

20 October 2000

Dear Secretary,

Congratulations on such a worthy and laudable task.

It worries me a little that a premise seems to be that because boys are falling behind the girls in results and performances and interest that it is only then, or for that reason we become concerned.

The girls have benefited rightfully from a concerted programme in the eighties to improve their access and opportunities via better educational devices.

If any sector in the community is lagging behind in the community as far as education or any field of advancement is concerned, then they should be assisted not because of their relative rate of progress compared to any other group but because they need support, pure and simple.

We know that many other groups need support i.e. ATSI groups, low income families, emotionally affected groups at risk such as single income, abused, street kids etc etc. (by the way, this would actually account for many of what you are flagging as allegedly boys concerns.)

An inference from the community might be that if the boys were out-performing the girls even if both groups were not really travelling well, then we wouldn't be as concerned.

The whole community is only as buoyant as its weakest group and we have groups that are definitely struggling, including boys so it seems.

Some writings by people such as Tim Costello (in The Age recently etc) might be the best clue as to the real problems (I would suggest) as we explore the spiritually deprived aspect of our society.

Could I suggest we could save a lot of hassles and a lot of money on salvation policies and programmes if we could devise a strategy to keep designated caregivers at home for as long as is practicable so that children will feel loved, accommodated and actually be provided quality time.

Whilst so many of us are hell bent on earning dollars and reaching goals and status at the leanest of cost to our employers, children are being lost and forced to the margins costing us heaps more on prevention of suicide, bullying, illiteracy, family breakdown, unemployment, insufficient social services, Stress management, street kids, drugs, etc. etc.

I would suggest that Kevin Andrews MHR, and other notables on family,

parenting and caring agencies would have a lot to offer on proactive measures to beat much of the ills that manifest themselves as BOYS education concerns.

This may all sound idealistic, but speaking as a teacher who has had twenty years of experience at five different all-boys schools, (and a father of two boys and two girls) I find the pattern similarly disturbing at all of them.

It has nothing to do with girls' achievement and is rather insulting and demeaning to all of us to suggest that it is.

Absolutely everyone suffers when boys outcomes are as diabolical as they can seem lately. There is no joy from the apparently satisfactory girls' outcomes if their future partners, fellow employees and acquaintances can't relate or be comfortable with life, themselves or others.

I'm not sure how I can help but if there is a role, I am interested.

Thanks for taking the time to read this soap box material !!

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