

## Enquiry into the Education of Boys Submission from

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Thank you for the opportunity to participate in such a worthwhile exercise.

One cannot consider this topic without allowing one's mind to recall the parallel situation when the focus was upon Education for Girls. The key factor then was to unlock the natural abilities of girls and encourage them to achieve their potential. No need to restate what was done or why it was necessary, but the delight of watching the transformation is still vivid in the memory of those who helped and watched, and still value that success. We must not allow our efforts on behalf of boys to limit what girls have been achieving.

All the research we have is emphasising that in education our boys are not doing well and do require change and specific attention. Their morale is not strong and because of this their enthusiasm has been dented, participation in classroom responses is limited and academic results are disappointing. Whilst one can argue that boys social development and stages of maturity vary from those of girls there are other factors that can be addressed and which should be given serious consideration. Let us look at some of the difficulties, why they inhibit and what can be done about them.

One obvious and measurable problem is the small number of male teachers in primary schools. It would be damaging if our little boys thoughtfully assumed that 'education is a women's thing'. Just as all children develop best if they have a 'mother figure' and a 'father figure', so do they need a better balance in teaching staff. Much stronger policy in promoting and recruiting male primary teachers is required.

Another limitation in appointment and role modelling for men is that almost every one is academically inclined. But boys are not all academic; some are apathetic. Some are antagonistic, and so are some of their families as well. This means that all our teachers need to be conscious of this, with a particular responsibility to value all the abilities of all the boys in their care. Male teachers could help non-academic boys more if they would occasionally find common cause with them. Boys do have strong spatial skills and enthusiasm for using them, leading to opportunities for computerised learning and better relations in schools.

Generally speaking, school homework does not provide links between students and the community. Yet, it can. Whilst there is obvious value in students bringing home extra classroom exercises to do out of class, this is not the only path that boys, in particular, can go down. More creative homework can require students to sally forth into their local environment to gather information etc, thus bringing them into contact with the adults whom they admire. A little thought will select some tasks that really please boy students. This flows back into better results in class.

Finally, our epistemology does not work well for any reluctant school members. Not for aboriginal students, not for economically disadvantaged students, and currently not for boys. Teachers should move from Step-by-

step style and adopt circular Epistemology. Better motivation will result in better outcomes for them.

My best wishes to the Committee, I hope you get lots of responses and that you can have productive discussions with some of the excellent people who work so diligently in the field of education.

Yours sincerely

John McFaul