primary Principals Association	Table of Statistics - students below chronological age by percentage of class
120	South Australian Primary Principals Association	Tables of Statistics - First Steps Terms 1 - 4
121	Festival of Light (SA)	Children are the casualties - the education war (video, 1991)
122	City Beach High School	Australian Issues in Boys' Education (booklet by Ian Lillico, January 2001)
123	City Beach High School	Boys & their Schooling - A guide for Parents and Teachers' (booklet by Ian Lillico, July 2000)
124	Flinders University SA	Current Education Issues or Are There Aliens in the Classroom? (presentation by Professor Faith Trent to AISWA Conference, March 2001)
125	Boys in Focus Consultants	BIF Structure (notes)
126	Education Department of Western Australia	Statistics relating to students suspended for 2000
127	Department of Education, Training and Employment (SA)	Apparent Retention Rates for Year 8-10 Students in 2000 (data)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
128	Department of Education, Training and Employment (SA)	Vet in Schools 1999 Review by Department of Education, Training and Employment (report)
129	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc	Various newspaper and magazine articles
130	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc	Excerpt from The Silence of the Screams: Female Violence in Intimate Relationships (October 1996)
131	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc	Domestic Violence in Australia: Are Women and Men Equally Violent? (paper by Bruce Headey, Dorothy Scott and David de Vaus, July 1999)
132	Lone Fathers Association NT Inc	All Men are Bastards (article from The Independent Monthly, November 1995)
133	National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd	School non completers: Outcomes in vocational education and training AVETRA Conference 28-30 March 2001 (paper by Katrina Ball and Stephen Lamb)
134	Quantum Literacy	Thinking of Boys (undated article)
135	Quantum Literacy	A Year's Reflections (article by Jacqueline Wilson in L.I.F.E. - Literacy is for Everyone! Newsletter No. 46, December 1999)
136	Quantum Literacy	Various newspaper and magazine articles
137	Bridgewater Primary School	Literacy Program 2001
138	Herdsman Cove Primary School	From Low to High at Herdsman Cove Primary School (report by Miriam Soloman with support from L James, A M Grey and D Bridge, June 2000)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
139	Herdsman Cove Primary School	Herdsman Cove Primary School Literacy Plan
140	Mr Dennis Overton	Attachment 1 - Recommended Colour Defective Vision Occupations
141	Mr Dennis Overton	Attachment 2 - Disabilities and Learning Difficulties Unit Comments
142	Mr Dennis Overton	Attachment 3 - Executive Summary NZHTA Report 7 on Colour Vision Screening
143	Mr Dennis Overton	Attachment 4 - Typical Mathematics Curriculum Work Sheets
144	Mr Dennis Overton	Attachment 5 - Typical Colour Coded Publications
145	Mr Dennis Overton	Understanding Colour Blindness - Can you see what I see? (by Dennis R Overton 2001)
146	Mrs D Weymiens	Various newspaper articles
147	Mrs D Weymiens	Autobiography by Shane Mooney
148	Wade High School	Information on the Performance of Boys
149	Griffith Public School	Griffith Public School - Management Plan 2002
150	Griffith Public School	Our Future - a Report of a Survey of Australian Government Primary School Principals (by the APPA, February 2001)
151	National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd	Apprentice and Trainee Commencements data

No.	From	Exhibit Title
152	Mr Patrick Toohey	Men's Health: Beyond Biomedicine. A Commentary on Men's Socially Determined Illness, Injury and Death (paper by Allan K Huggins)
153	Mr Chas Cook	Broad Based Skills for the Metal Industry Certificate (Module) - Introductory Electrical Wiring (Domestic)
154	Mr Chas Cook	Broad Based Skills for the Metal Industry Certificate (Module) - Introductory Electrical Wiring (Industrial)
155	Tallebudgera Beach School	Tallebudgera Beach School: Presentation Outline
156	Elanora Primary School, Education Queensland	Elanora State School 2001: 7GT Boys Only Class (by Graeme Townsend)
157	Cannon Hill Anglican College	Information on the Literacy Program: Cannon Hill Anglican College
158	Palmerston High School	Palmerston High School Prospectus
159	Palmerston High School	Palmerston High School Profile
160	Palmerston High School	Palmerston High School Term Two Transgressions 1999: Data Analysis by Gender
161	Palmerston High School	Palmerston High School Indigenous Students' Enrolment and Attendance
162	Mr M G O'Dowd	Various newspaper articles
163	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training	Learning Lessons: An independent review on Indigenous education in the Northern Territory (by Bob Collins and Tess Lea, 1999)

No.	From	Exhibit Title
164	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training	Table of the Northern Territory Reading and Numeracy Benchmark Data by Gender
165	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training	Graph 10: Teachers - shows the age groups and gender distribution of teachers employed by the NT Department of Employment, Education and Training
166	Northern Territory Department of Employment, Education and Training	A project description of Boys Business conducted by Dr Bob Smith, NT Music School
167	Mr Dennis Overton	Colour Defective Vision - Statistics
168	Mrs Pamela Holms	Newspaper article
169	Confidential	
170	Endeavour Forum	Youth suicide - why the epidemic? Australian Festival of Light Resource Paper (by Dr David Phillips, May 2002)
171	Endeavour Forum	Newspaper article (The Australian, 10 April 2002)
172	Mr Malcolm Slade	Listening to Boys: Issues and Problems influencing School Achievement and Retention (publication research Collection No. 5 by Malcolm Slade, April 2002)
173	NSW Department of Education and Training	West Wyalong and District Schools: Transition to High School "Middle School" Program, Action Plan 1995-6
174	Mrs Pamela Holms	Correspondence and newspaper clipping

No.	From	Exhibit Title
175	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools (report by the Gender Equity Taskforce, 1997)
176	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs	Factors influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their initial Destinations after Leaving School (report by Dr Cherry Collins, Professor Jane Kenway and Dr Julie McLeod, July 2000)
177	Professor Faith Trent and Mr Malcolm Slade	Declining Rates of Achievement and Retention (Evaluations and Investigations Programme by Professor Faith Trent and Malcolm Slade, June 2001)
178	Department of Education, Science and Training	Responses from the Deans of University Education Faculties on the aspects of Teacher Training

D List of hearings & witnesses

Thursday, 5 October 2000 - Canberra

Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs

Dr Evan Arthur, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Schools Division

Ms Mylinh Hardham, Assistant Secretary, International, Analysis and Evaluation Division, Analysis and Equity Branch

Mr Robert Horne, First Assistant Secretary, International, Analysis and Evaluation Division

Ms Eileen Newmarch, Director, International, Analysis and Evaluation Division, Analysis and Equity Branch

Ms Lois Sparkes, Executive Director, Schools Division, Quality Schooling Branch

Dr Peter Whitney, Acting First Assistant Secretary, Future Pathways Strategy Group

Tuesday, 24 October 2000 - Melbourne

Individuals

Mr Andrew Humphreys

Ms Kay Margetts

Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia

Mrs Hazel Day, Executive Assistant to the Chairman

Dr Gordon Donaldson, Immediate Past Chairman

COOL Consulting

Mr Scot Gardner, Consultant

Mr Peter Little, Consultant

Victoria Police

Mr John Thexton, District Inspector

Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals

Mr Jeremy Ludowyke, Spokesperson

West Education Centre

Ms Janette Kennedy, Manager, Professional Development

Ms Glenda Ward, Honorary Treasurer

West Education Centre Inc

Ms Loretta Winstanley, Executive Director

Wednesday, 25 October 2000 - Melbourne

Individuals

Dr Roderick Bruce

Dr Katherine Rowe

Dr Ken Rowe

Australian Education Union

Mr Denis Fitzgerald, Federal President

Ms Barbara Jennings, Acting Federal Women's Officer

Deakin University

Dr Cherry Collins, Senior Lecturer, Faculty of Education

Dr Julie McLeod, Lecturer, Faculty of Education

Endeavour Forum

Mr Alan Barron, Geelong Convenor

Mrs Babette Francis, National and Overseas Coordinator

Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology University

Ms Berenice Nyland, Lecturer, Department of School and Early Childhood Education

Self-Help Ending Domestics (SHED)

Mr Chris Laming, Coordinator

Trinity Grammar School

Mr Colin Coutts, Head of Junior School

Dr Heather Evans, Coordinator of Teaching and Learning Strategies

Victorian Department of Education, Employment and Training

Mr Ross Kimber, Assistant General Manager, School Programs & Student Welfare

Ms Jane Stewart, Manager, Cross Curriculum Centre, Schools Programs and Student Welfare Division, Office of Schools

Thursday, 26 October 2000 - Melbourne

Tintern Schools, Southwood Boys Grammar School

Mr Michael Blood, Head of Campus

Mrs Lynette Henshall, Vice Principal, Head of Junior Schools

Mr Adam Kenny, Deputy Head, Junior School

Mrs Sylvia Walton, Principal, Tintern Schools

Jarrad Bland, Student

Brayden Campbell, Student

David Coles, Student

Kirk Kinne, Student

Robert Lampert, Student

Lachlan McGowan, Student

Ashley Moloney, Student

Dean Papanicolaou, Student

Seth Press, Student

Trent Rawlins, Student

Thursday, 2 November 2000 - Canberra

Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc

Mr Rodney Molesworth, President

Thursday, 9 November 2000 - Canberra

Canberra Grammar School

Mr Simon Murray, Headmaster

Mr Mike Owner, School Counsellor (Senior School)

Mrs Anna Steele, Head of Department, English

Ms Jeanette Terry, Gifted and Talented Coordinator (Primary School)

Mr Jim Windeyer, Deputy Headmaster

Monday, 13 November 2000 - Sydney

Individuals

Dr Lori Beckett

Mr Ed Lewis

Dr Wayne Martino

Dr Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli

Dr Peter West

New South Wales Teachers Federation

Ms Maree O'Halloran, Senior Vice-President

Ms Michelle Rosicky, Women's Coordinator

NSW Department of Education and Training

Mr Tom Alegounarias, Acting Director, Strategic Relations

Ms Eleanor Davidson, Executive Director, Student Services and Equity Programs

Mr Martin Graham, Relieving Manager, Liaison Coordination, Strategic Relations Directorate

Mr George Green, Assistant Director-General, Student Services and Equity Programs

Ms Belinda Lee, Professional Assistant to Deputy Director-General, Policy and Planning

Dr Jim McMorrow, Deputy Director-General, Policy and Planning

Ms Joy Nielsen, Manager, Gender Equity Unit

University of Technology, Sydney, Faculty of Education

Professor Lyn Yates, Professor of Teacher Education

Tuesday, 14 November 2000 - Sydney

Individuals

Mr Rollo Browne

Ms Jennifer Buckingham

Reverend William Crews

Ms Marie-Anne Maakrun

Mr Andrew Mullins

Australian Hearing National Acoustic Laboratories

Dr Eric LePage, Senior Research Scientist, Hearing Loss Prevention Research

Dr Narelle Murray, Research Scientist, Hearing Loss Prevention Research

Independent Education Union of Australia

Ms Glynis Jones, Education Consultant

Ms Pamela Smith, Convenor of Women's Committee

New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council

Mr Chris Bonnor, Deputy President

Thursday, 30 November 2000 - Canberra

Australian Association of Social Workers

Associate Professor Peter Camilleri, Convenor, National Social Policy Committee

Ms Sarah Hordern, National Policy Officer

Ms Elizabeth Moleta, Accredited Member

Mr Paul Wyles, Accredited Member

Thursday, 7 December 2000 - Canberra

University of Melbourne

Professor Peter Hill, Deputy Dean and Director, Centre for Applied Educational Research, Faculty of Education

Tuesday, 20 February 2001 – Eagleby, Qld

Eagleby State School

Mr Chris Boff, Teacher

Mr Kevin Leathwaite, Acting Principal

Ms Trish Wilson, Acting Deputy Principal

Tuesday, 20 February 2001 – Woodridge, Qld

Education Queensland

Mr Ron Daniels, District Director

Loganlea State High School

Mrs Elena Itsikson, Acting Principal

Mabel Park State High School

Mr Dion Locke, Year 12 Coordinator

Marsden State High School

Mrs Gail Armstrong, Principal

Woodridge State High School

Mrs Maria-Ann Frew, Teacher

Ms Helen Jamieson, Principal

Mr Mark Rickard, Deputy Principal

Wednesday, 21 February 2001 - Brisbane

Edmund Rice Educational Services

Mr John Percy

Mrs Kerrie Tuite

Education Queensland

Ms Maree Hedemann, Senior Education Officer

Ms Barbara Henderson, Acting Manager, Social Inclusions Programs

International Boys' Schools Coalition

Mr Bruce Cook, Chairman, Australian Hub

MW Training Consultants

Mr Dallas Morgan-Williams, Manager

Ms Irena Morgan-Williams, Training Manager

Queensland Catholic Education Commission

Mr Garry Everett, Deputy Director

Ms Judith Gardiner, Curriculum Executive Officer

Ms Leesa Jeffcoat, Assistant Director (Curriculum), Rockhampton Catholic Education Office

Mr John Nunan, Secondary Teacher, Chair of Boys' Issues Committee, Marist College

Queensland Teachers Union

Ms Julie-Ann McCulloch, President

Ms Lesley McFarlane, Assistant Secretary Research

Queensland University of Technology

Dr Annah Healy, Lecturer, Language and Literacy (Primary Education)

Associate Professor Erica McWilliam, Assistant to the Dean (Postgraduate Programs)

University of Queensland

Professor Robert Lingard, School of Education

Dr Martin Mills, Research Fellow, School of Education

Thursday, 22 February 2001 – Roseville, NSW

Roseville Public School

Mrs Ann Letnic, School Counsellor

Mrs Gay Parsons, Reading Support Teacher

Mrs Carol Richmond, Principal

Mrs Catherine Williams, Deputy Principal

Thursday, 22 February 2001 – Kogarah, NSW

Individuals

Ms Marie-Anne Maakrun

James Cook Boys' Technology High School

Mr Stephen Billington, Principal

Ms Jill Collier, Deputy Principal

Mrs Krishna Diwakar, Assistant Teacher

Mr Howard Forrester, Teacher

Ms Nicole Kypriotis, Temporary Teacher

Mr Gary Latty, Head Teacher, Social Sciences

Ms Lindsay Mason, English Teacher

Mr Stephen Quinn, Deputy Principal

Ms Deborah Rees, Classroom Teacher

Ms Maree Rix, Head Teacher, English

Kevin Bayley, Student

Chris Beckett, Student

Jovan Brdaroski, Student

Andrew Bye, Student

Sam Cai, Student

Jason Carcasona, Student

Sasho Dinov, Student

Mouhammed Ghazi, Student

Cameron Hamilton, Student

Erfan Haque, Student

Craig Hong, Student

Nick Kacevski, Student

George Kacevski, Student

John Kaye, Student

Salesh Kumar, Student

Wess McLachlan, Student

Akash Nankany, Student

Peter Pang, Student

Amit Parekh, Student

Sikeli Ratu, Student

Gustavo Shad, Student

Stan Sklias, Student

Robert Spankie, Student

Jerry Tawalo, Student

Aaron Webb, Student

Resources and Education on Alcohol and Drugs for Youth (Ready Project)

Mr Matthew Brabant, Coordinator

Thursday, 8 March 2001 - Canberra

Individuals

Associate Professor David Plummer

Tuesday, 20 March 2001 - Elizabeth North, SA

Broadmeadows Primary School

Ms Dinah Huddy, Junior Primary Teacher

Ms Helen Lindstrom, School Counsellor

Ms Sue McKeough, Principal

Ms Sonia Paris, Junior Primary Teacher

Tuesday, 20 March 2001 - Evanston South, SA

Trinity College, Gawler

Mrs Marion Gaertner-Jones, Director, Open Learning Centre

Mr Michael Hewitson, Principal and Chief Executive Officer

Ms Linda Munns, Head of Senior School Years 8, 9 and 10, Blakeview Campus

Mr Wayne Philp, Head of Senior School Years 9 and 10, North Campus

Mrs Deborah Russell, Head of Senior School Years 11 and 12, North Campus

Dr Michael Slocombe, Principal, South Campus

Mr Robert Smedley, Principal, Blakeview Campus

Christian Bateman, Student

Steven Battersby, Student

Thomas Bennett, Student

Julian Blight, Student

Tom Brookman, Student

John Brooks, Student

Carolyn Buckseall, Student

Alexander Chatburn, Student

Jarrad Cody, Student

Benjamin Conoley, Student

Shaun Cooper, Student

Shaun Falls, Student

Adam Goossens, Student

Craig Hain, Student

Michael Hartwich, Student

Brody Lloyd, Student

Ryan Looker, Student

Scott McGregor, Student

Joel Meaney, Student

John Miller, Student

Tim Neville, Student

Jarrod Parker, Student

Liam Pawley, Student

Nicholas Pettigrew, Student

David Richardson, Student

Ryan Rogers, Student

Christopher Sherwood, Student

Greg Sugars, Student

Matthew Thame, Student

David Vannini, Student

Ashley Ward, Student

Jonathan Wignall, Student

Jonothon Wilson, Student

Andrew Winterfield, Student

Christopher Young, Student

Michael Zorich, Student

Wednesday, 21 March 2001 - Adelaide

Individuals

Mr Michael Adams

Mr Philip Altmann

Mr Roger Button

Association of Independent Schools of South Australia

Mr Richard Burchnall, President

Mrs Bronte Nicholls, Secondary Heads Committee, IT Committee

Dr Brian Webber, Executive Director

Board for Lutheran Schools

Mr Geoffrey Butler, Coordinator Boys Education Task Force

Mr Adrienne Jericho, National Director for Lutheran Schools

Department of Education, Training and Employment (SA)

Ms Shirley Dally, Manager, Gender Equity Curriculum Policy Directorate

Mr Tony Kirkman, Manager, Middle School, Hallett Cove School

Ms Jude Leak, Principal Policy Officer, Curriculum and Equity

Ms Jennifer Stehn, Executive Director, Curriculum

Festival of Light (SA)

Mrs Roslyn Phillips, Research Officer

Flinders University

Mr Malcolm Slade, Research Assistant

Professor Faith Trent, Faculty of Education, Humanities, Law and Theology

South Australian Association of State School Organisations Inc

Mr Graeden Horsell, President

Mr Mark Woollacott, Executive Director

South Australian Primary Principals Association

Mr Christopher Bayly, Principal / Member

Ms Kate Martin, Principal / Member

Mr Jeff Wait, Principal / Member

Thursday, 22 March 2001 - City Beach, WA

City Beach High School

Mr John Foreman, Teacher

Mr John Hughes, Deputy Principal

Mr Ian Lillico, Principal

Theodore Backhouse, Student

Stephen Bain, Student

Richard Eaton, Student

Robert Green, Student

Hadlee Martin, Student

Chad Neylon, Student

Thursday, 22 March 2001 - Perth

Catholic Secondary Principals' Association of WA

Ms Mary Ciccarelli, Executive Officer

Brother Alan Wedd, Member of Education Standing Committee

Mr Bob White, Member of Education Standing Committee

Coolbellup Socio Psychological Education Resource Centre

Mrs Pauline Marlborough, Teacher

Ms Natasha Rodgers, Psychologist-in-charge

Education Department of Western Australia

Ms Jocelyn Cook, Senior Educational Measurement Officer

Mr John Garnaut, Director, Learning and Teaching

Mr Warren Grellier, Senior Curriculum Officer, English

Fremantle Education Centre

Ms Elizabeth Dumont, Chief Executive Officer

Ms Barbara Watterston, Director of Professional Development and International Projects

Wesley College

Mr John Bednall, Headmaster

Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc

Mr Phillip Harrold, Policy and Research Officer

Thursday, 29 March 2001 - Canberra

Boys in Focus

Mr Steve Allchin, Special Projects Organiser

Mr Gregory Allott, Team Leader

Mr John Fleming, System Director

Ms Janelle Horton

Thursday, 5 April 2001 - Canberra

University of Newcastle, Family Action Centre

Mr Richard Fletcher, Manager, Men and Boys Program

Thursday, 24 May 2001 - Canberra

National Centre for Vocational Education Research Ltd

Ms Katrina Ball, Manager, Research and Evaluation Branch

Ms Jessie Borthwick, Deputy Director

Thursday, 7 June 2001 - Canberra

Australian Association of Social Workers

Ms Sarah Hordern, National Policy Officer

Ms Elizabeth Moleta, Member

Ms Rachel Wilson, Member

Mr Paul Wyles, Member

Wednesday, 25 July 2001 - Hobart

Bridgewater Primary School

Mrs Leanne Cleary, Parent Volunteer

Mrs Susie Eade, Teacher, Inclusion Students

Mrs Sandra Limbrick, Parent Volunteer

Mrs Glenda Murray, Teacher Assistant, Supporting Category A Child

Mrs Claire Musgrove, Teacher, Flying Start

Mrs Della Pyke, Teacher, Grade 5/6

Ms Lisa Rumley, Teacher, Advanced Skills and Acting Principal

Department of Education, Tasmania

Ms Jennifer Gale, Director, Office for Educational Review

Ms Alison Jacob, Deputy Secretary

Ms Kate Shipway, Director, Equity Standards Branch

Herdsmans Cove Primary School

Ms Alison Bailey, Teacher, Grade 2/3

Mrs Carolyn Brown, Teacher, Grade 3/4 Literacy Support

Ms Donna Hudson, Parent Volunteer

Mrs Lynne James, Principal

Mrs Carolyn Knapek, Teacher, Grade 3/4

New Town High School

Mr Ian Cordwell, Assistant Principal

Mr Ian Morgan, Principal

Thursday, 11 April 2002 - Griffith, NSW

Griffith Public School

Mrs Patricia Cox, Deputy Principal

Mrs Cheryl Crossingham, Classroom Teacher

Mr Brian Debus, Principal

Miss Tracey Hopkins, Classroom Teacher

Mr Bobby Willetts, Executive Teacher

NSW Department of Education and Training

Mr Mark Everett, District Superintendent, Griffith

Mr John Sutton, Assistant Director-General

Yenda Public School

Miss Susan Bourne, Executive Teacher

Mr Andrew Hooper, Principal

Wade High School

Ms Deborah Allen, Teacher/Librarian

Mrs Janice Barker, Careers Adviser and Member, Boys Education Committee

Mr Robert Barker, Deputy Principal

Mr Craig Barrett, Teacher

Mr George Bishop, Principal

Mr Allan Casey, Teacher

Mrs Susan Delves, Parent Representative

Mr Drew Hicks, Support Teacher

Ms Jennifer Hill, Deputy Principal

Mr Peter Jones, Parent Representative

Mr Mark McConville, Teacher

Mrs Anna Maria Rosetto, Member, Boys Education Committee

Mrs Christine Tomlinson, Member, Boys Education Committee

Samuel Allinson, Student

Jessica Bray, Student

Rebecca Bruce, Student

Jake Bryce, Student

James Duffell, Student

Amanda Favell, Student

Amy Fox, Student

Katie Heath, Student

Matthew Kimball, Student

Jordan Krszoka, Student

Alison Lee, Student

Hifo Loseli, Student

Karen Lowe, Student

Melissa Maher, Student

Kylie Martimbianco, Student

Sebastian Mazza, Student

Colin McKay, Student

Dion Minato, Student

Michael Moglrotti, Student

Hayley Norris, Student

Chris Palmer, Student

Anthony Papandrea, Student

Matt Roberts, Student

Sherree Schoonbeek, Student

Luke Signor, Student

Jagjit Singh, Student

Samantha Staltare, Student

Daniel Swindale, Student

Garth Tarr, Student

James Winter, Student

Wednesday, 8 May 2002 - Tallebudgera, Qld

Education Queensland

Mr Ron Daniels, District Director

Elanora Primary School, Education Queensland

Mr Michael Kelly, School Principal

Mr Barry Love, Deputy Principal

Mr Graeme Townsend, Senior Teacher, Year 6

Tallebudgera Beach School

Ms Veronica Buhner, Teacher-in-Charge 3R Programming

Mr John Graham, RTO Coordinator

Mr Allan Rafton, Principal

Wednesday, 8 May 2002 - Morningside, Qld

Cannon Hill Anglican College

Mrs Simone McDonough, Literacy Tutor

Ms Pauline Receveur, Literacy Coordinator / Tutor

Mr Gavin Swallow, Senior Teacher, Literacy

Thursday, 9 May 2002 - Darwin

Kormilda College

Mr Stephen Kinsella, Principal

Ms Julianne Willis, Deputy Principal

Northern Territory Indigenous Male Health Reference Group

Mr John Christophersen, Interim Chairman

NT Department of Employment, Education and Training

Mr Kenneth Davies, Acting General Manager School Services

Ms Carmelita Dunn, General Manager Indigenous Education Division

Friday, 10 May 2002 - Palmerston, NT

Palmerston High School

Mr Ross Macandrew, Assistant Principal

Mr David Maclean, Deputy Principal

Ms Frankie Maclean, Assistant Principal

Ms Judy Monkhouse, Senior Teacher

Mr Craig Overell, Senior Teacher

Ms Anne Rogan, Principal

Ms Susan Skyvington, Counsellor

Ms Margaret Zehntner, Teacher / Librarian

Bryant Cocker, Student

Aaron Fleming, Student

Danny Goetze, Student

Floyd Haustorfer, Student

Christopher Hurst, Student

Benjamin Koller, Student

Samuel Locke, Student

Jon Malone, Student

Stephen Ortner, Student

Aaron Pollock, Student

Jay Rossiter, Student

Blake Sanders, Student

Aaron Smith, Student

Russell Sully, Student

Saksit Thongnam, Student

Joshua Wadrop, Student

Scott Winter, Student

Thursday, 27 June 2002 - Canberra, ACT

Department of Education and Community Services, ACT

Mr James Coleborne, Executive Director, School Education Division

Mr Jeffrey Mason, Director, Curriculum and Assessment, School Education Division

E Literacy and Numeracy Benchmark Data

Table 1 Percentage of Year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 1999.

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 8yrs, 9mths	92.6	94.8	2.2
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 2.1	± 1.5	
Victoria			
1 8yrs, 11mths	86.2	92.0	5.8
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 2.9	± 2.0	
Queensland (c) (d)			
1. 8yrs 3mths	83.9	89.4	5.6
2. 2yrs, 8mths	± 4.9	± 3.5	
South Australia			
1. 8yrs, 6mths	85.5	87.8	2.3
2. 3yrs, 3mths	±3.2	± 2.4	
Western Australia			
1. 8yrs, 2mths	86.8	90.8	4.0
2. 2yrs, 7mths	± 2.5	± 1.8	
Tasmania			
1. 9yrs, 0mths	86.0	91.9	5.9
2. 3yrs, 7mths	±3.1	±2.2	
Northern Territory			
1. 8yrs, 8mths	75.9	79.7	3.8
2. 3yrs, 3mths	± 3.1	± 2.7	
Australian Capital Territory			
1 8yrs, 9mths	94.2	96.3	2.1
2. 3yrs, 6mths	± 1.5	± 1.3	
Australia(e)	87.9 + 3.0	92.0 +2.2	4.1

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(c) Data from Queensland are based on a sample of approximately 10% of Year 3 students from government and non- government schools.

(d) Data from Queensland for the percentage of male and female students does not include students who were formally exempted from the testing.

(e) Student sub-group data for Australia do not include Queensland students who were formally exempted from the testing.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

Table 2 Percentage of Year 5 students achieving the reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 1999

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 10yrs, 9mths	8.6	92.0	3.4
2. 5yrs, 7mths	±1.6	±1.3	
Victoria	85.6	90.5	4.9
1 10yrs, 11mths	±2.1	±1.7	
2. 5yrs, 7mths			
Queensland (c)	78.2	84.3	6.1
1. 10yrs 4mths	±3.5	±2.6	
2. 4yrs, 8mths			
South Australia	80.2	85.8	5.6
1. 10yrs, 6mths	±1.8	±1.4	
2. 5yrs, 3mths			
Western Australia	75.5	83.6	8.1
1. 10yrs, 2mths	±3.1	±2.3	
2. 4yrs, 7mths			
Tasmania	76.2	81.3	5.1
1. 11yrs, 0mths	±2.2	±1.9	
2. 5yrs, 8mths			
Northern Territory	77.3	80.0	2.7
1. 10yrs, 8mths	±2.0	±1.5	
2. 5yrs, 3mths			
Australian Capital	88.6	92.1	3.5
Territory	±2.2	±1.9	
1 10yrs, 8mths			
2. 5yrs, 6mths			
Australia	83.4	88.4	5.0

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(c) Data from Queensland for the percentage of male and female students does not include students who were formally exempted from the testing.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

Table 3 Percentage of Year 3 students achieving the reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 2000

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 8yrs, 9mths	91.5	94.8	3.3
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 2.3	± 1.5	
Victoria			
1 8yrs, 11mths	91.1	95.1	4.0
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 2.3	± 1.5	
Queensland (c)			
1. 8yrs 4mths	90.8	94.4	3.6
2. 2yrs, 8mths	± 4.4	± 3.2	
South Australia			
1. 8yrs, 6mths	84.4	89.3	4.9
2. 3yrs, 3mths	± 3.0	± 1.7	
Western Australia			
1. 8yrs, 2mths	95.2	96.5	1.3
2. 2yrs, 7mths	± 1.3	± 0.9	
Tasmania			
1. 9yrs, 1mths	88.7	93.6	4.9
2. 3yrs, 8mths	±2.9	±2.0	
Northern Territory			
1. 8yrs, 8mths	62.2	68.6	6.4
2. 3yrs, 3mths	± 3.8	± 3.7	
Australian Capital Territory			2.2
1 8yrs, 8mths	94.0	96.2	
2. 3yrs, 6mths	± 2.0	± 1.5	
Australia	90.9 +2.7	94.3 +1.8	3.4

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(c) Data from Queensland are based on a representative sample of approximately 10% of students from government and non-government schools.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

Table 4 Percentage of Year 5 students achieving the reading benchmark, by State and Territory, 2000

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 10yrs, 9mths	87.1	91.2	4.1
2. 5yrs, 7mths	± 1.9	± 1.5	
Victoria			
1 10yrs, 11mths	90.6	93.7	3.1
2. 5yrs, 7mths	± 2.2	± 1.7	
Queensland			
1. 10yrs 4mths	75.1	81.7	6.6
2. 4yrs, 8mths	± 3.9	± 3.5	
South Australia			
1. 10yrs, 6mths	82.2	86.7	4.5
2. 5yrs, 3mths	± 1.5	± 1.4	
Western Australia			
1. 10yrs, 2mths	92.4	94.9	2.5
2. 4yrs, 7mths	± 1.2	± 0.8	
Tasmania			
1. 11yrs, 0mths	78.7	84.3	5.6
2. 5yrs, 8mths	±3.3	±2.8	
Northern Territory			
1. 10yrs, 8mths	69.3	73.1	3.8
2. 5yrs, 3mths	± 3.4	± 3.3	
Australian Capital Territory			5.7
1 10yrs, 8mths	93.0	98.7	
2. 5yrs, 6mths	± 2.3	± 2.5	
Australia	85.2 +2.3	89.6 +1.9	4.4

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95% confidence intervals, for example, 80% ± 2.7%.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

Table 5 Percentage of Year 3 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by State and Territory, 2000

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 8yrs, 9mths	93.1	93.3	0.2
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 1.7	± 1.7	
Victoria			
1 8yrs, 11mths	96.7	96.1	0.6
2. 3yrs, 7mths	± 1.3	± 1.5	
Queensland (c)			
1. 8yrs 4mths	91.5	91.8	0.3
2. 2yrs, 8mths	± 3.6	± 3.4	
South Australia			0.9
1. 8yrs, 6mths	84.9	85.8	
2. 3yrs, 3mths	± 2.3	± 2.4	
Western Australia			0.6
1. 8yrs, 2mths	90.2	90.8	
2. 2yrs, 7mths	± 2.2	± 2.3	
Tasmania			
1. 9yrs, 1mths	92.3	93.2	0.9
2. 3yrs, 8mths	±2.0	±1.9	
Northern Territory			
1. 8yrs, 8mths	80.6	82.4	1.8
2. 3yrs, 3mths	± 2.5	± 2.6	
Australian Capital Territory			
1 8yrs, 8mths	95.2	96.3	1.1
2. 3yrs, 6mths	± 2.1	± 2.3	
Australia	92.7 +2.1	92.8 +2.1	0.1

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95 per cent confidence intervals, for example, 80 per cent ± 2.7 per cent.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(c) Data from Queensland are based on a representative sample of approximately 10%students from government and non-government schools.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

Table 6 Percentage of Year 5 students achieving the numeracy benchmark, by State and Territory, 2000

State/Territory 1 Average Age (a) 2 Years of Schooling (b)	Percentage of male students achieving the bench mark	Percentage of female students achieving the bench mark	Difference between percentage of male and female students achieving the bench mark
New South Wales			
1 10yrs, 9mths	90.8	91.5	0.7
2. 5yrs, 7mths	± 1.4	± 1.4	
Victoria			
1 10yrs, 11mths	94.1	94.4	0.3
2. 5yrs, 7mths	± 1.4	± 1.4	
Queensland			
1. 10yrs 4mths	86.0	87.0	1.0
2. 4yrs, 8mths	± 2.4	± 2.4	
South Australia			
1. 10yrs, 6mths	83.1	82.7	0.4
2. 5yrs, 3mths	± 2.2	± 2.6	
Western Australia			
1. 10yrs, 2mths	87.5	87.5	0
2. 4yrs, 7mths	± 1.1	± 2.2	
Tasmania			
1. 11yrs, 0mths	87.9	87.2	0.7
2. 5yrs, 8mths	±2.1	±2.1	
Northern Territory			
1. 10yrs, 8mths	74.5	73.7	1.2
2. 5yrs, 3mths	± 3.0	± 3.4	
Australian Capital Territory			
1 10yrs, 8mths	91.0	91.6	0.5
2. 5yrs, 6mths	± 2.5	± 2.5	
Australia	89.4 +1.7	89.8 +1.8	0.4

Note: The achievement percentages reported in this table include 95 per cent confidence intervals, for example, 80 per cent ± 2.7 per cent.

(a) The typical average age of students at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

(b) The typical average time students had spent in schooling at the time of testing, expressed in years and months.

Source *Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Submission No. 117.2.*

F National Goals for Schooling

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century[1]

The State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers of Education met as the 10th Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in Adelaide, 22-23 April 1999.

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

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1 Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), *The Adelaide Declaration on the Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, April 1999.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Commonwealth, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally.

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialling that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

Goals

Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave school, they should:

1.1 have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities, and to collaborate with others.

1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members.

1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives, and to accept responsibility for their own actions.

1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.

1.5 have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning.

1.6 be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society.

1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development.

1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

In terms of curriculum, students should have:

2.1 attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:

- the arts;
- English;
- health and physical education;
- languages other than English;
- mathematics;
- science;
- studies of society and environment; and
- technology

and the interrelationships between them.

2.2 attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.

2.3 participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies.

2.4 participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

Schooling should be socially just, so that:

3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.

3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.

3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students.

3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally.

3.6 all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.

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