

# TINTERN

ANGLICAN GIRLS GRAMMAR SCHOOL

Principal: Mrs S J Walton

MA, Dip Ed (Sydney), B Ed (La Trobe), FAPC, FACE,  
FRGS, FACEA

6 October 2000

Mr James Rees  
Inquiry Secretary  
House of Representatives  
Standing Committee on Employment, Education  
and Workplace Relations  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Mr Rees

I refer to my submission to the Committee's inquiry into the education and boys, dated 20 September 2000. I have subsequently proofread my submission and have made a few alterations with regard to making the document clearer for the Committee and would ask if you would be able to substitute this revised copy for my earlier submission.

Yours sincerely



Sylvia J Walton  
Principal

Encl.



# **SUBMISSION TO THE PARLIAMENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF AUSTRALIA INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS**

**Chair: Dr Brendan Nelson MP**

It is with pleasure that I present this brief submission to the Inquiry.

As I am sure you are aware, there is a great deal of current as well as longitudinal research indicating that boys and girls during their infant and childhood stages, reaching into early and mid-adolescence, benefit from specific programs to enhance their gender, growth and development. These specific gender needs do not of course, imply segregation or separation. They do, however, give us indications as to how best to educate boys and girls.

The submission that follows is of a practical nature and relates to my most recent experiences in secondary and primary education. The following points are by way of background.

- Tintern Anglican Girls Grammar School is 124 years old. It began educating boys and girls, but after about twenty years, became entirely a girls' school.
- Throughout my Principalship (18 years) I have been asked by families about the education of their sons in the way in which their daughters were being educated at Tintern. These were not requests for co-education, so much as for a particular style of education.
- Tintern has developed expertise in learning. We have a wide range of young people from the extremely gifted and talented to those that need support within the classroom particularly through literacy. We have built a reputation and indeed, an outstanding school, on the basis of this quality of learning.
- Research that is now in the popular domain and published in numerous educational journals and papers, for example, The Times Education Supplement and most Australian journals, indicates the following:
  - The education profession is feminised in terms of teachers in classrooms. This has an affect on both boys and girls. Particularly over the last twenty years (since the 1960's changes in the Marriage Act) families have changed and as a consequence so has school experience. There is a constant need for us to attract good men and women, but particularly men, into the teaching force.
  - Boys and girls need role models in terms of men and women, but boys are particularly in need of strong, energetic male role models.
  - The brain research theory that has been prominent for the last 8 - 10 years indicates very clearly that there are specific needs in relation to gender and infant, primary and secondary learning.

- Flowing from this, has been the work in the popular domain of Howard Gardner and less well known, but equally important, Robert Sternberg, into multiple intelligences and learning styles. Much of this work has been done in terms of longitudinal studies.
- The last few years have seen a great deal of emphasis placed on pedagogy or how to teach and what teaching involves, as well as metacognition – how to learn to think, and thinking upon thinking. This informs learning.
- In addition, it is quite clear from observation and research that the way in which girls operate in a classroom setting greatly differs from the way in which boys operate. Particularly in primary education, but also in secondary education, the management of these different styles of operation can have a profound effect on the attitudes young people develop in relation to their learning and their learning outcomes.
- The structures of our school day, week and year are such as to necessitate a great challenge to the teaching process, particularly when compared with the lifestyles and leisure activities of young people outside the school environment.

Although the above points are a brief statement and summary, each one needs careful unfolding, exploration and understanding, in order to best inform the way in which we should treat, teach and assist young men and young women, boys and girls within the primary and secondary school setting. This challenge has been one that Tintern Schools has taken up and has been investigating and studying for some time.

The Southwood Boys Grammar School campus of Tintern Schools was established to specifically educate boys and young men in their own environment. We established the term, 'Parallel Education' so that the Boys Grammar School could run parallel to the Girls Grammar School. The sites are some 5 kilometres apart.

The term 'Parallel Education' however, does not necessarily do justice to the concept that is established and in operation. Perhaps the term 'Complementary Education' is more accurate. Throughout the years 1999 and 2000, we have worked to ensure that our students at Southwood Boys Grammar School and Tintern Anglican Girls Grammar School have as many links as possible. These links are through the Co-curricular program which is extensive, as well as the Curriculum program at various levels. Our aim is to ensure that our boys and our girls have the best possible education based on current knowledge, research, social, emotional and psychological needs, as well as have the opportunity to mix with each other in a whole range of differing events and areas. We attempt to do this in ways that are not contrived, but are well controlled and structured. Because of the location of our campuses, we operate buses between the two (morning and afternoon).

The basis of Southwood Boys Grammar School was as follows:

- To be a parallel and complementary school to Tintern Anglican Girls Grammar School.
- To provide an environment which is specifically geared to the needs of boys.
- To ensure that the excellence of education, as developed at Tintern, was available to boys.
- To ensure that the value system and ethos of Tintern informed and permeated the Southwood campus and was thus available to all our boys.
- To ensure that all students at Southwood Boys Grammar School had strong role models, both male and female, but particularly male.
- To ensure that the structure of lessons and classes at Southwood matched the needs of boys for space, movement, tactile experiences as well as times of concentration, quiet and steady learning and constant educational and personal development.
- That the successful Tintern curriculum was transferred to Southwood, but where necessary clearly adapted and modified to assist boys in their learning, their growth and development.
- That the boys at Southwood had every opportunity to grow and develop in ways that help them feel equal to and proud of their boyhood and their manhood.
- That the same parent programs that are available to the Tintern families are available at Southwood, in order to assist Southwood parents work with and understand the needs of their sons.
- The development of social, sporting, aesthetic and outdoor experiences, so important through the Co-curricular program at Tintern, were available to all our boys at Southwood.
- That we moved through Southwood with our boys and young men in ways that link them to the community so that they understood the need to consider and work for the goodwill of others, as well as to develop and learn in their own individual ways.

The practical outcome of our work has been extremely gratifying, in that Southwood is growing slightly faster than expected in terms of student numbers. Within our particular region of Melbourne, mid to outer east, there are no boys' schools of the style and type of Southwood. It was most interesting to note when we were doing our demographic and market research for the establishment of Southwood, that two powerful points emerged:

- The strength of Tintern as a fine school was seen as being a major success factor for the establishment of a boys' school.

- The need for a boys' school run on the lines and with the style of Tintern, was seen as being particularly advantageous to young men and boys.

The House Education Committee Inquiry will focus on:

- *Boys' literacy needs and their socialisation skills in early and middle years of schooling.*

In relation to Southwood, we have a very strong commitment to standard and structured literacy from Prep to the end of Year 8. We use a variety of programs, including an English program called 'Letterland' and an American program called 'The Spalding Literacy System'. Our teachers are trained in these two systems, with Letterland operating in the Infants area and Spalding operating from mid-primary onwards. We have found that some of our boys have had difficult experiences in their primary schools and therefore they have felt less than adequate because their literacy skills were not formally and properly addressed. This has been one of our major achievements at Southwood. Incidentally, it is also a major achievement at Tintern. Without strong literacy skills and the sense of wellbeing that follows from having this prime skill, the way in which young people socialise and their valuing of learning experiences, is often very negative. More so, with boys than with girls. I would be pleased to demonstrate to the Committee the details of these excellent programs.

In relation to the socialisation skills of boys, we give every opportunity for our boys to work through vertical systems, as well as class systems and to interact in a range of different ways with the girls' school campus, as well as in their own set programs. To date, these have been very successful largely because we have operated with small numbers, purposeful groups and very good interaction with staff, boys and girls.

- *The strategies which schools have adopted to improve boys' learning and behaviour in school.*

This point flows logically from the first point which establishes the basis for learning. Our basic strategy was to establish a separate boys' campus. This has undoubtedly improved boys' learning. We keep detailed statistics on the boys, which can demonstrate this point. We can show that we have had a number of boys who have entered Southwood over the last two years who have had an experience of failure in terms of learning, which has often led to experiences of failure in terms of behaviour and socialisation. Once their skills are addressed they begin to move in a positive way with skill development and thus, in a positive way in learning and behaviour.

Behaviour, however, is a constant area of need and through the aid of our Vice Principal who is both an educator and a psychologist, we manage testing programs, counselling, parent programs and programs for the boys in terms of knowing how to organise their thoughts, their attitudes and thus, their behaviour. Once again, we can demonstrate this through the stories of some of our boys.

- *How the successful strategies developed by schools may be made more effective and more broadly implemented.*

It is interesting to note the number of schools that are receiving publicity when they establish separate classes for boys in basic areas of learning. Some fifteen or twenty years ago, the same system applied to girls was applauded. In that system, separate maths and science classes assisted girls. In this system, separate literacy and humanities classes advantage boys.

There would be a number of strategies that could be employed and could be developed by all schools to assist boys, such as literacy strategies, particular strategies in relation to classroom organisation and the like. However, our basic strategy of parallel and complementary campuses, where the needs of boys and of course the needs of girls, are addressed separately but throughout the school term with many opportunities to operate together, seems to be working extremely well for our students.

I would be very happy to discuss the details of all we do with either the Inquiry or any schools or school communities that are interested. I sense, through the experience that we are having, that we have within the Tintern Schools the germ of an excellent opportunity for young men and young women, particularly at this stage for young men.

I have not included all the detail that would be necessary for the Committee to fully understand what we have established, the reasons for its establishment and the way in which it is operating. I have tried to paint a brief sketch of our Schools and to indicate that we feel we have a major successful strategy for the education of boys, as well as the skill to concentrate on their basic literacy needs, their socialisation, their behaviour and of course, their growth and development as fine young men.

Sylvia J Walton  
**Principal**  
**TINTERN SCHOOLS**  
**P O Box 26**  
**Ringwood East Vic 3135**  
**Phone: 9845 7777 Fax: 9845 7710**  
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