

Submission 28.1
EoB Inquiry

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

22nd May 2002.

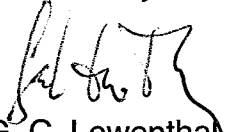
Dear Sir,

re: Inquiry into the Education of Boys

Following the invitation to me in your letter of 17th April last, herewith my submission intended to assist your Inquiry. Regrettably, I cannot locate my copy of any earlier submission but I trust that the enclosed material fits in with what I may have written before. But even if not, the enclosed submission is meant to provide background material for your Inquiry and I hope it will be useful as that. Not being active as a teacher of boys I could not really add directly to your valuable work.

Thanking you in advance for any attention Members of your Committee may be willing to give to my comments,

yours sincerely



Dr. G. C. Lowenthal AM

INQUIRY INTO THE EDUCATION OF BOYS

Submission to the Committee Secretary, House of Representatives, Canberra.,
By Dr. G. C. Lowenthal AM, PhD.

As seen today, the social, cultural and educational background affecting the well being and performance of school boys underwent fundamental changes since the days between the two world wars. Although not referred to in the terms of references, a few comments on these developments should be of interest to the inquiry and are submitted herewith.

Far-reaching social changes occurred since the 1960s primarily caused, world-wide, by rising affluence and advances in the social applications of science and technology, leading to, among others, markedly increased movements of populations across continents. Prior to the 1930s, the wages of the large majority of Australian families were only sufficient for food, shelter and a few minor amenities. As in other Western countries, 75 to 85 percent of the Australian population were manual workers and their families who rarely wanted more than basic education for their children most of whom would continue to make a living and leave it at that.

These attitudes changed significantly after WW2 when growing economic opportunities and immigration caused the numbers of boys and girls completing high school to increase from around 40% in the 1970s to about 90% of girls but only about 80% of boys at present. In prewar days High Schools had taught only a limited number of subjects (around 10 to 15), most of them academically oriented and compulsory, so providing a solid education notably in English Grammar, Literature and in Mathematics. The majority of capable boys qualified for university education which, at that time was open to everyone able to pass year 12 school examination. Scholarships were available for boys from poorer families.

At present, pupils can chose from about 55 subjects to qualify for the Higher School Certificate. This appears to help less capable pupils, but often only to reach positions they are unable to maintain. It is boys who have normal capabilities who are disadvantaged. They have to compete not only against a larger number of capable girls but also against overall less gifted pupils getting good passes in second and third rate subjects even though ultimately to no avail

Girls qualified for university studies in rising numbers exceeding those of boys since the 1980s (see above),. On average, senior girls are, genetically, physically weaker and psychologically less dominant, but have on average more practical intelligence than senior boys. Pre WW2, girls had less schooling than boys and only a few percent held highly paid positions. But they have always known how to reap the social and economic benefits of their housewifely competence and, since time immemorial were almost invariably the effective heads of the household whatever the appearance as schoolboys know well enough from their home life. The substantial physical and psychological differences between the sexes (now pretended by some school teachers not to exist), would have evolved since the

earliest days of living organisms to optimise survival chances. Statistics as regards Australians are available in Commonwealth or State Year Books. * (Foot Note)

From about the mid 1950s onwards most industrialised countries saw the emergence of a broadly based militant feminism which, in present conditions had little trouble to advance the standing of girls and women relative to boys and men economically and educationally, a development not lost on school boys. Increasing numbers of schoolgirls are no longer looking forward to be housewives and volunteer social workers which had been satisfactory roles before WW2.

Feminist agitation, claiming equal abilities for males and females succeeded with the help of sympathetic public media and of governments (seeking to attract votes), to place rising numbers of women into senior government positions, not forgetting Parliaments. That appointed candidates often do not have to face competition is justified as compensation for alleged age-old discrimination, a claim that sits oddly with the high regard paid to women in innumerable literary tributes written by men, notably Shakespeare's plays and poems, throughout history. Overall, increasing numbers of girls are obtaining positions in business, industry and the learned professions, but there is no evidence of growing contentment.

Schoolboys are realising that as husbands they may have to compete against their wives for jobs, income and the attachment of children rather than have their undivided support as formerly. With mutual, all-round dependence between the sexes having been greatly weakened by technology and new social attitudes, attraction is now made to rely increasingly on sexual activities in word and picture pushed by advertisers and the news media for their own profits. Sexual innuendos in numerous journals down to pornography are forced on every body not omitting school children, material which would have been neither tolerated nor wanted in earlier times. That an enduring marriage requires more than sex is overlooked and not by accident.

It is then not surprising that society is faced by a divorce rate of around 45 percent of the marriage rate (see Commonwealth Yearbooks), clear evidence of the failure of current social policies beginning with boys and girls in schools. Since the large majority of divorces follow 10 to 25 years of marriage their effect on schoolchildren would be considerable but hard to quantify. The consequences of frequent marriage break-downs and divorces are being hidden by comparative affluence, by government intervention and by a conspiracy of silence of the responsible authorities who are managing to look the other way, since no-one knows how to protect school children and notably schoolboys from the consequences

Boys see little advantage to struggle for good results against girls who at that age have always been, on average, more capable at studies. They prefer to concentrate on games where they need not fear competition, whatever photos in journals and in films of super-sports girls manage to suggest. Girls are crowding into universities and colleges, outnumbering boys in most faculties, though what advantages it will bring to women to equal or outnumber men in the professions remains to be seen. The learned professions no longer have the standard they used to have, a fact due in part, to the large participation of women. It is not their intellectual qualities which

are at issue as commonly claimed. Professional standing relies on personal authority as much and more than on specialist knowledge with personal authority being on average a masculine characteristic.

Women and also senior girls are respected, honoured and supported as guardians of the family, a position which feminists are undermining but school boys know to be important. Yet, judging by reports in the news media, there have long been rising numbers of ill treatment of women and children in their homes witnessed by school boys and, in return, lack of respect or regard for parents and teachers and for knowledge as traditionally interpreted.

Last not least there is the fact that Australia has moved into a multicultural and multiracial population, becoming more so year by year as the population grows. Although officially denied, many reports claim that differences between older and newer Australians are sharpening rather than softening, which would not be overlooked by schoolboys. If the Parliamentary Committee could find a way out of the jungle of egalitarianism as displayed by unduly familiar modes of address between strangers even when one party is greatly senior, by sloppy or needlessly provocative dressing, super luxurious motor cars and other costly consumer goods, the average school boy will be the first to thank Committee Members.

* That characteristics of organisms and notably of humans apply "on average" is a most important qualification which tends to be disregarded often by ignorance but also for ulterior motives. Each characteristic for each of the two genders follow a pattern similar to a normal (Gaussian) distribution with the two distributions overlapping to a greater or lesser extent. Also, some of these distributions are very much narrower or steeper than others. Well known differences are life expectancies at birth where *on average*, women exceed men by 6 to 8 years, or body height where *on average*, men exceed women by 6 to 8 percent. However, a small percentage of men have a longer life expectancy than *the average* woman and a small percentage of women are significantly taller than even tall men.

Intrinsic differences between men and women hold almost equally for senior boys and girls. Politically correct people wishing to make a case pick out a masculinised girl from the large majority of *normal* girls who is claimed to be the typical girl if the majority were not held back by conditions imposed in schools and elsewhere.