CHAPTER 6
THE SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT - FACTORS AFFECTING TEACHERS' MORALE, PERFORMANCE AND STATUS

WORK LOAD

In evidence to the Committee teachers indicated excessive work load was the single most significant contributor to stress and low morale. A range of factors was described as contributing to excessive work load. One of the major factors was the 'overcrowded curriculum'.

The 'Overcrowded Curriculum'

Curriculum requirements have increased as a result of community, educational, employer and political pressures. Often quite small, but well organised, groups can succeed in having their particular interests included in the curriculum. A Tasmanian witness,[1] for example, related how, as a result of demands by one section of the community, fly fishing has now been included in the post primary curriculum of Tasmanian schools.

At the same time as the number of curriculum subjects is increasing, teachers are chided for failing to devote sufficient attention to the basics. And it is never suggested that when a new subject is added to the curriculum one of the existing subjects should be dropped to make way for it. This is very unsatisfactory for teachers and students alike.

> ... every time there is a perceived problem in the community or gap in the knowledge of the community, the quick solution is to add that to the school curriculum, whether it is driver ed or pet care or whatever. One of the solutions that the people identifying the problem almost inevitably come up with is, "Let's add that to the school curriculum somewhere". No-one has been saying that there are other things that perhaps ought to drop off to enable new,

1 *Transcript of evidence*, Hobart, 9 October 1997, p 535 (Australian Education Union, Tas Branch)

> important social priorities to be incorporated, and that is an ongoing issue.[2]
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> With virtually every social problem that emerges, people turn to the schools to provide the solution. I used to think, as a Queenslander, that it only took three shark attacks in the summer for surf swimming to be required as a curriculum component.[3]
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> There has been considerable criticism of the overcrowded curriculum by the Minister for School Education, Dr Kemp. However, in the last year of the Howard Government there have been three major impositions on the school curriculum. The requirement for an increased emphasis on literacy and its accompanying testing, the requirement in senior secondary years for increased vocational education components in the curriculum and the development of job-placement functions, and the promotion of the Keating Government initiative in civics education. There has not been one statement suggesting the removal, or de-emphasis of any of the myriad areas which have become school responsibilities.[4]

The effect of the overcrowded curriculum on teachers is to increase their work load, to cause them to neglect or compromise teaching in some areas because of lack of time for preparation and presentation, and to increase anxiety levels as they are required to teach new subjects without adequate training, back up and resources.

Lack of Control over the Curriculum

Allied to teacher concerns about the overcrowded curriculum is their lack of control over curriculum selection, development and implementation. (Their lack of control over other aspects of the profession will be discussed elsewhere in the Report). This is a key issue. If teachers' input to curriculum issues is eroded, this will significantly undermine their professional standing. This issue was referred to by many of those who gave evidence to the Committee.

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2 *Transcript of evidence,* Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 201 (Education Queensland)

3 *Transcript of evidence,* Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 69 (Professor McGaw, Australian College of Education, ACT)

4 Submission no 248, vol 12, p 176 (Mr Edmunds, ACT)

> There is almost no provision for genuine consultation on curriculum development, so our curriculum environment right now is frankly heading towards crisis.[5]
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> ... South Australian teachers have been removed from many of the processes in curriculum decision making. These decisions are being made at the centre and teachers do not have the opportunity to have input to those. Statements and profiles and basic skills testing would be the two things I would suggest that teachers would find they have very little involvement in.[6]
>
> This process of developing state versions of the national curriculum can be used to introduce one example of the way the profession is regarded in the development of curriculum. In general, teachers and teacher experiences were not used to develop the state versions although the structure provides a framework which does allow implementation details to be developed at local level.[7]

Lack of curriculum control applies in TAFE as well as in schools.

> Many [TAFE] teachers bemoan the down-grading in their traditional role of curriculum design and assessment - a de-skilling of the profession through more mechanistic and bureaucratic centralised assessment tools.[8]

Of particular concern to teachers was the imposition of national testing programs. These have been opposed by many teachers as educationally unsound on the grounds that results have the potential to be misrepresented and manipulated. Media coverage of recent national testing results suggests these fears are well grounded.

Teachers recognise the value of testing for diagnostic purposes and are keen to use such results to enhance their teaching. But this requires an appreciation of the complexity of the teaching task and of the role of teachers, which are often not adequately understood. As a result the tests can prove counterproductive.

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5 *Transcript of evidence,* Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 727 (Australian Education Union, Vic)

6 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 1010 (Australian Education Union, SA Branch)

7 Submission no 1, vol 1, p 3 (Professor Northfield, Monash University, Vic)

8 Submission no 248, vol 18, p 176 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

Teachers stressed their willingness to be accountable but believed it important that the profession be involved in the accountability mechanisms and processes.

> ... the move to more and more testing... we believe has the potential, unless carefully considered, to compromise teacher professionalism. The assessment of student achievement is a very complex issue.
>
> .... We believe that the most recent statements introducing national testing are politically driven. At their centre is the implication that teachers are incapable of measuring what they do. It is our view that teachers are not afraid of measurement. They merely wish to ensure that one is measuring the right thing and the measurement process does not take precedence over the teaching process. Measurement is only a tool, preferably for diagnosis, not an end in itself. It is only useful insofar as it informs teaching practice.[9]
>
> Around the country, state and territory curriculum and assessment bodies are restricting the participation of teachers, and there is a growing emphasis on the use of standardised, pen and paper style national or state testing of students, quite unrelated to teachers' professional judgement, and often contrary to the wisdom of their experience.[10]

A further concern of teachers which relates to curriculum but is not restricted to it is the pace and scope of change in schools.

The Pace and Scope of Change in Schools

Change is a fact of life. It affects people in all professions and teachers cannot expect to escape it. Their concerns, as presented in evidence to the Committee, relate not to change per se but to the number of changes faced by schools and the inadequate time allowed for teachers to implement and evaluate them. Many teachers have faced more than twenty years of change - at an accelerating rate - and are cynical both about its rationale and about its effects.

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9 Submission no 179, vol 7, pp 187-188 (Hollywood Senior High School Council, WA)

10 Submission no 281, vol 16, p 6 (Independent Education Union of Australia, Vic)

Some commentators have referred to the impact on teachers of changes driven by education department staff unfamiliar with present classroom demands, and the self defeating nature of these impositions.

> As the gap widens between administration and teaching, between development and implementation, so too does the difference in administrators' and teachers' time perspectives. Perceptions regarding the pace of change diverge more and more. Administrators compensate by strengthening their control... With [stronger control] come[s] reinforced resistance to change and implementation among the teaching force: to the intensification of teachers' work. As they get caught up in the spiral of intensification, bureaucratically driven initiatives to exert tighter control over the development and change process become self-defeating.[11]

Many teachers believed curriculum changes were ill considered and that they were often introduced without adequate consultation with the teachers required to implement them. Then, after teachers and students had spent time and effort adapting to them, they were withdrawn and replaced by something equally ill considered. Many teachers thought the changes were politically rather than educationally motivated. They had a significant impact upon teachers' work load.

> Taken in isolation, particular changes to the school curriculum may be readily explained and be popular with the community but, when all these changes are aggregated, we have a considerable level of discontinuity. The chopping and changing of the curriculum and its direction may provide governments and ministers with some favourable short-term press coverage and community support, but this can be at the expense of quality teaching and learning - a process that requires continuity, patience and perseverance.[12]
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> ... we have been working on collecting documents that have emanated from our department since December 1992 to the present, over a five-year period.
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> More than 100 documents detailing policy changes, introducing support materials, introducing guidelines on various aspects of curriculum, student management and all facets of organisation of

11 Andy Hargreaves. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times. Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. Cassell, 1994, p 114

12 *Transcript of evidence,* Sydney, 29 August, 1997, p 39 (Catholic Education Office, NSW)

> the school have come from our department in the five-year period. So the rate and pace of change has accelerated phenomenally.[13]

The Time Devoted to Non Core Teaching Tasks

It is not simply the **range** of curriculum topics which has added to teacher work load. Equally important is the **number** of non-core teaching tasks which teachers are now routinely expected to undertake. Many of these stem from schools' increasing responsibility for functions formerly performed by families and community and church organisations. Schools have become the first port of call for many families in crisis and in some schools teachers' welfare role threatens to engulf their primary function, that is, to teach. Teachers did not seek this role. Many commented that they were not trained and not prepared for it and received little support. (This was but one context in which lack of training was cited by teachers as contributing to their workload. Others are discussed elsewhere in the Report). But when faced by distressed, traumatised students they felt they had no option but to respond.

> The changing nature of families and society has increased the workload of teachers in trying to cope with the needs of young people, to deal with disruptive behaviours, to support students in times of family breakdowns, and to accommodate the integration of students with physical and intellectual disabilities within classrooms.[14]

> As well as preparing students academically, teachers in NSN schools are expected to act in the roles of social worker, counsellor, surrogate parent, psychologist, law enforcer, disabilities educator and, as recently proposed, employment agents within their local communities. These additional expectations placed upon teachers... move teachers far beyond their traditional educational roles without adequate training or new ways of coping with and organising this work.[15]

Non-core teaching tasks are not restricted to teachers' welfare role. New patterns of school organisation, and especially the move to devolution

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13 *Transcript of evidence,* Hobart, 9 October 1997, p 537 (Australian Education Union, Tas)

14 Submission no 212, vol 10, p 37 (Australian Science Teachers' Association, ACT)

15 Submission no 105, vol 4, p 21 (National Schools Network, Vic)

and a more managerialist approach to school governance, have resulted in additional administrative responsibilities for teachers. They attend more meetings and produce and comment upon more documents than ever before.

The work load of principals, particularly, has increased as a result of devolution. Research commissioned by the Victorian Primary Principals' Association in 1996, for example, showed principals worked an average of 61.9 hours per week (the maximum was 117 hours).[16]

The growing focus on fund raising at the individual school level and the requirement for schools to market themselves so as to maintain enrolments have also resulted in additional work for teachers. All of these tasks, referred to by teachers in evidence to the Committee as 'administrivia', reduce the time available to teachers for their central role of teaching. This is a major cause of teacher dissatisfaction and a significant contributor to the deskilling of the profession.

> ... our research indicates that teachers are seeing themselves being forced partly away from the valued professional towards the clerical assistant or indeed the factory operative.
>
> My position is that such a shift can be no good thing for the status of teaching or the status of teachers.[17]

One way of assisting teachers to focus on their core tasks would be to employ more para professionals to carry out many of the non core tasks now undertaken by teachers. Teachers presented a range of views on this issue. Some supported it but the majority considered it had the potential to undermine rather than to enhance the professionalism and status of teachers.

The educational aspects of the debate have been overshadowed in recent discussion where supporters of the employment of more para professionals are suggesting that para professionals be employed **in place** of trained teachers rather than **in support** of them. Such a scenario envisages fewer, more highly paid teachers supported by a large

16 Reported in the *Age* of 4 February 1997

17 *Transcript of evidence,* Hobart, 19 October 1997, p 546 (Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania)

number of para professionals undertaking not only the non core teaching tasks, which teachers would be happy to relinquish, but many of their teaching tasks too. The Committee's concern, on the basis of the evidence it received, is that proponents of such a view are motivated primarily by a desire to control costs rather than to enhance teacher professionalism or student learning. Teachers are opposed to such a model, but not to the employment of para professionals as such.

> I think that the exploration of the role of non-teaching staff in schools is very important. Removing some of the drudgery tasks from teachers, and some of the other tasks which are very well performed by non-teaching staff in the schools, could release teachers more effectively for the role for which they are trained, which is teaching.[18]
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> Paraprofessionals can help in classes, and are already used. They are of most use in special education classes and to support disabled students, and make possible the mainstreaming of some students.
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> A model where paraprofessionals work to a fully trained teacher as a general method of reducing personnel cost is no more than the deskilling of the profession and will carry a cost in terms of the quality of the education which can be delivered.[19]
>
> Those who hope, or claim, that we will be able to staff schools in the future with a reduced proportion of well qualified and well paid teachers and an increased proportion of briefly trained teacher-aides with limited education in what they teach, and still maintain the quality of learning are misguided or mischievous.[20]

The Requirement to Teach Unfamiliar Subjects

Teachers' work load is increased when they are required to teach subjects with which they are unfamiliar. Such a situation is unfair to both teachers and students. It contributes to teacher stress and to less than optimal learning outcomes for students. Evidence presented to the Committee shows that such a practice is becoming more common. It is most evident in subjects in which there is a shortage of trained teachers,

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18 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 992 (South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc)

19 Submission no 248, vol 12, pp 171-172 (Mr Edmunds, ACT)

20 Submission no 273, vol 14, p 164 (Professor Ingvarson, Monash University, Vic)

especially in maths and science, and in rural areas where it is difficult to recruit subject specialists. But it is not restricted to those areas. The employment of higher proportions of casual teachers increases the possibility that teachers, sent at short notice to short term vacancies, will be required to teach in areas outside their specialisation.

> Teachers are concerned that the practice will expand as education departments attempt to plug gaps emerging in other subject areas and becoming increasingly problematic in rural areas. (See Chapter 8). Lack of qualified staff is not a new issue. Rural schools have encountered this difficulty on an annual basis. Attracting suitable staff and keeping them is a major problem in regional and rural schools in general and science faculties in particular.[21]

> There is a shortage of science teachers throughout Australia. There is especially a shortage in country areas. So we often have people teaching outside their area of expertise. This is a great concern to ASTA.[22]

> School staff are being asked to take on the management of school libraries in small schools in an effort to save money on salaries for trained professional staff.
>
> ... Without qualified teacher librarians managing school libraries, teachers and students cannot expect to access, retrieve, select and organize information in a critical and efficient manner.[23]

Vocational Education

An area in which teachers are increasingly required to teach without adequate background or training is vocational education in the post compulsory years.

The latest proposals for vocational education in schools, (for example through the School to Work Program) require schools to run TAFE courses, accredited by TAFE institutions. Again, teachers have serious reservations about such an approach. These mainly relate to teachers'

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21 Submission no 185, vol 8, p 52 (Science Teachers' Association of Victoria)

22 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 978 (Australian Science Teachers' Association)

23 Submission no 137, vol 5, p 153 (Australian School Library Association ACT Inc)

lack of training in vocational subjects and to inadequate resourcing and equipping of their schools to take on these new commitments. The Committee was advised[24] that in Queensland, for example, school teachers required to teach vocational education courses are to be given a two week 'familiarisation'. Teachers have had changes in vocational education imposed upon them. Their views have not been sought although decisions taken will affect them very directly.

> I think teachers feel their status is being depressed because on the one hand they are being blamed and on the other hand they are being given solutions, which in one sense tends to render them powerless because they have not been part of devising those solutions. They do not understand them; they see them as change heaped on change. I refer to the ongoing changes in vocational education in the senior secondary areas. I cannot keep up with the name changes, let alone what it means. A teacher in a classroom not getting access to the things that I see would just be swamped by it.[25]

Teachers see such courses as 'TAFE on the cheap' and as diverting thinly spread resources away from the core business of schools. Even students, who are generally supportive of school - TAFE links, are less than enthusiastic. They would prefer to undertake TAFE courses at TAFE colleges which are adult-oriented and less strictly regulated than schools.

The Committee's view

Schools have been very innovative in their approaches to incorporating vocational training and in extending opportunities to their post compulsory students. In the Committee's view however, the latest proposals for the teaching of TAFE courses in schools are bound to fail unless they are accompanied by far greater resources than are currently envisaged and by appropriate training for teachers. The proposal is for $23 million to be allocated for implementing vocational education in schools. This is part of a package of measures dealing with school to

24 See *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 264 (Queensland Teachers' Union)

25 *Transcript of evidence*, Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 192 (Education Queensland)

work transition, for which a total of $187 million has been allocated over four years, to be matched by the States and Territories.[26]

While the Committee recognises that additional funding will follow an increase in retention, such post hoc funding arrangements severely disadvantage schools in the short term as they are required to equip themselves for their new role in the expectation that sufficient funding will follow. The extent of the funding is unclear, given the dramatic variations in estimates of the impact of the Common Youth Allowance on school retention rates.

The Committee RECOMMENDS proposed new funding for vocational education in schools be retained within the TAFE system, with school efforts focussed on improving links between vocational education and training providers and schools.

The Impact of the Inclusive Classroom

Over the last 20 years schools have increasingly included in their mainstream classes children with disabilities who would formerly have been taught in special education schools. This parallels moves in other areas away from institutionalisation of people with disabilities and their inclusion in mainstream services such as housing and, where appropriate, open employment.

In evidence to the Committee teachers were generally supportive of moves to include children with disabilities in regular classes. Where teachers were provided with adequate back up and support (in the form of teacher aides, specialist help, withdrawal classes for intensive work with small groups etc) teachers believed inclusion policies worked well both for children with disabilities and for other children in the class.

In practice however such support as was provided was rarely adequate and is declining. In this situation teachers' work load increased dramatically as they tried to juggle individual attention to those children with disabilities who required it and the needs of other children in the class. The needs of children with disabilities were not adequately met and the education of other students also suffered. This is a particular

26 Press Release by the Hon Dr David Kemp MP, Minister for Schools, Vocational Education and Training, 20 August 1996

problem for government schools, which enrol much higher proportions of children with disabilities than do private schools.

Many teachers and their representatives identified inclusion policies (without adequate back up) as a major contributor to excessive work load.

> Recent Government Inquiries in New South Wales and Western Australia have made major recommendations on the further integration of students with disabilities which will significantly add to teachers' workload. Based on experience in other states, where similar programs have been introduced, a lack of proper resourcing for the policy will further exacerbate teacher workload.[27]

> The policy of inclusive education has added considerable complexity to the everyday working life of the average teacher. The demands made upon teachers will continue to grow as inclusive schooling principles are translated into practice. Attempting to meet the social, emotional, personal and educational needs of each and every student in terms of personalised teaching and alternative resources can be a daunting task. The added requirement of consulting with and collaborating with other professionals also increases the responsibilities, time commitment and workload of the regular classroom teacher. [28]

Class Size

Reliable information on class size is difficult to obtain. In 1996 the ABS calculated[29] the average national ratio of full time equivalent [FTE] teaching staff to full time students of all ages as 15.4. This was a slight rise over 1992, when it was 15.3. This figure does not equate to class size however, because it includes FTE teaching staff who do not actually teach, such as school counsellors, principals and deputy principals. Given the increased administrative load on schools as a result of devolution - much of which is being undertaken by teachers in time they would formerly have spent in classroom teaching - it is likely (but difficult to prove) that teachers are correct in claiming significant increases in class size. Figures published recently by the Victorian

27 Submission no 262, vol 13, p 205 (Australian Education Union)

28 Submission no 16, vol 1, p 74 (Professor Peter Westwood, SA)

29 ABS. *Schools Australia 1996*. Cat No 4221.0, p 57

Government[30] show an increase in average class size in government primary schools from 23.4 in 1992 to 26 in 1997, with average class sizes ranging from 6 to 31.9.

There is some dispute in the general literature about the relationship between class size, student outcomes and teacher work load. Most work undertaken in Australia supports teachers' claims that class size affects student learning.[31]

A major longitudinal study on class size conducted in Tennessee, Project STAR, concluded that: "students continued to show the advantages [of small class size] on every achievement measure even a full year after returning to full size classes. In addition, class size appeared to have been [sic] a contributing effect to the success of the most effective teachers."[32]

In Australia both the Karmel Report (1985) and the Carrick Report (1989) challenged this view.

In evidence to the Committee, only education departments - and not all of those - disputed the connection between class size, student outcomes and teacher work load.

> ... for every paper one can find saying that a reduced number of students in a class improves learning, you can find an overall number of papers saying that it does not.[33]

Evidence from teachers was quite different. They claimed that class size has a direct impact on teacher work load and on student outcomes. It is a prime example of an issue on which it is difficult for teachers to separate industrial from professional concerns. Because of its centrality to teachers' work and to students' learning it is usually a major focus in

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30 In *The Age*, 10 March 1997, p 1

31 See, for example, Commonwealth Schools Commission. *Commonwealth Standards for Australian Schools, 1984* and S Bourke. *Class size, teaching practices and student achievement.* In Collected Papers of the Annual Conference , Australian Association for Research in Education, November 1985

32 F Bain. *Class size does make a difference*. Phi Delta Kappan, November 1992

33 *Transcript of evidence,* Perth, 18 September 1997, p 475 (Department of Education Services, WA)

teachers' industrial disputes. In evidence to the Committee many teachers pointed to the link between increasing class size and increasing work load, and between increasing class size and poorer student outcomes, especially at the primary school level.

> At the moment, research and evidence related over the last, say, decade, indicates that a class size of under 20, particularly in the early years, simply makes very good sense. I do not think we have really moved that way in Australia and, if we have, I do believe, in the last number of years at least, we are retreating from it.[34]

> ... I can tell you on the record that our utmost priority is early childhood education and reducing the class sizes in early childhood. We have said that now for a number of years. We have surveyed our members; they have agreed with that. It somewhat galls us that those priorities are not being talked about in the context of the debate around literacy and child welfare generally.[35]

> In studying class sizes it is worthwhile investigating the class sizes used in successful private schools. Such schools charge substantial fees, and so will work to reduce the teacher costs as far as possible and therefore the impost to families. If large classes are effective they can be expected to operate in such schools. They do not.[36]

The Committee reiterates the point that teachers now have to bring a much higher proportion of their class to much higher skill levels, applied to much more complex tasks than was formerly the case. As a result the intensity of the teaching work load is increasing. This is compounded by large classes.

Other Factors Contributing to Teacher Work Load

Teachers have traditionally undertaken extra curricular activities with their students, sometimes but not always related to their subject expertise. They have coached sports teams, conducted camps, run clubs and supervised homework. This work has always been unpaid but was seen by many teachers as a valuable opportunity for interacting with

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34 *Transcript of evidence,* Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 216 (Association of Independent Schools of Queensland)

35 *Transcript of evidence,* Melbourne, 10 October 1997, p 735 (Australian Education Union)

36 Submission no 248, vol 12, p 171 (Mr Edmunds, ACT)

students in a less formal environment than the classroom, and thus developing good relationships with them.

Some teachers continue to enjoy their participation in extra curricula activities but others are retreating from it. There are a number of reasons for this. One is the fear of litigation should any mishap occur. A related issue is the need to document all aspects of extra curricula activities and to require explicit parental permission for them, which adds to the administrative load associated with such activities. Another reason is that teachers' direct work load is such as to leave little time or energy. A further factor is the lack of appreciation of their efforts - by parents or by their employers - both of whom increasingly view such participation as a **requirement** rather than a **choice.**

> Teachers took industrial action two years ago and I was very involved in the issues this concerned and acted as the on site union rep. I had several phone calls from parents demanding that I restore their child's "education rights" and take them on camp, on excursions and out of school activities. When I explained that these were activities I conducted as an act of goodwill and I was not paid for these activities I was told to go and get another job if that was my attitude as people working with children needed to be giving.[37]

> The implementation of bans on all out of hours, unpaid, voluntary work by teachers [during industrial action in the ACT in 1996] was attacked by the government as being unprofessional because the action was hurting the students; the parents of students affected by the action accused teachers of jeopardising the educational opportunities of their children; the media, of course, accused teachers of acting out of greed and focussed on such things as the long holidays teachers enjoy each year. The exploitation of the teacher workforce by the governments, both federal and state, has become so ingrained that there are some members in the community who now demand the voluntary component as a right for students. They refuse to acknowledge that what is being demanded is the performance of unpaid, voluntary, out of hours work.[38]

Compulsory professional development, normally in teachers' own time, also contributes to their work load. This is discussed in Chapter 7.

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37 Submission no 162, vol 7, p 11 (Ms Josso, WA)

38 Submission no 122, vol 5, p 14 (Mr Book, ACT)

Teacher work load has increased as a result of higher retention rates. These have changed the composition of the post compulsory student population. Whereas it previously consisted mainly of academically gifted and motivated students aiming for university entrance it is now much more diverse. In response, teachers have been required to provide a much broader range of courses, with a much greater focus on vocational education. The resulting increase in work load has been exacerbated by their general unfamiliarity with the subject area and lack of adequate preparation and training, as noted earlier in this Chapter.

Teacher Work Load - Conclusions

Teacher work load is now recognised as a serious concern by independent commentators. The Australian Industrial Relations Commission, for example, in a hearing brought by Victorian teachers in 1994 stated:

> The uncontradicted evidence in these proceedings is that the standard working week of 38 hours is no more than a formality, with some Victorian teachers spending in the order of 50 hours per week or more at their work to discharge their duties in an adequate and acceptable manner.[39]

In this situation the fact that teachers and schools still function at all is cause for celebration. That they function well in most cases is remarkable.

> ... schools in the late 20th century are the last bastions of certainty in the lives of young children. The family has lost its moorings in traditional beliefs, there is widespread disaffection from political parties and processes. Schools are still providing that sense of certainty while all these other situations have failed our young.[40]

> The fact that Australia was the highest ranking English speaking country on the TIMSS [Third International Mathematics and Science Study] measures of student performance is a significant achievement, as is the fact that Australian students regularly attain medal status in the international Mathematics and Science Olympiads. Australian initiatives in creative and innovative

39 Reported by Geoffrey Maslen. *The Blackboard Jungle.* In Australian Educator, no 7, Winter 1995, p 19

40 NSW Teachers' Federation. In the *Australian,* 3 February, 1997

> mathematics teaching and learning materials (for example, the Mathematics Curriculum Teaching Project materials and more recently the Working Mathematically CD Rom produced by the Curriculum Corporation) are widely recognised as world best practice.[41]

But we cannot expect that, without assistance, teachers and schools will continue indefinitely to serve our young people so well. The Committee concludes, on the basis of evidence it received, that it is appropriate for governments now to reassess what teachers do and what it is they want teachers to do. If governments expect teachers to continue to perform the multiple roles they now undertake they must resource them accordingly. They must remunerate teachers adequately for their work and assist them by reducing class sizes and providing additional support staff, both for clerical and for welfare functions. They must, in cooperation with teachers and as a matter of urgency, rationalise the curriculum and prioritise subjects to be covered.

THE IMPACT OF TECHNOLOGY

This section examines the impact of technology on teachers, on students and on schools more generally.

The Impact on Teachers

While teachers' evidence to the Committee acknowledged the potential of new technology to enhance both teaching and learning the weight of evidence suggested that this potential was still largely unrealised.

There are a number of reasons for this. Perhaps the most significant relates to the average age of classroom teachers. This is between 45 and 47, with slight variations between States. (See Chapter 8). Few teachers in this age group would have had routine access to computers during their training. Consequently many are apprehensive about their computing skills and resist computer use in the classroom. Although

41 Submission no 210, vol 10, p 20 (Australian Association of Mathematics Teachers Inc)

many teachers have purchased their own computers[42] they have had to learn to use them on the job. Few have received adequate training although, where it has been offered, courses have been oversubscribed. In Tasmania, for example, 40% of the teaching force has enrolled for professional development courses in computing. In Queensland in 1997, 1000 places were offered in professional development in computing which required teachers to give up two weeks of their leave to participate. They were, according to Education Queensland, "massively oversubscribed."

Teachers' general lack of detailed knowledge of the technology and its applications (especially compared with that of their students) is a significant contributor to teacher stress.

> ...Queensland ...research indicates that although teachers were generally comfortable with new forms of technology, the majority had completed little associated training, and possessed moderately low levels of computer competence. In addition, there was evidence that computer anxiety or cyberphobia was a factor in teacher stress. Because of these concerns, it is unlikely that teachers will regularly use computers in classes with their students.[43]

> Teachers who have taught successfully for years are now feeling threatened by the need to become completely up to date with the latest technology... Teachers report that they are now spending huge amounts of time and money upgrading facilities at home. Personal computers, printers, faxes, connection to the internet and the necessary support software are now considered necessities by teachers if they are to achieve the school, government and community goals.[44]

Technology teachers, or those in other subject areas with technology expertise, are often called upon to assist other teachers.

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42 42% of Victorian teachers and 46% of Queensland teachers have purchased their own computers according to Glenn Russell and Neil Russell. *Imperative or dissonance? Implications of student computer use for a cyberspace curriculum.* In Unicorn, vol 23, no 3, December 1997, pp 2-10

43 Ibid p 5

44 Submission no 145, vol 6, p 66 (Ms Mahar, Vic)

> The same thing applies if you have a teacher who is expert enough to fix the computers. That tends to be what they are doing instead of teaching their students, which is another bone of contention.[45]

Teachers also expressed concerns about the lack of resources to maintain and repair computers.

> One of the major difficulties associated with this [computers in schools] is that technical assistance, in the main, is not provided in the school situation. Teachers are expected to provide the technical expertise to keep computers, printers, networks, internet etc in working order. In any other profession or business, this task would be undertaken by the appropriate technician so the practising professional (in this case the teacher) could pursue the task of teaching.[46]

> Maintenance of the computer network now takes place on weekends and in holidays because downtime during working hours must be minimised (seven days during the last January holiday.)[47]

A number of teachers questioned whether computers and other equipment in schools represented value for money.

> Technology is an expensive component of education which often promises more than it delivers. As someone experienced in the technology area, I am concerned that scarce resources are being diverted away from teachers and into technology for little more than PR value.[48]

Teachers identified a number of ways in which the widespread introduction of technology into classrooms could, potentially at least, impact adversely upon their teaching role. These included:

- the potential for pre packaged materials to be delivered directly to students without any teacher involvement

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45 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 975 (South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs Inc)

46 Submission no 67, vol 3, p 5 (Ms Coutts- Smith, ACT)

47 Submission no 124, vol 5, p 34 (Mr Munns, NSW)

48 Submission no 94, vol 3, p 170 (Mr Harding, Vic)

- the potential for Australian students to be flooded with materials produced in other countries and reflecting different cultural values
- increased danger of plagiarism
- absence of curriculum policies designed to integrate the use of computers into classroom practice
- a focus on teachers as facilitators, with a corresponding downgrading in the value of their subject knowledge and possibly, as a result, an undermining of their traditional source of authority.

One submission went so far as to argue that the threat to teachers' status posed by technology was without precedent.

> Traditionally, questions of material status may relate to such things as levels of income and education, and the amount of autonomy a worker is perceived to possess in the workplace, and the standards of competency achieved. In the case of the information revolution, however, teachers risk the contempt of their clients on the one thing that they, as teachers, are assumed to possess - the knowledge about how to access information.[49]

There is evidence that education departments are moving to address teachers' concerns about the impact of computer technology in schools. In Queensland, for example, the education department is about to let a tender for a computer network across the State which will include significant funding for in service training of teachers ($6.7 million in 1997-98).[50] In the ACT the Government recently announced that it would be providing 'refurbished' computers for 95% of its teachers and 20,000 computers over the next four years for school and college students. At the end of that period ACT schools would have one computer for every

49 Submission no 138, vol 5, p 175 (School of Education, James Cook University)

50 See *Transcript of evidence,* Brisbane, 10 September 1997, pp 199-200 for details

two students.[51] In New South Wales the Government is spending $186 million to purchase 55,000 computers for government schools.[52]

The effectiveness of the ACT and New South Wales approaches has been questioned by some commentators[53] because of the lack of provision for support and training of teachers.

> To get more of the benefit which appears to exist in computer technology for education it will not be enough for teachers to learn, with some trepidation, how to operate the machines as capably as their students. They will need to be actively involved in the design and development of software which is educationally sound and useful and which complements the rest of their teaching programs.[54]

Certainly there are individual schools which are well resourced and whose teachers are well trained in computing use and well supported. In these schools teachers' professionalism and student outcomes are both enhanced by technology. But such schools remain in the minority.

The Impact on Students

Many students arrive at school well versed in the use of computers. Consequently they (and their parents) expect that computers will be routinely available in schools and that they will be used effectively by teachers. When this proves not to be the case there is a danger that their respect for teachers will be undermined and teachers' self esteem and confidence correspondingly diminished.

> The difference in the technology use now is that the students have access to a wider range of information than the teacher has. The students have more time and more ability to access information that the teacher has never even heard of, which may be beyond the

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51 *ACT public schools to get 20,000 computers.* Canberra Times, 4 December 1997, p 2 and *A_Maze-ing boost to ACT school computers.* The Australian, 16 December 1997

52 *Teachers fret: how to use high-tech*. Sydney Morning Herald, 15 September 1997, p 12 and *Wet behind the ears*. Sydney Morning Herald, 13 September 1997, p 16

53 See, for example, Emma Macdonald. *Technology offer needs the back-up.* Canberra Times, 10 December 1997, p 15

54 Schools Council. *Australia's Teachers, An Agenda for the Next Decade.* Canberra, 1990, pp 26-27

> teacher's knowledge. Therefore, the teacher's authority can no longer rest on superior knowledge. Often the teacher will have superior knowledge, but often they will not.[55]
>
> Often students have access to more sophisticated technology for longer periods of time than their teachers and the student - as - expert has undermined the self-esteem of many teachers.[56]
>
> Sometimes a student in the class is able to help the teacher with a computer problem, but this cannot be relied on - and teachers naturally feel the strain of this uncertainty. A small number of students in computer classes would still expect the teacher to know *everything,* but I have found that most are understanding of the situation, especially if one is frank with them. We learn together, and help one another. On the surface this is fine, but the underlying insecurity felt by the teachers should not be deemed unimportant.[57]

Not all teachers saw this as a threat. That at least was the view of Apple computers.

> Younger teachers are... less intimidated by students who are more computer literate than themselves. In fact, many younger teachers seem to see this role reversal as a constructive bonding tool in the student - teacher relationship.[58]

There are many benefits to students from the widespread introduction of technology into schools, as the earlier witness also noted.

> There have been *many* positive features relating to the widespread introduction of technology into government schools in Queensland. The opportunities available to our students are extraordinary, which is particularly obvious to someone in my situation who has been in the job for so long.[59]

One submission commented on the benefits of technology to students who were not high achievers in traditional, book based learning. The potential for maintaining interest and participation among a group of

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55 *Transcript of evidence,* Townsville, 11 September 1997, p 286 (School of Education, James Cook University)

56 Submission no 267, vol 14, p 43 (Australian Education Union, Vic Branch)

57 Submission no 78, vol 3, p 76 (Mrs McGrath, Qld)

58 Submission no 244, vol 12, p 100 (Apple Computer Australia Pty Ltd, NSW)

59 Submission no 78, vol 3, p 79 (Mrs McGrath, Qld)

students not always well served by traditional curriculum approaches deserves further attention.

> It appears that some Australian students have taught themselves from the internet, abstract and complicated computer programming language which they then use to complete a number of internet related tasks from constructing a web site to establishing webzones. Interestingly, many of these students have been streamed by their state high schools into low level mathematics and English classes.[60]

A submission from the Association of Women Educators commented on the particular difficulties faced by women teachers in becoming computer literate. These related to time available, negative attitudes to women's abilities, financial constraints and discouragement from using the internet through fear of 'cyber-violence' and 'cyber-sexual harassment.'[61]

The Impact on Schools

The widespread use of technology in schools has potential benefits for school administrators. But again, evidence presented to the Committee suggested that they have not been fully realised. Indeed, technology often **increased** work load for many administrative staff and for teachers rather than decreasing it.

Potential benefits were described in one submission as follows:

> Record systems for both staff and students have been in common use for some time, but other systemic operations could include staff career development planning, cost-benefit analyses of proposed programs, training needs analysis projections for administrators and teaching staff, and perhaps vocational education and career pathways data on individual students.[62]

The reality is somewhat different.

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60 Submission no 138, vol 5, p 175 (School of Education, James Cook University)

61 Submission no 278, vol 15, pp 75-76 (Australian Association of Women Educators)

62 Submission no 108, vol 4, p 59 (Council of Education Associations of South Australia)

> In school administration the advent of technology has done little to ease the burden on schools. School administrative staff have been called upon to acquire new skills with no diminution in their other tasks.[63]
>
> Although technology should be improving our teaching and lifestyles, I would say that:
>
> the fax machine - enables decisions to be changed overnight - without even talking to someone; spits out an enormous number of documents which can not be kept up with; is sometimes a friend and a much despised piece of equipment!!!
>
> Finally, since the advent of the computer, the pace of change in schools has speeded up. Also, those of us with computers do far more of our own typing than other teachers, we create far more of the schools documents and also re- create them. Our work load has increased as we have become the keepers of these documents...[64]

One of the most insidious impacts of technology on schools is to exacerbate differences between rich and poor schools. While schools in wealthy areas can provide their students with state of the art computers and software to match, schools in poorer areas are struggling with inadequate, out of date equipment. As students from wealthy areas often have computers at home, while those in poor areas do not, schools are inadvertently entrenching divisions rather than minimising them.

> Schools have been expected to make enormous investments in information technology without additional resources to do so. Information technology would now take a minimum of 15% of a school's discretionary budget, usually much more... Pressure to raise funds from the community to pay for such resources are very different in different communities, increasing the stress on teachers working in poor communities, and diverting them from their core classroom duties.[65]

A related difficulty for some schools without adequate computer equipment is the development of curriculum by education departments on the assumption that all schools have adequate access to computer

63 Submission no 150, vol 6, p 120 (Mr Franks, NSW)

64 Submission no 57, vol 2, p 131 (Ms Stanway, Vic)

65 Submission no 248, vol 12, pp 169-170 (Mr Edmunds, ACT)

technology. Schools which do not are severely disadvantaged by this practice.

The Committee acknowledges the high costs to State governments and to schools of providing adequate levels of computer equipment and back up support. It is concerned that in this environment, schools and students in poor areas will be severely disadvantaged by their lack of access to the relevant technology. The Committee believes that the Commonwealth's traditional role in promoting greater equity between schools would be advanced were it to assist schools in poor areas to upgrade their computer technology, as it has previously assisted them to upgrade their libraries and science laboratories. Accordingly, the Committee reiterates a recommendation to this effect from its earlier Report.[66]

The Committee RECOMMENDS that:

- **Commonwealth, State and Territory governments establish benchmarks for appropriate levels of funding for technology in schools**

- **the Commonwealth Government reappraise its Capital Grants Program to ensure that government school funding for technology meets the benchmark funding level established by Commonwealth, State and Territory governments.**

The Committee notes that the Australian Education Union has suggested possible information technology benchmarks for schools covering, for example, hardware, software, staffing and facilities. These could provide an useful guide to governments.[67]

66 Senate Employment, Education and Training References Committee. *Not a level playground. The private and commercial funding of government schools,* 1997, pp 98-108

67 Jim Cumming, *Towards a Resource Guarantee in Information Technology.* A working paper prepared for the Australian Education Union, July 1997

ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE - THE IMPACT AT SCHOOL LEVEL

The impact of organisational change at the systems level was discussed in the previous Chapter. This Chapter examines the impact of organisational change upon individual schools and their teachers. One of its most significant effects on teachers - diverting their time and attention from core teaching tasks to administration - was discussed earlier in this Chapter and will not be repeated here.

The Case for Devolution

At the school level the most important organisational change has been the move to devolution. The aim of devolution is to shift responsibility for the management of schools away from a central bureaucracy to the local school level. It is intended to empower schools to make their own decisions and, at the same time, to make them more accountable for these decisions. Devolution is consistent with the move to deregulation taking place across the range of public and community services. It finds its most comprehensive expression in the Victorian *Schools of the Future* program, launched in 1993.

When commenting on *Schools of the Future, V*ictorian Government representatives claimed that:

> Such schools give opportunities for teachers to exercise greater discretionary judgement over their own learning and for classroom activities and curriculum design to achieve agreed goals.
>
> ... The key principle of the *Schools of the Future* program is the location of responsibility, authority and accountability at the school level. Full staffing flexibility allows principals of schools to manage their human and financial resources within their school global budget allocations.[68]

Premier Kennett's view is that:

68 Submission no 271, vol 14, p 147 & 151 (Victorian Government)

> The concept of Schools of the Future has allowed schools to take on greater autonomy and develop a stronger sense of ownership.[69]

The submission from the Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, while acknowledging that devolution has added to teachers' non-core responsibilities also claimed:

> ... developments such as devolution of responsibility to schools have also provided teachers with additional opportunities. For example, it has allowed teachers greater autonomy in exercising their professional judgement in relation to curriculum development and student assessment and, potentially, more of an opportunity to influence their working environment and how resources are allocated within schools.[70]

Some State governments providing evidence to the Committee were more guarded in their assessments of the benefits of devolution and appeared to the Committee to be distancing themselves from its most extreme manifestations.

> In South Australia we respect the individuality of each of our schools and the preschool communities but... because of our concern for equity... we have not moved as far as some other states have with respect to a number of aspects of local school based management or devolution, as you described it. We are working on a more evolutionary approach towards decisions being made at the point at which they are put into effect, rather than some revolutionary type of approach of imposing it.[71]

> If you look at what has happened in some other states, school based management has been introduced at a time when resources were taken out of schools. Perhaps some of those [adverse] things you were quoting may relate to that. The very opposite is the case here in Queensland...[72]

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69 Speech to Australian National University's Centre for Public Policy on 24 September 1997, as reported in the *Age* on 25 September 1997

70 Submission no 276, vol 15, p 10 (Department of Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs)

71 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 958 (Department for Education and Children's Services, SA)

72 *Transcript of evidence,* Brisbane, 10 September 1997, p 194 (Education Queensland)

Despite concerns about some aspects of the *Schools of the Future* program the Victorian Government intends to provide even greater autonomy to individual schools through its Schools of the Third Millennium project. This will remove some existing regulatory constraints on schools and make them essentially self governing rather than merely self managing, as is now the case. Proposals currently before the Education Department include, for example, giving schools free access to commercial loans. Schools will also be encouraged to form closer links with industry, to increase corporate sponsorship and to become more entrepreneurial.

The Reality of Devolution

Teachers had a different opinion of devolution. Their views were consistent across the country, regardless of the extent of devolution in their particular administrations. Their unanimous opinion, reflected in evidence to the Committee, was that the reality of devolution did not match the rhetoric.

In addition to increasing their work load and diverting them from core teaching tasks, teachers also pointed to the loss of central support which it had entailed.

> The policy directions towards more responsibility at the local school level (Schools of the Future in Victoria) has been implemented in association with cutbacks in education spending. The assumption that individual schools can provide all service requirements needed for a school to operate effectively ... needs to be examined. Schools vary in their capacity to accept these increasing responsibilities.[73]

> The centrally directed system worked well and we had time and energy to try innovative teaching methods. Not now though - only those that are mandatory. The centrally directed system had the potential to be enhanced, not disbanded.[74]

A number of teachers considered one of the most invidious impacts of devolution was the way in which it changed relationships between teachers and education department staff and between teachers and principals. Formerly departmental staff were seen as supporting teachers. Now they directed them. In the same way, principals had been

73 Submission no 1, vol 1, p 7 (Professor Northfield, Vic)

74 Submission no 33, vol 1, p 150 (Mr Hurdle, Qld)

seen, by teachers, by themselves and by education departments, as primarily teachers whose role was to support their teachers. Now, with fixed term contracts depending on satisfactory management performance, they are seen by teachers as agents of government.

> It is easy, in the current climate, for teachers to assume that they serve the bureaucracy rather than the bureaucracy supporting schools.[75]

> An unfortunate but logical conclusion of the rigid line management structure enforced by the Northern Territory Government is the creation of needless tensions between staff and their Principals. This was not helped by the large contracts offered to Principals, [in recent enterprise bargaining] in direct contrast to the offer made to teachers.[76]

> I do not think there is a lot of talking done either between the classroom teacher and the principal, and that is a global statement. I certainly feel that teachers in Western Australia feel that there is them, which is educators and the administrators at the central level, and there are us. I am very sure that is a pervasive attitude across our schools.[77]

There is some evidence that principals themselves are ambivalent about their new role. A survey of 339 principals of Victorian schools conducted in 1996 by Professor Brian Caldwell of the University of Melbourne,[78] an enthusiastic supporter of *Schools of the Future,* found that a very large majority believed that devolution had improved student learning outcomes, improved school accountability and responsibility and resulted in clearer school direction. However, the same survey found that the majority of these principals considered they had less job satisfaction, suffered greater bureaucratic interference and enjoyed less cooperation from other schools.

Other surveys paint a gloomier picture of principals' assessment of the impact of devolution and related changes on their roles. A survey of

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75 Submission no 150, vol 6, p 116 (Mr Franks, NSW)

76 Submission no 301, vol 18, p 156 (NT Labor Party)

77 *Transcript of evidence,* Perth, 18 September 1997 p 489 (Faculty of Education, Curtin University of Technology)

78 Reported in the *Age* of 14 April 1997

principals from 1,954 schools nationwide conducted for the Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council indicated that:

> ...regardless of location, type, size or level of school, gender or age, 92% of Australian principals expect to retire or resign from the principalship more than five years before they 'have' to.
>
> Important findings include:
>
> . The pressures of unrelenting change which are not necessarily to Education's advantage.
>
> . The increasing, multiple and sometimes conflicting expectations which result in an excessive workload for the Principal filled with growing tension, stress and, increasingly, burnout.
>
> . The perception that Education has become an economic/political football in which the Principalship is not valued.[79]

Many teachers saw devolution as primarily a cost cutting exercise.

> The implementation of school-based management is also a source of some angst. It will depend very much on the skills of individual principals as to how deleterious the effects of such changes are on schools. Few, if any, in the profession believe that it will result in long term benefits for education, as distinct from education budgets.[80]
>
> In general devolution is seen as having no direct link to improving the delivery of education to students nor to improving student outcomes. In reality the department is maintaining an ever increasing amount of control but devolving financial responsibility so that schools are left to solve the problem of the funding crisis in education.[81]
>
> As for Departmental devolution of power, that has simply meant that HQ (Sydney) still controls the purse strings whilst, despite its protestations of devolutionary empowerment for individual schools,

79 Survey results are detailed in Submission no 222, vol 10, pp 190 -192 (Faculty of Education, Tas)

80 Submission no 52, vol 2, p 100 (Mr Ewbank, ACT)

81 Submission no 59, vol 2, p 142 (Mr/Ms Elliott, WA)

> placing ever greater responsibilities on those financially powerless entities.[82]

Others considered it inefficient because it placed the burden of administration, especially financial management, on teachers and principals who were not trained for these responsibilities.

> Far too often these [management] positions appear to be filled by people with out of date teaching qualifications inappropriate to their current role which is vastly different from that of the classroom teacher for which they were trained. When conditions, including decision making, are provided at an amateur level it becomes very difficult for teaching to proceed in a professional manner...[83]

> The transfer of many administration functions to schools has put a great deal of pressure on school administrations particularly in the area of financial management. Any business as big as a reasonable size school would have at least one accountant but school finances are essentially being run by bookkeepers with little formal accounting expertise. In some schools accounting teachers are doing much of this work on top of their teaching load.[84]

Far from empowering teachers, as supporters of devolution claim, many submissions indicated teachers saw devolution as reducing their ownership and control of their work, with concomitant undermining of their professionalism.

> All this waffle about empowerment and devolution is nonsense. The teachers can see through it. Even our school development days are now taken up with this bureaucratic gloss which is there to serve the bureaucracy - rather than the bureaucracy being there to serve the pointy end: that is, the classroom teacher.[85]

> Our Victorian study [conducted for the Australian Principals Association Professional Development Council] confirms **increased tension between central policy setting on the one hand and monitoring and school operational autonomy on the other is set to grow.** It concluded that a form of SBM [school based management] was occurring in Victoria but because of its top down approach

82 Submission no 110, vol 4, p 75 (Concerned teachers, Coff's Harbour, NSW)

83 Submission no 135, vol 5, p 141 (Staff at Grange Public School, Minto, NSW)

84 Submission no 63, vol 2, p 165 (Mr/Ms Himbury, Vic)

85 *Transcript of evidence*, Perth, 17 September 1997, p 457 (Mr Macphail, WA)

> teachers believe they have less ownership and decreased professionalism as well as lowered organisational health in their schools. Claims for the success of the Victorian *Schools of the Future* were, at best, seen to be too hasty and, at worst, that actions to date may have already sown the seeds of the reform effort's demise.
>
> ... Unfortunately research such as ours in Victoria continues to indicate **those at the centre tend to espouse the rhetoric of empowerment, but have great difficulty letting go of power.**[86]

This is also the view of some commentators.

> Predicated on developments in the field of corporate management, school- based management also promises autonomy, empowerment, collaboration, flexibility, responsiveness and release from the grip of meddling bureaucracy. In early experiments, when schools are typically granted the latitude to innovate, self-managing schools can exemplify some of the more positive aspects of these principles rather well. But when developed across entire systems, in a context where self-management or local management is accompanied by the retention of central control over what is produced... then school - based management is no longer an avenue of empowerment but a conduit of blame.[87]

One submission raised the potentially adverse impact of devolution upon female teachers.

> With decentralization education systems and schools are taking on the paradigm of individual competitiveness in market liberalism. The assumption is that a level playing field is created and Equal Employment programs advantage women. What is lost is the collective history of the systemic disadvantage of women and the understanding of how it continues to operate in the restructured system. As all players are seen as being individuals with equal standing there would be no need for affirmative action and equal opportunity initiatives. Gains women have made with the support of these initiatives would be lost.[88]

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86 Submission no 222, vol 10, pp 191-192 (Faculty of Education, University of Tasmania)

87 Andy Hargreaves. *Changing Teachers, Changing Times. Teachers' Work and Culture in the Postmodern Age*. Cassell, 1994, p 68

88 Submission no 278, vol 15, p 73 (Association of Women Educators, ACT Branch)

CHANGES TO SCHOOL FUNDING PRACTICES

Commonwealth and State funding to public schools is not keeping pace with the recurrent costs of education. (See Chapter 5). The shortfall is having to be met by the schools themselves (that is, the parents). Fund raising at school level is no longer optional. Nor is it used for extra activities such as school excursions. It is now a necessity and is used to support core work.[89] If parents are unable or unwilling to raise funds then the schools and their students will suffer a corresponding drop in resources. As in other public services, costs are being shifted from government (that is, general taxpayers) to users.

A number of unfortunate consequences result, each of which was brought to the attention of the Committee in submissions and at public hearings.

Greater reliance on private fund raising increases the disparities between schools because schools in richer areas are able to raise more funds than schools in poorer areas.

> When you charge for a service rich people end up with a better product. It is sad that this obvious fact has no sway in the conscience of the present government.[90]
>
> Clearly, in Victoria, the compensatory mechanisms which historically have been directed towards equalising educational opportunity in schools have virtually been abandoned. The statistics that are coming forward of the emphasis on non-government sources of funding for schools are demonstrating a very high polarisation between schools that are able to raise funds of up to $3,000 per head from non-government sources and a significant number of schools that can raise less than $50 per head.
>
> Polarisation of this kind is extreme and is likely to lead to the failure of a significant number of schools to have the resources to address

89 These issues are discussed in Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee. *Not a level playground. The private and commercial funding of government schools,* 1997 and also Michael Howard and Jane Coulter. *Scrounging to meet the Shortfall. Fees, funding and sponsorship in Government schools*. Public Sector Research Centre, University of New South Wales, 1995

90 Submission no 11, vol 1, p 49 (Mr Dyer, ACT)

> precisely those policy issues which have been announced at a federal level - improvement of literacy, improvement of scientific and mathematical ability.[91]

It is argued that the logical consequence of such a policy, if it is allowed to continue, would be to deprive poor parents of any choice in the education of their children, with public schools relegated to a residual system for those unable to afford anything else. This fear was raised by the Good Shepherd Youth and Family Services, amongst others.

> A range of policy commentators and advocates for a strong public education system have expressed serious fears about the recent changes to the 'New Schools Policy'. Many perceive that the current ideological commitment by both Federal and State Liberal Governments to privatisation and competition will lead to 'welfare schools' in the same way that public housing has become welfare housing[92]

Some parents are unable to meet the financial contributions asked by schools, which places considerable pressure on them and on their children and may deprive those children of the opportunity to participate in many school activities, including core activities. Parents are thus placed in the anomalous position of being required by law to send their children to school but being unable to afford the levies requested by state schools.

The Committee heard evidence that in some schools the supposedly voluntary school contributions are in effect compulsory.

> While such [government school] fees are voluntary in a strict legal sense, the report [by the Public Sector Research Centre] indicates that most parents feel compelled to pay them for a combination of reasons which include their desire that their children not be vilified for not paying, or miss out on resources or activities, their belief that the fees are actually legal and the varying methods adopted by schools to recover the fees.[93]

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91 *Transcript of evidence,* Adelaide, 16 October 1997, p 896 (Australian Council of Deans of Education)

92 Submission no 227, vol 11, p 50 (Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, Vic)

93 Submission no 281, vol 16, p 22 (Independent Education Union of Australia)

Some State education departments disputed this. They believed parental contributions were always voluntary.

> While the Northern Territory schools are able to raise additional funding it is the Government's position that this is not mandatory and is only necessary for the provision of services beyond a standard education.[94]

In the ACT the Department of Education and Training was recently obliged to reassure parents of the voluntary nature of school fees in the Territory after parents of children at a number of government schools complained about the apparently compulsory nature of the fees.

An analysis of the situation around the country in 1997 concluded that:

> ... despite the political rhetoric about fees being non-enforceable in most Australian states, provisions for free access to education virtually no longer exist in Australia.[95]

A number of teachers referred to the adverse consequences for poor schools and students of changes to the funding of the Commonwealth's Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP). While the Committee is aware that former DSP funds have been integrated into broadbanded equity funding for schools it appears that many schools which were formerly DSP beneficiaries are deriving little support from the broadbanded funding scheme.

The Committee RECOMMENDS that the Commonwealth Government reinstate the Disadvantaged Schools Program as a separately identified and funded program.

As detailed in the Committee's recent report on school sponsorship and funding,[96] schools are increasingly being driven to seek corporate sponsorship to meet their funding shortfalls. There are dangers in too great a reliance upon a particular corporate sponsor, or upon inappropriate sponsors.

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94 Submission no 298, vol 18, p 82 (Northern Territory Department of Education)

95 *School Funding Crisis.* In Education Alternatives, vol 6, no 5, July 1997, p 12

96 Senate Employment Education and Training References Committee. *Not a level playground. The private and commercial funding of government schools,* 1997

> The sponsorship of school and educational activities has developed without any real public discussion about the moral and ethical dilemmas of exposing students, compulsorily at school, to a variety of commercial pressures. Governments, motivated by a primary concern to reduce their expenditure, have been all too prepared to operate in a moral vacuum. They have shown themselves totally inappropriate arbiters of whether alternate sources can be used without conflict of interest.[97]

> ... the issue of private sponsorship is a vexed one. Most public school teachers find it abhorrent that schools' funds should have to be topped up with private funds for core educational activities.... To use a specific example: Cherrybrook Technology High School in northern Sydney. The corporate sponsorship from IBM has benefited the school enormously, allowing them resources which, otherwise, would have been outside the scope of any school. The students of that school are leaving year 12 knowing how to operate only IBM platform technology. These days, the differences between that platform and others is minor, but the real issue here is the narrowing of education perspectives and opportunities that *necessarily* results from such sponsorship.[98]

> The need to seek sponsorship, (e.g. McDonalds) just to fund basic educational programs compromises professional ethics and reduces time spent in delivery of programs.[99]

Fund raising involves extra work for both parents and teachers. It raises ethical dilemmas for teachers, as noted above, and undermines professionalism.

> Teachers are regularly called upon to assist parents in raising funds for the school so that appropriate resources may be provided or replaced. These functions invariably take place in the evenings or on weekends. I have never met a public servant who had to go to work on the weekend to raise funds for a computer or materials with which to carry out his/her job. This may sound facetious but it is a daily fact of life when you are a teacher.[100]

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97 Submission no 262, vol 13, p 184 (Australian Education Union)

98 Submission no 52, vol 2, p 101 (Mr Ewbank, ACT)

99 Submission no 129, vol 5, p 94 (ACT Executive Teachers' Association)

100 Submission no 64, vol 2, p 177 (Mrs Grey, NSW)

> As well as creating many ethical dilemmas, fundraising limits the time available for professional duties which are already overloaded. Being seen as fundraisers is not status-enhancing.[101]

Some teachers regularly provide basic assistance to their students from their own pockets. Although there is no requirement for them to do this it does raise, in very stark form, the question of the extent to which teachers' primary teaching role is being superseded by their welfare role.

> In order to teach one particular class on a Monday morning, I would buy breakfast and students would eat while sitting and reading or talking. ... At no stage was this a directive of my school but it was known by those in administration and sanctioned as breakfast seemed to be able to encourage attendance and discourage misbehaviour.[102]

> On a day-to-day basis teachers are expending more personal money on teaching resources, references, student materials, texts and inservice costs than ever before. I estimate that I spend at least $6000 each year on such expenses. Again, I am not alone.[103]

The market approach to education sees schools as market places, a view already well entrenched with respect to universities. It encourages schools to compete for students (and thus funds) rather than to cooperate. This is difficult for teachers to accept, given their view of teaching as an essentially cooperative enterprise.

> When schools are in close proximity, and in the country areas, one school may gain sponsorship and another similarly located and socioeconomic school may not, rivalry between schools for the sponsorship dollar can add to teachers' stress, pitting school against school within clusters in which they work.[104]

The impact of the market approach in Schools of the Future in Victoria was succinctly summed up by Simon Marginson.

> Parents were now seen as 'consumers' of the individual school rather than citizen-members of a common system of schools, in which

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101 Submission no 263 , vol 13, p 186 (Australian Education Union)

102 Submission no 162, vol 7, p 10 (Ms Josso, WA)

103 Submission no 70, vol 3, p 16 (Ms Cowan, Qld)

104 Submission no 284, vol 16, p 100 (S A Association of School Parents' Clubs Inc)

> everyone had an interest in everyone else's welfare. Other schools were seen as competitors, and the success of one school, for example in examinations, was the failure of another.[105]

In furtherance of their immediate short term funding interests schools may act against the best long term interests of their students. Their dilemma was explained, in relation to TAFE, in a submission from a TAFE teacher.

> A student in the cooperative model of mass education institutions would be counselled and directed to the best option for his/her aptitude: perhaps another course or another institution, or perhaps employment. Professionals would freely exchange information about such options. No longer. In the competitive model, institutions and departments within institutions see students as financial chattels who must be kept on the roll regardless of their best interests. Teachers are actually put in the position of being disloyal to their employer when they bring alternatives to the attention of their students.[106]

A major concern with the increased emphasis on fund raising at the individual school level is that, in the longer term, governments will see this as a given, and withdraw further from the provision of universal, free public education.

> The concern is that governments might be said to be tempted into allowing parents to take on these burdens, instead of themselves responding to community expectations of standard educational facilities.[107]

WORKING CONDITIONS

One consequence of reduced funding to public schools is that school buildings and equipment are often no longer adequately maintained and repaired. Working in such conditions undermines teachers' status in the eyes of the community. It reinforces the view that teaching is not highly valued.

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105 Simon Marginson. *Markets in Education*, Allen & Unwin 1997, p 196

106 Submission no 2, vol 1, p 10 (Mr May, Vic)

107 Submission no 79, vol 3, p 86 (State School Teachers' Union of WA)

> For many teachers, the poor state of their working environment reinforces their belief that society undervalues the work they do. Staffrooms are often overcrowded, the furniture is old and frequently dysfunctional and storage facilities inadequate. Cramped staffroom conditions are often cited as a reason for not accepting student teachers.[108]

> The poor physical environment in many schools is frequently reported as a matter of diminishing the status of teachers as the building stock gradually deteriorates through the incapacity of the system to adequately fund maintenance in schools.[109]

> Formerly, those who worked in schools in any capacity felt that there was an army close behind, an army of workmen and tradesmen to deal with emergencies such as burst pipes and broken windows.... Sadly, this army (like the Red Army) is a shadow of its former self.[110]

Where conditions are actually unsafe teachers are concerned about their duty of care and possible litigation if students are injured. These additional pressures contribute to low morale.

> ... last year I had an exposed power point with live wires sticking out of the wall. It took me four visits to the registrar over about three weeks before someone came out and fixed it.[111]

> Theatre equipment has often proved unsafe... Drama teachers are not given enough training in the sheer physical business of and logistics and safety of setting up a theatre. School administrators still adhere to the dangerous 'multi-purpose space/the boys can look after the lighting' philosophy.[112]

> The Department of Education fails to comply with their own Operating Procedures, Workplace Health and Safety legislation, the Teaching Award and Australian Law. Officers of the Department of Education put teachers in positions of negligence by either directing or expecting them to perform duties that break the above

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108 Submission no 261, vol 13, p 140 (School of Education, Macquarie University)

109 Submission no 254, vol 13, p 79 (Australian Education Union, ACT Branch)

110 Submission no 25, vol 1, p 112 (Ms Lonergan, Tas)

111 *Transcript of evidence,* Perth, 17 September 1997, p 417 (Mount Lawley Senior High School Education Committee, WA)

112 Submission no 247, vol 12, p 158 (ACT Drama Association)

> procedures/legislation/industrial awards or by failing to provide necessary resources to allow the above procedures/ legislation/industrial awards to be met.[113]

Teachers' working conditions are adversely affected by the reduction in funding for relief teachers. There is now less provision in schools than formerly for the employment of relief staff to replace teachers who are sick. The work of absent teachers is now increasingly undertaken by their colleagues, **in addition to** their regular work load. This is stressful for the colleagues concerned and places pressure on sick teachers to continue working. Many do so.

> At our school, … we have teachers coming in sick because we cannot find teachers to take their places.[114]

> One of our colleagues who had to have time off due to sickness came back and confided in me how guilty she felt because she was imagining that that amount of time - a month - that she had to take off work would have eaten so much into our budget. She was feeling guilty because now things were getting tighter for everybody else. She was ill, but the guilt was there.[115]

The Committee's attention was drawn to the arrangements in some school systems where each school is allocated a nominal sick leave/professional development 'quota'. So if teachers use up their quota on sick leave they automatically lose any entitlement to professional development. This is the position in the Northern Territory.

> Currently in the Northern Territory [the funding of relief teacher days for professional development] is provided in a minuscule lump sum to schools, an average of 6.5 days full-time equivalent teacher, and is meant to cover both sickness and professional development. We see it as harmful to professionalism to link those two.[116]

The factors undermining teacher morale, performance and status at the school level are largely imposed from beyond the school gate but they

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113 Submission no 215, vol 10, p 67 (Mr Jacques, Qld)

114 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 9 October 1997, p 606 (Mr Malgioglio, Vic)

115 *Transcript of evidence*, Melbourne, 9 October 1997, p 606 (Ms Morley, Vic)

116 *Transcript of evidence*, Darwin, 14 October 1997, p 773 (Northern Territory Joint Council of Professional Teaching Associations)

have a very negative impact within schools generally and on teachers in particular. The demands imposed from outside, such as those related to resourcing and currriculum, serve to divert teachers from a focus upon those aspects of their work from which they derive their greatest satisfaction, student achievement, positive interactions with students and collegial support. Since these demands originate from beyond the school it is difficult for teachers to change them. They have to rely upon those who have the authority to introduce such changes - politicians, bureaucrats, principals and, to a lesser extent, parent and community groups as represented on school councils.