FIRST REPORT

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INQUIRY INTO THE PROVISION OF PUBLIC EDUCATION IN NSW

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P R E V I E W: ASSETS OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATIONSYSTEM

AND

CONCERNS IDENTIFIED via HEARINGS AND SUBMISSIONS, AND IN THE COURSE OF SCHOOL VISITS

BACKGROUND

The Independent Inquiry into the Provision of Public Education in New South Wales (hereafter 'the Inquiry') was officially launched at the beginning of September, 2001 and is due to complete its work by the end of August, 2002. It has broad terms of reference (see Appendix 1) amounting to a comprehensive audit of the state of public education in New South Wales.

Apart from providing the wherewithal to make the Inquiry possible, and providing encouragement and support at every turn, a most significant contribution of the sponsors (the Teachers Federation of NSW and the Parents and Citizens' Federation of NSW) has been to uphold the independence of the Inquiry. As is right and proper, the members of both organisations have used the avenues available to all to make their views known and to share the enormous practical experience possessed by their combined memberships. Those contributions have enriched the pool of information available to the Inquiry, but no privilege has been sought, or granted, to ideas and proposals emanating from the sponsoring bodies.

The Inquiry has enjoyed an extremely high level of support from the authorities. Early in the Inquiry's existence, a necessary but simple protocol was devised to authorise the Inquiry staff's access to public schools and sections of the administration of the Department of Education and Training (hereafter the DET). The resultant cooperation has been unstinting, extending from the investment of substantial school executive time and energy in maximising the value of school visits, to senior departmental officers sharing their knowledge of issues of concern to the Inquiry. On the most practical of levels, the DET has made available the office space at the Australian Technology Park from which the Inquiry operates.

The character of the Inquiry has, in large measure, been shaped by the public nature of its processes. By mid-May, 2002, staff, students and parents/carers had been consulted in the course of visits to 136 schools throughout the length and breadth of the state, from Tweed Heads in the north, to Bourke, Brewarrina and Walgett in the west, and Cooma, Wagga Wagga and Tumut in the south, as well as the major urban centres. The schools that have been visited are listed in Appendix 1, together with details of the 27 locations to date in which public hearings have been held. Also listed in Appendix 1 are the major themes of the 760 written submissions received from parents, teachers, students and interested members of the public. The Inquiry's outcomes are grounded in the vast body of material that has resulted from these extensive public consultations, but they are not confined to the advice and

information tended. There has been scope to probe the latter and make direct observations of facilities and the work conducted in the schools; independent scholars and practitioners have been consulted and advantage taken of relevant local and international research; the Inquiry, with assistance, has conducted its own research, including a survey of 683 mid-career primary and secondary teachers.

Much work has been undertaken in the first nine months of the Inquiry and the remaining three months promise to be just as busy. However, rather than following the usual course of completing the entire report before making its contents and recommendations known, it has been decided that circumstances warrant the adoption of a different approach. Literally thousands of people have contributed directly and indirectly to the Inquiry, in some cases submissions being compiled on the basis of the results of surveys by staff and parents of the individuals and households that comprise school communities.

To properly acknowledge the thoughts and suggestions of so many people and avoid matters of great significance to the community being eclipsed by one or two topics of particular current interest, the report will be released in three stages. The present instalment of the first three chapters covers the issues of Teacher Professionalism, Curriculum and Pedagogy, and the Foundations for Effective Learning (including the question of appropriate class sizes). These are all crucial issues but others of great importance will follow. A potential disadvantage of the release strategy that is being adopted is that the many threads linking problematic areas of public education and the means of improving the situation, may remain out of view when the focus is on particular topic areas. To minimise that problem, this first instalment is accompanied by the following substantial *Preview* that sets out some of the major assets of the Public Education System revealed in the course of the Inquiry as well as an outline of the range of issues and concerns that have been raised. In addition, linkages between different topics are 'signposted' at appropriate points in the text.

Chapters of the report to be released over coming months will cover the following issues:

- Specialist schools and social values,
- Buildings, amenities and physical planning,
- Staffing and resource allocation,
- Discipline and student welfare,
- Integration of students living with disabilities,
- Social disadvantage and school communities,
- Education in rural and remote areas,
- TAFE and public education,
- Administrative structure and governance of public education,
- The cost of public education,
- Teacher preparation and induction into professional service,
- Planning capacity and future staffing requirements.

It is planned that the second release of the Inquiry's findings will occur in early July, 2002, and the final instalment will be issued at the end of August, 2002. While the report in its entirety will highlight some issues of considerable urgency warranting prompt action, the intended result is to provide an overall plan for the progressive improvement of the New South Wales public education system over the coming decade.

ASSETS OF THE PUBLIC EDUCATION SYSTEM

This report begins by identifying some of the key assets of the Public Education System that have drawn comment during the Inquiry or commanded attention by virtue of their significance. Contemporary knowledge about the revitalising and development of established organisations stresses the advantage of capitalising on existing 'positives' even if they have not been fully realised, as will clearly be seen is sometimes the case within public education. Of course, no listing of a system's assets can be considered complete or beyond challenge. What follows is, above all else, an attempt to present a more balanced picture of New South Wales public education than would result from simply listing identified shortcomings and criticisms. The order of presentation has been arranged to emphasise that the final asset listed, *teacher commitment,* is probably the crucial one that enables the system to operate as well as it does in the face of resource difficulties and sometimes only partly implemented initiatives.

EXCEPTIONAL STUDENTS

The processes of the Inquiry have afforded contact with some public education students of an extremely high calibre whose verbal presentation, powers of reasoning and social awareness reflect very favourably on their education. The exceptional abilities of these students have been manifested in a number of ways including: their insightful commentaries on the elements of a sound education; their reflections on educational policies and practices; their capacity to publicly critique educational arrangements in their regions in an articulate and reasoned way; and, in some instances, their willingness and ability to create links between the Inquiry and their school communities. An example of the latter was when students at Dorrigo High School insisted that a hearing be conducted in their town. When that proved possible to arrange for a Saturday morning, they organised a series of quality submissions and chaired the proceedings. The townspeople and members of the school community who attended greatly appreciated the students' initiative and the professional way in which they conducted proceedings.

A similarly warm response followed presentations by three representatives of high schools in the Newcastle-Lake Macquarie region. The comments made by a number of speakers at that hearing to the effect that 'the system must be doing something right to help produce such quality students' is a sentiment shared by the Inquiry. There were strong presentations from students during other hearings and visits.

ACCEPTANCE OF THE FULL RANGE OF STUDENTS

A policy that entails challenges for public education but which represents a major asset to the community, is the acceptance of the full range of students. While obviously revelling in assisting high calibre students to achieve their full potential, the public education system is equally committed to helping students of varying degrees of ability, regardless of their backgrounds, to achieve the same goal. Students from families of limited means and limited educational sophistication are welcomed. Moreover, the system attempts to work constructively with students with challenging behaviours, a proportion of these students having come to public education after being rejected by non-government schools. The integration of students with disabilities into mainstream schools, described below as another major achievement, is a further example of the inclusiveness of the public system. It is the

system's willingness and capacity to work with such a broadly representative population of students that marks one of its major social contributions.

STUDENTS' ATTAINMENTS

The emphasis on inclusiveness has not been at the expense of students' attainments. In recent years there has been a focus within the public education system on students acquiring a solid foundation in basic educational competencies. There has been a recent opportunity to assess the outcomes of that endeavour. In 2000 a program conducted by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) made international comparisons of students' proficiency in reading, and mathematical and scientific literacy[*]. Australian students acquitted themselves very well in these assessments. The top 5% of Australian students achieved at the same level in the three specified domains as the top 5% of students in any country, compensating for socio-economic disadvantage, the disadvantaged position of Indigenous students and the poorer reading ability of boys compared to girls. On all three domains New South Wales students performed above the OECD average and in both reading and mathematics New South Wales students were on a par with the highest achieving country[+]. The Inquiry has also been impressed by the constructive use being made of Basic Skills Test (BST) results in assisting teachers to work in a focussed way to improve student performance.

EDUCATION QUALIFICATIONS OF PUBLIC SCHOOL TEACHERS

The Inquiry has been impressed by the overall standard of education of public school teachers. That background has been evident in the classroom teaching that has been observed, discussions with staff, the quality of teachers' collective and individual submissions to the Inquiry, and the comments made by senior students and parents. The Inquiry has not been able to obtain statistics on the professional qualifications of teachers, data that it believes would be well worthwhile compiling in the interests of a proper public appreciation of this most important feature of the public education system. In the absence of statistical information it seems, nonetheless, that all but a very small minority of older primary teachers have at least a first degree and many have higher degrees. The attainment of such a uniformly high standard of qualifications testifies to the DET's belief in its own currency and is an undoubted asset of the system.

QUALITY OF LEADERSHIP IN THE SCHOOLS

On the basis of their scale alone, many of today's public schools are formidable administrative challenges. 22% of primary schools have more than 450 students and 40% of high schools have more than 900 students. Add to the issue of size the more rigorous curriculum requirements that have been introduced in recent times, the juggling of de-centralised finances (often 'close to the bone' when it comes to meeting local needs), increasing parental expectations of schools, the more competitive nature of the 'education market', problems of teacher morale, and the need to manage some poorly behaved students, together with other exigencies, and the management role of a school principal is indeed a testing one. These challenges

[*] The Program for International Student Assessment (PISA)

[+] ACER/OECD, (2001) *How Literate Are Australia's Students*? Melbourne, Australian Council for Educational Research.

are not confined to large institutions, those in charge of one-teacher schools having to deal with many of the same issues. Still, the complexity of the management role is affected by the sheer size of a school community.

One of the issues taken up in the Inquiry's report is whether or not sufficient authority and flexibility have been conferred upon principals to enable them to discharge their challenging responsibilities. There are also questions surrounding the procedures for appointing principals. However, overall, the Inquiry has formed a most favourable impression of the majority of the principals it has encountered in the course of its work. At their very best, they are forward looking managers prepared to work with their communities, including other schools, to obtain what is needed for the advancement of their students. The cooperation across schools in extending the range of subject choices for HSC candidates is only one example of enterprising management, and while the latter may be in need of further encouragement, it is already a positive feature of the public education system.

ADAPTATION TO A MORE DIVERSE POST-COMPULSORY STUDENT POPULATION

Recent decades have seen a remarkable increase in the retention of students to the completion of secondary education. The details are presented in Chapter 2 of the Inquiry's report but where only 10% of those who embarked on high school studies completed the five years of secondary schooling in the late 1950s, the corresponding figure today is around 70%. Present day senior students include many who in earlier times would have left school to take up unskilled and semi-skilled jobs and apprenticeships. There are general social benefits in maintaining the education and training of young people in a world with shrinking opportunities for the unskilled. While it is possible to identify needed improvements to the educational adaptations that have been made to meet the wider range of abilities and academic potential of senior students, credit is due for the scale of what is being attempted and the attainments to date. Persistence with narrower forms of academic education, instead of diversifying course offerings to include vocationally oriented programs, would have been a form of institutional ritualism that assured the failure of the less academically inclined. Moreover, the Inquiry has met many academically gifted young people whose school years have been enriched by the inclusion of an industrial arts or vocational subject in their senior program.

The range of students also requires additional support from the system in finding pathways to employment, or further education and training. Within schools, the Inquiry has seen careers advisors work, often under considerable pressure, with other staff and community networks, to assist young people to develop skills and knowledge and to gain 'real world' experience and contacts as part of planning their own pathways and career choices.

PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES IN MAINSTREAM EDUCATION

Another field of activity that deserves commendation because of the seriousness of the endeavour rather than the completeness of its implementation, is the *integration* of students living with disabilities into mainstream schooling. The details of what is being attempted will be discussed in appropriate detail in the Inquiry's report which will focus on a number of continuing implementation problems. However, the increase in the number of students with disabilities formerly excluded

from the experience of attending a standard school but now able to do so, is impressive. Funding for the integration of students with identified disabilities in mainstream classes (the Funding Support Program) has more than quadrupled from $9 million in 1996-97 to over $50 million in 2002, with at least 17,000 students currently receiving support.

COMPUTERS IN SCHOOLS

Incorporating computers into public education is a basic step in preparing students to take their place in the Information Society. Therefore, the rapid and comprehensive installation of computers in the public schools - approximately 100,000 of them by the end of 2002 - has been universally welcomed. By the end of 2001, 2,100 schools had been connected to the Internet and a $33 million contract has been announced to provide e-mail accounts to all students in schools and TAFE by 2003. The schools are now witnessing the beginning of the first three-year computer upgrade that includes new multi-media computers. Once again there have been implementation problems, some of which are currently receiving attention, and there is an unresolved problem with technical maintenance. Nevertheless, the substantial public investment in school computers is bringing real benefits and represents a major asset of the public education system.

SOME INNOVATIONS IN PEDAGOGY

In Chapter 2 of the Inquiry's report, *Curriculum and Pedagogy,* recognition is given to the achievements of a number of schools that have demonstrated innovations in pedagogy, especially in relation to students in the middle years of schooling. Stated baldly, as is appropriate in this brief *Preview,* what is deserving of commendation is the series of local actions taken rather than a system-wide initiative inviting, or directly supportive of, pedagogic innovation. The detailed justification for that view is to be found in the Report, especially in Chapter 2. Even so, the varied, often small scale experiments that are taking place within the system indicates the existence of a vein of creative potential of no mean significance to the enhancement of the system as a whole.

PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS HAVENS FROM RACISM

Late in the 2001 school year claims were being made about ethnicity-related crime and associated inter-group tensions in Sydney's Western suburbs. The Inquiry decided to hold a hearing for students and families of Arabic background living within the Canterbury-Bankstown area. The well-attended meeting, held at Wiley Park Girls High School and attended by primary and secondary students from neighbouring schools, followed the general structure of other public hearings. Nevertheless, it was hoped that the occasion would provide an opportunity for spontaneous comments on the role played by schools in amplifying, echoing, or dampening ethnic tensions present in the surrounding community.

As the meeting progressed, senior female students and their mothers began to speak of the taunts, intimidations and physical interference, such as having their hajab pulled from their heads, that they experienced in their suburbs. The students contrasted that environment with their experience of being at school. One young woman from the host school declared:

> This is my second home. I am supported here. I feel the same in the company of my teachers and the other students as I do at home.

Other young women spoke in similar terms, emphasising that although they were of the Muslim faith and adhering to some distinct cultural beliefs, they shared the ambitions of their fellow students to do as well as possible academically and progress to professional or other rewarding careers. They appreciated the support and encouragement of their teachers and felt secure within their school communities.

The timing and location of the Wiley Park hearing afforded a particularly good opportunity to assess the role of public schools in relation to combating racism. The positive impression created by that occasion has not been diminished by the observations made during other school visits, or other encounters with parents, teachers and students.

TEACHERS' COMMITMENT

Many of the assets of the public education system have only been partly realised. Good policy objectives have been set and substantial investments made to attain them. However, the investments have been at levels that still fall short of what is needed to do the job. Hence the references in the foregoing discussion to implementation problems in areas like computing, the diversification of course offerings and the integration of students with disabilities, to say nothing of the frequent shortfalls in budgetary provision for necessary local expenditures. The analysis of these problems is a major burden of the Inquiry's report but it is still appropriate in this *Preview* section to ask: Given the difficulties that daily beset the public education system, why does it work as effectively as it does? The evidence of the Inquiry's fieldwork, the public hearings and submissions received converge on one main answer to this question. The system works as well as it does because of the professional commitment of its teachers.

In an era when the relevance of traditional vocational ideals of 'service before self' have come under question, the Inquiry has had numerous reminders of the continuing strength of this value orientation among teachers. More than the sum total of goodwill of the vast majority of individual teachers is involved. Their commitment is sustained by a service tradition that is a basic part of their professional identity. That priority shows in numerous ways: their constant advocacy on behalf of students; their attentiveness to the individual and collective needs of their pupils; the sustained energy and enthusiasm throughout each day of classes; and their willingness to take on duties additional to formal requirements and to invest out-of-school time in planning and other exercises to improve teaching and benefit their students. There are many additional ways in which teachers' dedication has come to light, such as sharing their professional libraries with students and purchasing learning resources specifically for that purpose; using their personal vehicles to transport students in approved instances; downloading learning materials on their home computers; purchasing stationery for students; and in country areas, regularly subscribing to raffles and other fund raising ventures to support students' travel to educational venues. The overall impression has been that teachers' dedication to students' learning and to their profession is the fundamental asset of the public education system.

The 'positives' of the system, including those outlined above, need to be kept in mind throughout the review that is presented in the next section of problematic issues that have arisen in the course of the Inquiry.

CONCERNS IDENTIFIED *via* HEARINGS AND SUBMISSIONS, AND IN THE COURSE OF SCHOOL VISITS*

TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

At almost every public hearing and repeatedly throughout the written submissions and during school visits, teachers have stated that they are being denied the professional status to which they are entitled and which they require in order to perform their role. While this claim has most frequently emanated from teachers, it has received support from parents and other observers of the public education system. Concern has been expressed about the lack of opportunities for on-going professional development of teachers. It has been regarded as self-evident by all stakeholders, including secondary students, that a teacher's initial education and induction into the craft of teaching needs to be up-dated constantly in a society characterised by rapid advances in knowledge and information technology. The need for staff to keep abreast of new knowledge and advances in teaching methods, it has been argued, is made more urgent by the varying capacities, motivation and goals of a student population that, particularly in the secondary years, differs remarkably from what was the case just a few decades ago.

Teachers have submitted to the Inquiry that in order to respond appropriately to the challenges they face requires that they exercise that well-informed discretionary judgement that is a cornerstone of all professions. They have complained that the dominant control exercised by central authorities over curricula and the tight prescriptions surrounding its presentation are counter-productive. Teachers complain that they spend so much time dealing with technicalities connected with the broad design of courses that they are left with little time to prepare their classes and the educational exercises that bear directly on student learning. Little latitude is left for teachers to use their knowledge and experience in drawing the best achievements possible from young people, who range from the academically talented to the poorly motivated and less academically endowed. Teachers have frequently invoked the image of a type of 'academic slot machine' to capture what they feel is the inflexible role they are being asked to play in the education of young people. This occupational self-image, in turn, relates to a strongly perceived mutual lack of trust between teachers and their employers. The efforts of even the most circumspect to remain controlled in their comments dissolve when they recall the environment surrounding the last teachers' salary case. This is viewed as a significant turning point in lowering teacher morale. Teachers express great anger over what they consider to have been the public denigration of their competence and professionalism. They see this lack of respect by their employers as having contributed to a similar attitude by the media, and by parents and students. Teachers frequently state that a repeat of the industrial climate that accompanied the last salary case would see many existing staff depart and discourage good quality people from becoming public school teachers.

Notwithstanding the inclusion of the diagnostic value of the Basic Skills Tests (BST) among the previously listed assets of the education system, a major complaint of many teachers is what they consider to be the over-emphasis on student performance and outcomes as measured by mandatory tests. Those expressing this view believe that the tests detract from the learning process and less tangible outcomes of education, such as self-esteem or a positive orientation to learning.

* Issues refer to concerns expressed by more than one source and usually by many.

Not only is recurrent testing felt to interfere with teaching and learning in ways that truly engage students, but it is interpreted by many teachers as yet more evidence of a lack of respect for their professional judgement. They have reported that they already know in detail who in their classes can read and write, and who is in need of more assistance. They reject the reliance on one-off measures over more sophisticated and long-term assessments. In addition, the increased emphasis on student outcomes, reflected in extensive public interest in HSC results, and in the New South Wales Department of Education and Training's (DET) focus on value-added measures, comes at a time when many teachers feel they have less control over the curriculum than ever before.

Teacher professionalism is under threat from what many perceive as an increased workload, caused in part by the pace of change teaching has experienced in the last decade, with new curricula, reporting requirements and content areas to be covered. Teachers complain that there is little or no time to reflect on their teaching practice, to discuss pedagogical issues with colleagues, or to engage in innovative teaching programs. In this context, proposals concerning a professional association for teachers and teacher registration have been put to the Inquiry, as ways of increasing the public recognition of teaching as a profession, and as of benefit to teachers themselves. This issue is addressed in the full report.

By the testimony of students and their parents, an overwhelming majority of teachers are committed, knowledgeable and enthusiastic encouragers of learning. A minority of teachers give students the impression that they would prefer to be otherwise engaged. When this occurs, frustrated parents, colleagues and students express dismay that some form of constructive intervention, supportive in the first instance, disciplinary, if necessary, in the second, does not take place. There is a preference among most parents and students for trying, in the first place, to assist teachers who are under-performing professionally, as it is their belief that personal pressures or insufficient skill in classroom management can be mistaken for poor motivation.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

The purposes of public education: what students should learn

While the Inquiry has heard on all sides that public education should be purposeful and not subject to distraction, a range of primary purposes, sometimes involving tension between them, have been explicitly or implicitly stated in the verbal and written submissions received. The views and their underlying values have seldom been expressed in naked form. Their adherents have usually acknowledged, at least in passing, the need to take account of varied purposes of public education. However, three main ways of thinking about this can be identified.

The first view concerning the primary purposes of public education has been presented at virtually every public hearing of the Inquiry, during visits to the schools and in submissions. This view privileges respect for the rights and views of fellow humans, appreciating differences among people, collaboration and teamwork, membership of a shared community and an understanding of democratic principles.

It amounts to a *communitarian priority* rather than an emphasis upon individual achievement. It stresses the role of schools in helping to integrate Australian society by fostering understanding and tolerance between people of different backgrounds and potentials. This same perspective emphasises the importance of developing a sense of citizenship and social generosity in young people. The importance of these

priorities has been stressed by teachers and parents, and by students when they have addressed public meetings. They are seen as traditional strengths of public education that have acquired even greater importance in an era of social and cultural divisions.

Second, many teachers and some parents have attached primacy to students acquiring skills in researching issues, weighing data and critically evaluating arguments as a foundation for life-long learning. This group has placed a particular importance on the *processes of learning,* and tends to be critical of curricula demands and teaching methods that, in their view, over-emphasise content at the expense of such features as integrating learning from different disciplinary strands, and attempting to discern patterns of information that lend themselves to theorising and the generation of hypotheses. Senior students have frequently commented to the Inquiry upon their sense of rushing through prescribed syllabuses with inadequate time for reflection upon the importance or disciplinary, social or personal implications of material they have 'learned.'

A third and different perspective encountered by the Inquiry has focused upon the mastery of content assessed in ways that match externally devised calibrations of presumed 'academic excellence'. Many parents and students subscribe openly to a view of public education characterised by *instrumental excellence*. While the common denominator underlying this approach is the cultivation of demonstrable academic success, the Inquiry has encountered versions of the orientation of widely varying sophistication. At one extreme have been those submissions that acknowledge the complexity and variability of abilities and their interplay with human factors. This group, often on the basis of personal experience of their own children, argues that the separate education of young people of outstanding ability draws out the best from them and confirms norms supportive of intellectual excellence. Within this distinct grouping and culture, space is still preserved for citizenship building exercises within and beyond the school. Less 'light and shade' in thinking about the purposes of education surrounds practices like the bussing of primary students from their schools to coaching centres to prepare for the selective schools test. Some students and their parents adopt a particularly narrow approach to maximising at all costs academic results that govern entry to certain university courses. The enthusiasm of some teachers and schools for the latter approach, and the continuing total dependence of most university faculties on small differences in test results for allocating student places, adds a measure of external credibility to the *instrumental excellence* perspective.

There are, of course, people who subscribe, to different degrees, to all three of these purposes of education. And there is much more of a detailed nature that could be said about them. But in broad-brush form, they capture the essence of some key debates that have occurred during the process of this Inquiry, as individual versus collective achievement, and just what public education should focus on, have come under scrutiny.

The primary focus of schools: Learning

A pervasive theme underlying verbal and written submissions to the Inquiry is that teachers want to establish a clear focus on learning as the core task of the public education system. As expressed to the Inquiry, this view is sufficiently comprehensive to accommodate a variety of forms of teaching and learning, some of which (like vocationally oriented subjects) either revive past endeavours of the public education system or are new to it. What executive and classroom staff have been

anxious to emphasise is that their primary professional skills reside in teaching, not in the remedying of social ills of all kinds simply on the grounds that they work with young people during their formative years. "We are not trained psychologists or social workers" has been a recurring remark in staff room meetings and public hearings. They note that their responsibilities have expanded in recent years, to include activities such as medical diagnosis and treatment, child protection notification, bicycle and drug and road safety education, special education, and public relations. Teachers ask that the authorities stop regarding the school curriculum as being infinitely expandable to incorporate 'answers' to every social problem that arises.

On the available evidence, teachers do not wish to exclude themselves, individually, and as members of a school community, from playing a constructive part in assisting young people who have special needs, are at risk, or whose behaviour is both unacceptable and disruptive of the work of other students. A knowledge of the broader social contexts that have helped shape their students' attitudes to learning and behaviour can certainly assist teachers in this task. However, they recognise the limitations of their professional competence and believe that their time can best be spent concentrating on less disturbed pupils while working cooperatively with those heading special units to assist the most disruptive students. They also regret that, under present arrangements, executive staff time in many schools is severely diverted from the leadership of teaching and learning because of the need to attend to students' behavioural and related problems.

Teachers have also commented frequently to the Inquiry, in face to face meetings and submissions, that their capacity to focus on teaching and learning has been encroached upon by paperwork and other administrative activities that were not required in the past. They refer to tasks such as liaising with counsellors and executive staff concerning students with special needs and/or behavioural difficulties, downloading and printing Board of Studies documents, collecting money, troubleshooting computer problems, attending meetings, and reporting on a myriad of student outcomes through profiling. Teachers note that many of these requirements must be undertaken within the same teaching week as in the past. They feel pulled from their primary focus, forced to devote every spare minute to just keeping on top of the paper.

Career-long development of teachers

Teachers' desire to give greater emphasis to teaching and learning has been reflected in many ways. Staff and a substantial number of parents attending the public hearings have indicated that improving teaching ability is a career-long task and needs to be supported at all stages of a teacher's development. That career, they believe, needs to be launched by a confidence-boosting and professionally consolidating induction into teaching. Many participants in the Inquiry have argued that the initial phase should take the form of an *internship* incorporating effective mentoring and a graduated workload, with adequate time for lesson planning and consultation with peers. Opportunities should be afforded for novice teachers to gain confidence in wider aspects of their role, such as building constructive partnerships with parents. The comment has been made by a range of people, but especially Aboriginal parents, that teachers should interact with them on a basis of students' achievements, as well as their educational and other problems. One Aboriginal mother summarised the feelings of others in her community in this way: "When we see a teacher coming we say, 'Oh. Oh! Here's trouble." Novice teachers need the guidance, and time, to learn to relate to students' families in a more positive way.

As things stand, many new teachers, especially in rural and remote areas of the state, have spoken of being 'thrown in at the deep end' and being dissatisfied with the brief orientation program they have received. They have also commented extensively on the fact that their teacher preparation courses did little to prepare them for the realities of the classroom and the practical management of students. A less frequently made observation has been the depletion from the ranks of teachers of significant numbers of staff after only a few years.

Apart from providing support during the foundational stage of teachers' careers, as previously noted one of the strongest messages received from teachers, parents and students is the need for staff to undergo continuous development of their professional competence. In addition to updating their knowledge of specialised areas, teachers have stressed that effectiveness in their field depends heavily on developing patterns of professional collaboration around teaching and learning. A working concept of professional development must be broad enough to embrace teachers working with other teachers, within and across schools, to devise and evaluate new pedagogies, to identify gaps in teacher knowledge, to use their own, as well as external resources to fill those gaps, and to plan more effective learning. The key to fulfilling these needs, it has been stated repeatedly, is having the occasional time outside of fixed classroom commitments to devote to the relevant tasks. The truth of this view appears to have been borne out by the fact that where the Inquiry has located schools with innovatory teaching practices, almost invariably funds have been available from varied sources to purchase some relief time from standard teaching duties.

Replacement teachers

A complicating factor in securing relief time is that casual teachers, the people needed to replace teachers who are ill, on leave or taking part in training, are in extremely short supply in many parts of the state. The Government recently has acknowledged the problem of securing the services of casual teachers and planning is underway to try and find solutions. During the Inquiry's fieldwork primary principals spoke of being forced to settle on class minders who are inappropriately qualified. Frequently the 'solution' is to add primary students who are without a teacher for the day, to other classes. Principals and Assistant Principals report starting their day by making twenty or more telephone calls in a fruitless attempt to locate casual staff. In secondary schools it is said to be a common practice to inform students that their teacher is absent and that they should "Go to the front lawn." The veracity of this report has been borne out by the Inquiry's direct observation of such an instruction being given. Teachers have acknowledged the assistance rendered by the new mobile positions that have been offered to some schools. Some schools also report the advantage of employing a 'casual' staff member over and beyond the school's staffing establishment. These strategies, like all of the issues raised in this introduction, are discussed in appropriate chapters of the report.

Physical limitations on optimal teaching and learning

Teachers frequently indicate their awareness of non-traditional forms of teaching, including the configuring of classes in ways that enhance group learning and the use of team teaching. However, they state that the physical dimensions of standard older classrooms constrain their use of flexible teaching styles. They have demonstrated to the Inquiry that a fully attended class in the upper primary and beyond leaves little or no room for anything other than regimented seating. (This is not the case with

more recently constructed classrooms or older ones with 'break out' spaces that lend themselves to group study or computer work.) The general uniformity of teaching style limits the extent to which account can be taken of the varied learning styles of students. The introduction of computer work-stations and equipment for students with special needs into already cramped standard classrooms further diminishes the opportunity for flexible teaching and learning styles.

Learning resources

Teachers, students, parents and especially teacher librarians have commented on the limited availability and non-currency of learning resources, from special kits to textbooks and library holdings. Similar comments have been made about the age and availability of science, technology and vocational/industrial arts equipment, including the safe and efficient storage of materials. A repeated example given has been the inadequate provision of funds for the purchase of texts and other materials for the new HSC syllabus. It also has been suggested that school and other library services should be linked at District and State levels, thereby increasing the 'purchasing power' of schools in relation to on-line information services (as with TAFE Institutes). Unfavourable comparisons have been made repeatedly in these respects between public schools and private schools in the same location, the advantaged position of the latter being driven home in some instances by the need for public system students to attend private schools to gain experience of working with state-of-the-art equipment. Teachers in the relevant fields have repeatedly questioned the equity of public school students undergoing their training on outmoded equipment while federally supported private schools have up-to-date equivalents at their disposal.

Information technology

While many primary schools have proudly displayed their young students' facility in the use of computers, parents sophisticated in such matters have commented upon the delayed integration of information technology into teaching practice. They wish to see information technology become a natural part of the school environment but believe that by dint of their age and limited training in this field, many teachers are more comfortable talking about, rather than incorporating, information technology into their daily practice. Some of the same parents and teachers who are positively disposed to programmed learning of the basic skills, believe there would be less need for special teachers to deal with learning difficulties if more use were made of computerised instruction in the earliest years. All parties have expressed appreciation of the roll out of computers to the schools but school staff consider that provision incomplete in the absence of technical officers to maintain the equipment, and where necessary, funds for system linkage, such as cabling. That role has fallen upon dedicated but frequently self-taught amateurs, who by their own admission, are often not equal to the task.

So far as students are concerned, many, especially in rural areas, have reported - and demonstrated - great difficulty in using the Internet to access information important for learning purposes. The Inquiry has seen whole school periods expire without students being able to complete an information gathering exercise or even reach a sought after web site. Executive and classroom teachers have reported similar frustrations in accessing web sites and curriculum and other materials that need to be down loaded from DET sources. These difficulties are said to reside in the inability of existing computer infrastructure to cope with user demands, especially

at peak usage times. Since a great deal of the information required by teachers, support staff and students now has to be accessed *via* the Internet, significant disappointment has been expressed about the present difficulties. Not all schools share those difficulties, and in the first term of 2002, a number of schools that had previously complained about the operation of their computer systems, reported some improvement.

Curriculum

Primary teachers in particular, but senior secondary teachers as well, have complained throughout the course of the Inquiry of being required to achieve such a broad coverage of topic areas as to necessitate superficial learning. "The curriculum is overloaded," and "Excessive quantity does not equal rigour," are refrains that have been repeated over and over again in staffroom meetings and public hearings. These comments also relate to the perceived over-centralised control of school education that was referred to above under the heading of 'Teacher Professionalism.' From observing meetings of teachers in planning sessions, a basic problem is the degree of ambiguity that exists in relation to certain syllabus recommendations/ instructions. This is a problem that exists more in the realm of semiotics than literal meaning. The suggested specific topics or elements to be learned, and the suggested times to be devoted to that learning, are asserted by the curriculum authority (the Board of Studies) to be just that - suggestions. Close reading of the curriculum documents bears out the literal truth of the Board's contention. Some teachers, on the other hand, have given every sign of being affected by the authoritative tone of the documents and ascribing prescriptive status to the recommendations that they contain. It is their understanding that the Board of Studies, as the relevant statutory authority, and not their employer (the DET), has final authority in curriculum matters. Teachers have reported great difficulty in gaining clear answers to questions that arise in implementing the curriculum, claiming that responsibility often seems to 'fall between two stools,' namely, the Board and the DET. This concern applies even to the most basic requirement of clarifying what is required by the curriculum. Referral back by both authorities to the curriculum documents tends to grant even more authority to those documents and creates the feeling that there is little room to manoeuvre. As a result some staff report operating in a constant state of conflict as they attempt, in their words, to 'jump at speed through curriculum hoops' while others, with varying degrees of furtiveness, render the curricular more practicable through adaptation based on their practice experience. The cost of the latter course is often an abiding apprehension that they will be brought to book for the exercise of their professional discretion.

In relation to the curriculum, many teachers see the existence of a structural problem in one body (the Board of Studies) setting directions for the core institutional business of teaching and learning, while another (the DET) is responsible for the human resource development and allocation decisions required to give effect to the educational policy settings. In particular, many teachers are insistent that curriculum changes need to be synchronised with the development of appropriate information resources and the professional development of teachers. Several of the professional associations have expressed regret that they have not been invited to play a more significant mediating role in the reform of curricula and in assisting to equip teachers for new teaching challenges. Although substantial sums have been spent by the Board in introducing teachers to recent changes to the Higher School Certificate, the Inquiry has encountered widespread criticism of the scope and methodology of these in-service programs, especially when the 'Train the trainer' model is employed.

The Inquiry has received many comments from teachers that basic HSC courses (for example, in Maths, History and English) are now too difficult for students of low to average ability who previously benefited from, and enjoyed, studies of moderate complexity. At the primary level, the plethora of learning outcomes, often repeated in different KLA documents, is said to be almost overwhelming. This problem is also mentioned at the secondary level.

Teacher librarians

Teacher librarians have a particularly important role to play in schools where information literacy is an essential ingredient of learning. According to many of their colleagues, the teacher librarian should play a major collaborative role with classroom teachers in developing new teaching programs that integrate traditional and electronic resources. Teacher librarians have pointed out to the Inquiry that they are distracted from this core role by the inappropriate assignment of teaching responsibilities and being used to solve timetable problems.

Pedagogy: strategic directions

While a minority of teachers have stated their belief that curriculum developments of recent years have introduced greater certainty and rigour into public education, practically all argue that those changes leave unresolved the question of what constitutes appropriate pedagogies for today's students. Many New South Wales teachers are conscious of innovations taking place elsewhere but apart from a commendable but limited number of pedagogic experiments in state schools they are unaware of a system-level strategic direction supportive of these endeavours. They are generally not conscious of any determination to replace approaches that they experience as unproductive with planned and evaluated alternative teaching strategies. The Inquiry has been made aware of a set of pedagogic principles newly developed by the Board of Studies and has had the benefit of consultation with senior officers of the DET who are formulating strategies for integrating curriculum and training functions especially in relation to a current curriculum review of Years 7-10. This information, along with consultations with interstate authorities concerning their strategic directions, have helped inform the Inquiry's formulation of its own position on the crucial issue of improving pedagogy in our schools.

The serious matter of student indiscipline receives further comment in a later section of this *Preview*. There is, however, a more general issue of disengagement from traditional learning among students in the middle-years of schooling that frequently has been the focus of discussions with secondary teachers. The need to try different educational approaches with young adolescents is widely acknowledged and considerable awareness exists about alternative pedagogies that are being tried elsewhere. However, the Inquiry has encountered only limited evidence of current or planned experimentation with teaching approaches that take account of the needs and preferred learning styles of young adolescents. Nor, apart from brief work experience programs and vocational-training course attachments to industry and community organisations, has the Inquiry encountered much evidence of schools locating learning experiences in sites away from conventional school buildings. An exception has been the creation by some schools of small education units within community centres of various kinds. Here young people whose school behaviour has been disruptive are assisted to modify their conduct while continuing to learn via a combination of conventional and non-conventional means. The Inquiry also has

received counsel from Aboriginal parents in remote areas that conventional schools, in both their material and organisational forms, are frequently counter-productive when it comes to attracting the interest of their children. These parents have urged the adoption of culturally engaging learning sites that are more student and family friendly.

Traditionally designed and operated schools do not work for all young people. Quite apart from problems of indiscipline, the atmosphere, organisation and cultural priorities of standard schools simply grate with some young people. To avoid many of these individuals being consigned to the economic and social scrap heap before their lives have hardly begun, alternative and 'second chance' programs of a tolerant and inviting nature need to be brought into play. An issue for the Inquiry is the preservation of existing programs that meet the described need and the creation of pathways into existing post-school training and education schemes for young adults once they are prepared to take advantage of such opportunities.

PHYSICAL FACILITIES AND AMENITIES

Parents, students and teachers have told the Inquiry that they experience the physical structures of the public schools on several levels as constituting an environment that:

1. either aids or impedes the core activities of teaching and learning by providing, or failing to provide the following -
    - safe, secure and clean learning areas, protection from the elements and a temperature compatible with efficient work performance,
    - basic services and facilities, like wet areas and adequate library facilities, that support teaching and learning,
    - suitable special facilities for students with special needs,
    - convenient and safe storage of equipment and learning materials,
    - conditions in workrooms and elsewhere that conform with occupational health and safety requirements,
    - teaching spaces that are adequate to accommodate comfortably the number of students that are assigned to them and that permit classes to be arranged flexibly in accordance with the purposes and needs of the teaching taking place,
    - outdoor recreation areas that protect students from the extremes of climate,
    - covered ways between buildings,
    - a common-room of sufficient size to meet the total staff's need for work breaks and refreshment, socialising, and work-related meetings,
    - private office space for counsellors and other specialist staff,
    - work stations that provide for the storage of teachers' work papers and teaching resources, and where the provision of staff computers and telephones resembles the standards of other professional and commercial institutions,
    - a predominance in all but exceptional cases of standard rather than demountable buildings or other temporary structures that are inherently structurally unsatisfactory,
    - an assembly/multi-function hall large enough to meet the requirements of each school;

2. undergoes maintenance in a predictable and coherent way in accordance with an asset management plan that -
   - is understood by the school community,
   - attempts to remedy problems rather than deal with them in a piecemeal or stop-gap manner,
   - is not reliant upon the (unequal) fund raising capacity of different schools;

3. symbolises in all its structures and surrounds the quality of the education offered, and the respect in which students and staff are held by the government and education authority

The above issues concerning the physical environment of public schools have been raised repeatedly in submissions and Inquiry hearings. During school visits staff have directly indicated their concerns by pointing out maintenance and structural shortcomings. These have ranged over worn and damaged carpets, blinds, equipment, desks, chairs and playground surfaces. Attention has been drawn to defective guttering, painting, toilets, plumbing and drainage, and leaking roofs. These, and other matters, are covered in the Inquiry's report.

STUDENT WELFARE AND DISCIPLINE

Among the problems most frequently mentioned by parents, teachers and students is the bad behaviour of some students. The problem is serious, disrupts learning and drains the morale of staff. Many observers believe it is the single most important reason for parents transferring their children to private schools. Yet the Inquiry has rarely encountered a school in which the principal and staff members have put the number of students responsible for serious misbehaviour at higher than 5%. The same principals state that dealing with misbehaviour and its consequences takes up a significant part of their working day and the non-teaching time of their deputy. Teachers say that dealing with it can monopolise class time. Students have frequently described the interference caused to their classroom learning by student misbehaviour as their major problem at school. The total lack of respect for teachers and the verbal abuse sometimes showered upon them by disruptive students causes some teachers to 'count the days' until they can flee the situation.

The various standard control measures available to teachers (like detentions and playground clean-up duties) pull some students back into more appropriate behaviour but have little effect on others. Out-of-school suspensions often have no more effect. Indeed, students frequently welcome them. Some students make teachers feel even more powerless to control pupils' misbehaviour by threatening to exploit child protection measures which, despite their necessity, are surrounded by a great deal of misunderstanding. Teachers are fearful that even the best-intentioned physical gesture of concern for a distressed child could result in disciplinary action against them, even though their action was totally asexual. The Inquiry has consulted the Office of the Ombudsman and the DET Investigation Unit in an attempt to clarify these issues.

When principals, school counsellors and other school staff look into the background of a disruptive student they frequently find family and other factors that help to explain the young person's misconduct. There is a feeling that, in combination with the types of temporary withdrawal programs now being devised by some schools and described in some detail in the Inquiry's report, social interventions hold promise of

achieving improved behaviour. Among the reported impediments to working constructively with young people and their families are:

- the shortage in most localities of community service staff who could assist the school;

- the fact that the services of school counsellors are in very short supply and that as much as 40% of their time is spent documenting problems rather than counselling or otherwise dealing with students' problems. The Inquiry believes there are ways available for reducing the amount of paperwork undertaken by counsellors and school staff generally but even if that were done and the number of school counsellors increased, other school-based assistance would be necessary.

To enable principals to concentrate on their core task of leading the teaching and learning functions of a school, another role has to be fashioned that focuses on integrating learning with human support and guidance services in an effort to combat student indiscipline. Teachers place a high priority upon the evolution of such a role to meet the realities of today's schools and today's youth. The cry has gone up at many of the Inquiry's meetings that the social changes and instability of institutions such as the family in recent decades are coming home to roost - and it is the schools that are bearing the consequences. This type of statement, while understandable, is too narrow in its tracing of the effects of social change and overlooks the impact on some families of broader trends, such as sustained unemployment and the increasing geographic concentration of poverty in many Western countries, including Australia. In any event, teachers are the first to claim that the overwhelming majority of young people are congenial to work with and responsive to the education they provide. To this can be added the optimism of teachers involved in working in detached situations with small groups of young people who have failed to respond to other measures.

Involved in the expanded consideration of this topic are issues of the adequate funding of behaviour correction initiatives and an appropriate blending of community and school based temporary withdrawal programs and more controlling and secure 'tutorial centres'. To some extent the question revolves around the relative advantages of investing in services rather than 'bricks and mortar.' Implicated is a question of whether rigidities in the existing staffing formulae for schools block appropriate executive support that some principals urgently need in order to handle problem students effectively.

Student misconduct cross-references with many other strands of the Public Education Inquiry. The students who get into trouble for misbehaviour have often had a long history of learning difficulties. As insightful parents, as well as teachers, have repeatedly pointed out, failure to master the basics in the beginning years can cast a long shadow across the remainder of a young person's school career. This inability and associated embarrassment can easily result in alternative means of attracting attention that deny the value of other people's academic achievements. The problems are compounded by home and community stresses including demoralised parents who have lost the ability to inspire, let alone guide and support their children.

For a number of reasons then, not least the entitlement of every child to a successful launching of her or his career as a formal learner, there is a broad consensus that providing optimum learning conditions in the first three or four years of schooling should be a high priority of the public education system. Given the current problem

of student indiscipline and teachers' experience of associated long term learning difficulties, there are additional reasons for close consideration of the importance of reduced student/teacher ratios in the early years. As is documented in the Inquiry report, there is a considerable body of quality research evidence to support this contention. Teachers believe that the higher academic expectations now placed upon all stages of schooling, the behavioural problems that have just been described, and the special problems posed by 'inclusive' student policies (discussed below), require that class sizes should be reduced across the board. However, they have agreed in almost every instance they have been asked that the early years should be the first priority.

Another issue that cross-references with student misbehaviour is the adequacy or otherwise of novice teachers' preparation for the management of the classroom. Many experienced teachers would add that they too need assistance in dealing with the behaviour of today's youth, a need that might be accommodated by the expanded notion of professional development to which reference has already been made.

STRUCTURE OF PUBLIC EDUCATION

The matters summarised in this section are among the most contested of the issues raised during the Inquiry. In the past fifteen years, the public education system in New South Wales has changed significantly, as the Inquiry has been reminded of at many meetings and hearings. Important structural changes have included dezoning, the increase in the number of selective schools, the creation of a number of senior and multi-campus colleges, and changes to the funding and approval processes for non-government schools. Many of these changes have been made with the stated aim of increasing parental choice in schooling. The importance to many parents of a choice of schools has been raised frequently during the Inquiry. The changes have also helped to transform public education in New South Wales from a neighbourhood-based system of comprehensive schools to a marketplace, in which specialisation and competition among public schools and between public and private schools have, in the opinion of many participants in the Inquiry, replaced a more uniform and cooperative environment. It is the view of many individuals encountered by the Inquiry that these changes have had negative as well as positive consequences.

One repeatedly raised issue bears on the question of the appropriateness of academically selective schooling (see also the earlier discussion of three views on the primary purposes of public education). Teachers, parents and members of the community subscribing to a *communitarian priority* view of public education have emphasised the harm done to student leadership and the culture of education in comprehensive high schools by the 'creaming off' and transfer to selective schools of more gifted and academically skilled students. According to those holding this view, 'selectivity' undermines the ability of public secondary schools to act as a microcosm of Australian democracy and rehearse those attitudes of cooperation and mutual understanding that are essential for the preservation of social cohesion. Besides, it has been argued, the weight of research evidence indicates that little is achieved by selective education. This understanding is based on a comparison of the high school graduation and subsequent university performances of students who have been matched on academic performance at an earlier stage of their education - those students who were admitted to selective schools fared no better than those who continued in comprehensive schools.

Other parents and academics have put equally strong counter-arguments in favour of selective education. They emphasise the communal importance of nurturing individual talent, not only as a value in itself but because of the economic gains obtained and the (presumed) social benefits that result. They argue that the numbers of students lost from the comprehensive schools are small and the benefits to the selected students and the community are substantial. The research evidence cited by opponents of selectivity is criticised on the grounds that it is not based on the results that are obtained from applying contemporary selective education principles. Standard test results from certain New South Wales selective schools, on the other hand, are seen as evidence of 'value adding' by these schools. The Inquiry has been favoured by a confidential presentation of these findings, which are impressive in their own right. However, in the absence of comparative data for matched students who have remained in comprehensive schools, they do not shed light on the comparative impact of the two types of schools.

Recent international research has shown the particular importance of selective schooling principles, including the advancement of pupils across educational stages, in the case of extremely gifted students. Whatever the structural priorities of different groups, there appears to be near consensus on one point. Students who, either directly or indirectly, demonstrate abilities of an exceptionally high order must be afforded the opportunity of developing their talent or talents by means of special programs that incorporate internationally endorsed principles of gifted and talented education. How this might best be achieved is more controversial.

The Inquiry's analyses of these different viewpoints concerning selective education and the relevant research findings are presented in its report together with recommendations concerning other specialist school arrangements. In some instances the evidence received (for example, from a teacher working at a specialist sports high school that has no gymnasium) has testified to the hollowness of some specialist school titles that were assumed at a time when such claims were fashionable. In some instances, such as schools classified as technology high schools, reviews have been held and titles that are not warranted are being shed. At the same time collegiate structures have been created in many localities. These take two forms: senior high schools that work cooperatively with, and receive students from 'feeder' junior high schools, and 'stand alone' senior high schools. Some of the latter take students from surrounding comprehensive high schools to the detriment of their senior numbers.

The conversion of former comprehensive high schools to junior high schools has led to some of the more emotive public hearings staged by the Inquiry. Contributing to this emotion have been perceptions by parents and teachers that school communities have not been consulted adequately or that the consultative processes have not been authentic. In at least one instance, staff and students have interpreted the unprepared physical and educational state of a new college as reflecting a 'win at all costs' attitude by the authorities. Where proponents of the establishment of some colleges see an opportunity for junior high schools to concentrate on developing pedagogies more appropriate to young adolescent students, opponents interpret the move as a downgrading of the 'feeder' schools and a restriction on the careers and professional development of teachers.

A less combative view that has been put to the Inquiry, especially by principals, is that ways of catering to the academic and social needs of senior students should be fashioned in the light of local opportunities and circumstances, rather than fastening onto a single approach such as the creation of colleges. According to this view, where serious problems exist in retaining students till the completion of

the senior years, and a disproportionate share of resources is being expended in servicing the educational needs of those who do continue, an aggregation of senior students in one centre makes educational, social and economic sense. In these circumstances a senior college may, as a consequence of sheer numbers, open up subject choices for students while enabling more resources of all kinds, including professional 'know-how,' to be devoted to dealing with the educational disengagement of early adolescent students.

On the other hand, the analyses of local needs and opportunities conducted by principals in other localities (such as Wagga Wagga and Central Newcastle) have indicated the merits of non-collegiate solutions to the needs of senior students. These are schools that appreciate the opportunity to continue to work with students through all stages of their young adult development, both challenging and rewarding. Their strategies, revolving around managed forms of inter-school cooperation in areas like HSC subject offerings, are echoed in other regions of the state by smaller scale cooperative arrangements between public schools, and across the private and public school sectors. At the same time, the schools concerned are not facing major contractions in their numbers of students so that there is less need to find more drastic structural solutions.

The collegiate structure has been introduced hastily in a number of locations. This has led to some distrust within the affected communities, and to anxiety in high schools with falling enrolments, which fear that they may be next in line for closure or amalgamation. Parents wonder if the high school they enrol their children in today will still be there when their children are in Year 12. These uncertainties have to be weighed against the fact that the collegiate model also offers opportunities for innovation and educational enrichment, as already evidenced by some campuses. Whatever local decisions are taken, there is widespread support for the view that the public education system forfeits its integrity when one of its units (for example, a senior college) promotes itself by drawing invidious comparisons with other units (for example, comprehensive high schools). Teachers, parents and students insist there is a difference between a school taking pride in its achievements and what it has to offer, and flaunting its material advantages over 'rival' public schools. To many the latter compounds the unfairness that they judge to exist between the level of government endowment of well funded private schools compared to their less adequately funded public counterparts.

SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY

Teachers and already involved parents view the participation of a substantial number of parents and community members in the life of schools as highly desirable. Given Australia's multicultural composition, it is important that schools are responsive to the range of viewpoints, values and cultural mores that make up contemporary Australia. It is believed that such a pattern of community involvement helps to align public education with local needs and goals, enhances the working partnership between teachers and families, supports the enhancement of educational programs and projects, provides helping hands for school services from tuck shops to reading assistance and ground improvements, and helps with fundraising. The Inquiry has seen remarkable examples of stoic effort, usually by relatively small bands of committed parents, enabling schools to acquire textbooks, learning resources, computers, additional teaching staff, small buildings, canopies and weather shields, building refurbishments, and a range of items that the parents are left feeling should be available as part of the state's funding of public education. They have put that view directly to the Inquiry. Moreover, the systematic appraisal of levels of

fundraising within localities of varying degrees of economic and social wellbeing has brought home the inequities that result from reliance on locally raised funds as a basis for acquiring educational essentials.

Less common in the Inquiry's experience has been the involvement of parents and supporters in deliberations about the structure of education programs or the methods used to teach them. There have been exceptions. For example, one sophisticated primary school P&C group is urging the incorporation of information technology into many and varied facets of classroom activities and encouraging a wide exploration of basic principles of technology. Another P&C in a predominantly Aboriginal town is supportive of the local principal's desire to enter a partnership with a university to sponsor two promising students and thereby inspire others to succeed academically. In one selective high school, parents and students are strongly represented on all decision-making committees in the school, including those dealing with teaching and curriculum. The overall picture, however, is one of 'leaving academic matters in the hands of the experts'. An issue for the Inquiry is how local community involvement in public education can be taken beyond material concerns to appropriate participation in educational decision-making. A related concern is how students can be afforded similar opportunities so as to take advantage of their experiences and ideas, and to help make a reality of the notion of schools being a training ground for citizenship. Arrangements that afford the desired opportunities have been documented by the Inquiry but they have been rare.

There have many reminders in the course of the Inquiry of the ways in which individual and community problems become identified in and around schools. Because schools form a vital part of the economic and social fabric of communities, particularly in disadvantaged and non-metropolitan localities, they represent a potentially valuable site for connecting individuals and families in need to services and resources that might assist them. Some good examples of this approach are to hand and an issue for the Inquiry has been how schools can participate in local community service systems without losing their primary focus on education.

SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE

While there is clear overlap between some of the issues discussed above and social disadvantage, the latter also demands attention in its own right. Public schooling, in offering a chance to all children to learn and to achieve to the best of their ability, can ameliorate some of the entrenched patterns of social and educational inequality in the wider society. The Inquiry has encountered many committed teachers who choose to work in socially disadvantaged areas, and who feel proud of the contribution they make to enhancing the life opportunities of their students. They do this in the face of very significant odds. The student mobility rate in some schools is over 25%, meaning that on average, a quarter of the school population turns over each year. This is especially so in areas of high unemployment and/or public housing, and makes the cultivation of a strong commitment to schooling, and a positive school culture, difficult to attain. The Inquiry has been reminded in visits to schools serving disadvantaged areas that the social dislocations flowing from unemployment, poverty, inadequate housing, fragmented and inadequate community resources and support, and problems of physical and mental health have a direct impact on schooling.

Behind the frequent claim by teachers that they are increasingly called upon to respond to 'welfare' concerns is the reality that students bring with them to school the multiple problems that they experience in their family and community life. For these

children, school provides one of the most stable elements in their lives, as many teachers have commented. School can be a haven for children whose home lives are chaotic, including those who are in foster care. But for schools to engage these children, to give them a good education, and to help them achieve fulfilling post-school lives, provisions need to exist that are frequently lacking. These include case management systems for the most at-risk children, assistance with behaviour management issues, and individualised plans that address gaps in knowledge and skills. Ideally, schools with high numbers of socially disadvantaged children would be staffed with the most experienced teachers in the state, as their needs are often the most challenging. However, the inquiry has not found this to be the case. Teachers and parents have also expressed concern at apparent inequities in funding for disadvantaged schools, notwithstanding top-up funding from programs such as the Priority Schools Funding Program (PSFP). Possible ways of improving the situation are the subject of recommendations presented in the Inquiry's report.

CHILDREN WITH IDENTIFIED DISABILITIES AND/OR LEARNING DIFFICULTIES

The past few years have seen a dramatic change in the way in which students with disabilities are accommodated within the education system. In parallel with other social movements towards inclusiveness and non-discrimination in our society, students with disabilities are now encouraged to participate in the regular classroom, wherever possible. It is argued that this gives them access to peers who can act as role models, appropriate access to an educational curriculum, and acceptance as valued members of the school community. In other words, there are argued to be strong moral as well as practical reasons for including disabled students within the wider school community. The alternative of segregating disabled students in special schools, is viewed by some as unacceptable.

There is much to commend the move to inclusion, and the Inquiry has witnessed young people whose lives have clearly been enriched by it, not only students with disabilities themselves, but often, able-bodied students who have benefited from knowing them. It must be said, however, that no issue in relation to schools, with the possible exception of student behaviour, has attracted as much attention and criticism from teachers. The majority of teachers are in full support of inclusion and integration for many students, but only if it is, in their words, "adequately resourced". The Inquiry has heard the repeated refrain that inclusion to date has been achieved with too much haste, and with far too few resources, notwithstanding a considerable injection of funds from the DET. Teachers remark that students with disabilities require more class preparation time, particularly as most teachers lack appropriate training in special education and are unfamiliar with the specific needs of students with particular kinds of disabilities. They feel that they have been left to deal with the ensuing demands without necessary professional development or sufficient in-class support. Counsellors and others in schools, who coordinate the applications required each year for ongoing funding under the Funding Support (Integration) Program, speak of the immense amount of paperwork and number of meetings involved. They express frustration when the result of these efforts is a few hundred dollars a year, or no funding at all. Teachers believe that the rules for eligibility for funding are forever changing to limit the number of eligible students, and that there is a lack of appreciation of how difficult their job has become.

One of the major complaints about integration concerns what are perceived to be arbitrary cut-off points above which students are only eligible for assistance already provided to schools, such as Support Teachers Learning Difficulties (STLDs), or reading recovery teachers. There is a widespread view that there are many more

students in need of help with their learning than are currently given assistance. While smaller class sizes would help teachers give individual attention to students in the early years, teachers say that at present they can see some students being set up for future educational failure, as their learning needs are ignored through lack of resources in the early years. These issues are addressed in more detail in the full report.

INCLUSIVENESS

In this section of the *Preview*, the Inquiry refers briefly to a number of groups within the community who may, for one reason or another, have special needs with respect to public education. These groups include those from different ethnic communities, those whose primary language is other than English, and people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander decent. Also discussed under this heading are possibly distinctive needs of boys and girls.

For schools that have considerable numbers of children whose first language is not English, and for individual students who do not speak English, the provision of timely ESL assistance is essential. Submissions to the Inquiry suggest that intensive initial English assistance is provided for to a varying extent within the public education system, both through Intensive English Centres and within mainstream schools. However, for students who have gained very basic proficiency in English, follow-up help for 2nd and 3rd phase English proficiency is often not forthcoming. This is of concern, as many of these children do not have exposure to fluent English at home, and need the extra help to reach age-appropriate levels of English literacy. Without this, they will be unable to fully access the educational curriculum or to achieve to the fullest possible extent.

The Inquiry has benefited from a number of discussions with Aboriginal parents, Aboriginal Education Assistants (AEAs), and teachers and principals in schools with a significant number of Aboriginal students. One of the key concerns is the lack of qualified AEAs in schools that meet the eligibility criteria. A qualified AEA is an essential link between the local Aboriginal community and the school and an important resource to enhance learning outcomes. The Inquiry received some reports that suggested that AEAs were not used within the schools to fully achieve these outcomes. The argument has also been put that new teachers in predominantly Aboriginal schools need to be systematically introduced into the cultural protocols and background of the community within which they will work, and that Aboriginal parents and community leaders should play a key role in such a program. Suggestions to the Inquiry around curriculum and pedagogy included strategies to reduce the disproportionate number of Indigenous young people in special units, efforts to develop culturally appropriate pedagogy and learning environments, and efforts to ensure a more consistent application of the Aboriginal Education Policy.

In some ways gender, once so intensely debated in education circles, has been a ‘sleeper’ issue during this Inquiry. Issues such as the possibly gendered nature of the formal and informal curriculum in schools have not been mentioned. In relation to girls, few submissions have mentioned their special needs or concerns; in relation to boys, more comment has been made, but often with gender (maleness) assumed rather than stated, when issues such as welfare and discipline are being discussed. There is a common perception, however, that boys as a group - or at least *some* boys - have needs that are not being met at present. Boys, the Inquiry has been told, need positive male role models at school, especially as many families lack adult male

figures, and fewer males are entering teaching. Boys are said to be confused, uncertain how to 'be' in the world, not quite fitting in to the requirements of formal schooling. Parents have expressed concern, for example, that in primary schools, the so-called boisterousness of boys is not accepted and may actually be punished. A significant minority of older boys are perceived by teachers to be poorly engaged with education, unable to read or communicate well, prone to physical ways of resolving conflict, apt to be verbally abusive and distrustful of authority, and likely to drop out after causing disruption to the education of their peers.

The Inquiry is aware of the complexity and sensitivity of some of these matters. While girls' retention and Year 12 success rates are above those of boys, girls as a group still perform less well in post-school options, in part due to less career-oriented HSC choices. On the other hand, some males have always benefited from public education, and increasingly, academically able girls are following a similar trajectory. Advocates on behalf of boys have capitalised on popular representations of girls as more successful than boys at school, and argued for a transfer of resources from girls to boys. But this argument ignores the fact that girls and boys as a group are not homogeneous. Clearly, a functional education system will be responsive to the range of behaviours that boys and girls may evidence reflecting particular needs. In addition, children of both sexes who experience difficulty attaining adequate levels of basic skills in English literacy, computer literacy and numeracy, are equally deserving of special assistance. It is important that all students are given assistance to maximise their post-school opportunities, and apprised of the likely consequences of different subject choices - choices that intersect with gender and socio-economic status.

ADMINISTRATION AND GOVERNANCE

There are few public education systems as large as that in New South Wales, with more than 2,200 schools and 60,000 teachers. It is also, in the view of teachers and some administrators, a highly centralised system. Teachers in schools report feeling distanced from the DET, subject to directives from on high, or worse, ignored and frustrated in their attempts to teach as effectively as possible. They talk of not being consulted about curriculum additions and changes, and of their concerns not being acknowledged by those further up the line.

One aspect of the governance of public education that has drawn considerable comment, mainly from teachers, is the purpose and responsibilities of the District level offices of the DET. A common (but not universal) view is that despite the presence within District Offices of a range of specialist support staff, little tangible assistance is rendered to schools, or at least, much less than in the old days of regions and the inspectorate. Staff members in some District Offices have been remarkably frank in acknowledging their limited ability to be of assistance, a fact they attribute to the paucity of their numbers in comparison to the scale of demand for their services. That assessment could simply be accepted as part of the resource equation but for claims made in administrative circles in New South Wales that somehow the answer to many of the current problems of the public schools resides in the more effective utilisation of District level capacities. District officers have indicated that a *minor* increase in resources could be achieved by reducing some positions in District offices in areas with small numbers of schools. There also have been other recommendations concerning the more effective practical use of the District Office's local knowledge of matters like staffing profiles and property needs, information which is presented in the final report.

The more general issue of concern to many executive and classroom teachers is the role of the District Office in ensuring a two-way flow of information within the public education system. That it conveys the requirements and policies of the central administration to the schools under its jurisdiction is acknowledged and accepted. What is more doubtful in the minds of school staff is that the District Office operates as a unit of administration to keep the Centre informed of the day-to-day realities within schools and the practicability and success of departmental policies. Of course, senior officers of the DET themselves make direct observations of the functioning of the schools on-the-ground, but many teachers believe that this needs to be complemented by a constant monitoring of the needs of what is a huge administrative system. On the evidence available to the Inquiry, the District Offices appear not to believe that one of their key functions is to keep senior management apprised of the problems and needs of schools within their area. Rather, the Inquiry has encountered the attitude that an efficient District Office deals with its own difficulties and keeps any problems under control. This would be commendable if many of the solutions were resource neutral, the District Officers believed that to be the case, and the central administration was helped at an appropriate level of generality to keep abreast of regional problems and their solutions.

A split between policy formulation and implementation in education in New South Wales is not limited to curriculum matters. In the name of devolution and privatisation, a number of critical changes have been made to the management of resources in New South Wales schools. The creation of global budgets with which schools manage most of their administrative responsibilities gives schools flexibility, but has brought with it some negatives. First, principals have become responsible for a wide range of matters that were previously dealt with centrally, and second, more and more responsibilities have been incorporated into the global budget without a commensurate increase in its value. Annual reporting requirements and the GST have only added to the burden. This in turn has placed additional pressure on ancillary staff, many of whom now manage significant budgets and generate numbers of reports, but are not paid as bursars or accountants. Likewise, principals have lamented the amount of their time spent on day-to-day administration rather than educational leadership. On the privatisation side, the Inquiry has been inundated with criticisms of the outsourcing of school cleaning services, which are universally perceived to have reduced the cleanliness of schools, and of the abolition of cyclical maintenance in favour of a contract system in which the control of costs is paramount. Some of these matters require further investigation, as explored in the full report.

Finally, perhaps because of the size of the public education system in New South Wales, a number of administrative rigidities have been noted that make life difficult for schools and cause significant resentment. Not least among these is the existence of a range of tight formulae governing the allocation of numbers of teachers, ancillary staff, executive positions, general assistants, classrooms, and other things. Enthusiastic schools will always feel that they could make good use of additional resources. The finite resources of government and the need to treat schools equitably mean that some consistent formulae must be employed to ration teachers, classrooms, money and the other resources that enable programs to operate. However, throughout the Inquiry questions have been raised about whether some of the formulae used for this purpose achieve the desired objective of equity. In particular, criticism has been levelled at the categorical nature of the formulae, the calculation of entitlements on the basis of thresholds that decide whether a school is, or is not, eligible for something. While accepting that resource allocation formulae must exist, there has been widespread criticism of the bluntness of the criteria. For example, a drop in a school's enrolment figures from 26 to 25 can entail

substantial teaching and ancillary staffing losses as well as the loss of a demountable classroom. The District Office can moderate these decisions on the basis of further anticipated changes but the point at issue is the non-proportionate and non-graduated nature of the resource adjustment. Similar concerns exist in relation to other school entitlements including the creation of a non-teaching principal position. The tying of general assistant positions to school enrolments exclusive of the size of the grounds that such appointees tend, is another resource allocation approach that is widely questioned.

A related set of concerns raised with the Inquiry bears on the unweighted nature of some formulae that teachers believe should take account of the socially disadvantaged backgrounds of the students attending a school. This issue is taken up in the Inquiry's report.

TAFE AND PUBLIC EDUCATION

The most important inter-connections between TAFE and the public education system for the present purposes concern collaboration in the provision of vocationally related education and providing 'second chance' education to students who, for a variety of reasons, are unable to cope with standard schooling. One avenue for the latter is admission to the Certificate of General and Vocational Education (CGVE). The Inquiry has had contact with the providers of this Certificate course and has conducted a small survey of students. A difficulty for the Inquiry has been identifying those elements of the many submissions about TAFE that have a bearing on its terms of reference. One of the most frequently made criticisms of TAFE has been its excessive reliance upon casual staff. This is said to impinge negatively upon the teaching of the Certificate of General and Vocational Education (CGVE) in so far as staff are sometimes inaccessible to students outside of class times. The strongly competitive environment in which TAFE operates is said to be another general impediment to the CGVE course because, regardless of its social importance and the numbers seeking to take advantage of it, the course is cross-subsidised by other more commercial TAFE enterprises and the numbers are rationed. For some commentators the need for the course to be financed in this way reflects upon the adequacy of funding in general. The issue for the Inquiry is whether, given the very favourable reception afforded by a group of 'at risk' young people to the CGVE, a more economical or effective program can be devised.

Where school students undergo vocationally relevant studies at TAFE both the staffing and equipment used generally receive praise from both participants and school staff. There are problems in timetabling and an issue about the proportion of teaching credit points involved that should be transferred from schools to TAFE. Given the more recent involvement of many school teachers in vocational education, a question is sometimes raised as to why TAFE staff cannot share standard teaching and learning materials with their school-based colleagues.

Recent developments have seen not only Vocational Education and Training (VET) frameworks accepted for HSC study, but VET courses accredited for the University Admissions Index (UAI). This represents a significant change in the curriculum pathways available for students in the senior high school, a change that has caused some disagreement at public hearings and in submissions to the Inquiry. Some teachers are concerned with the direction of change. While they recognise that the HSC must cater to a range of students with diverse educational and career plans, they are worried that vocational training runs counter to the notion that the

purpose of the HSC is to provide students with an intellectually demanding general education.

A more frequent set of concerns is about the implementation of VET in schools. The competency-based requirements of VET differ from those of other HSC courses, a point that extends to teachers, who must regularly update their training to retain their teaching certificate. There are concerns that the resources available to students who undertake VET in schools are inferior to those for students doing the same courses in TAFE, in terms of class sizes, facilities and equipment. There also appear to be a series of practical issues: work placements are difficult to organise, especially in rural areas; and there is a heavy workload involved in organising placements and in monitoring the VET program.

SCHOOLS IN RURAL AND REMOTE AREAS

The problems associated with the operation of computers in non-metropolitan areas have already been mentioned. Inequities of other kinds affecting rural students have been raised with the Inquiry. All parties have stated that there is a general difficulty in accessing cultural repositories and performances, like art galleries, museums, musical recitals and dance and drama presentations, including sites and performances of direct relevance to school curricula and examinations. Some technical field excursions necessarily involve visits to urban areas (for example, to study a chemical plant or to observe urban geographic phenomena); seminars and lectures that help students to prepare for the HSC are frequently provided by metropolitan universities: and sporting events and competitions which schools believe are important to individual and school development, frequently entail considerable travel, if not to urban areas then at least to distant towns.

Intra-state airfares are expensive so that hiring a bus is usually the most economical way of travelling to the above-mentioned venues. Even this approach places a heavy financial burden not only on the students' families but also on those teachers and carers who are required to accompany the students as supervisors. Raising money by way of raffles and like means does not overcome the problem because the costs are essentially transferred to the same people, including teachers. To keep costs to a minimum, wherever possible study visits to metropolitan areas are compressed to a single day with resultant stresses and strains. When that is not possible then additional accommodation costs are entailed.

Teachers have repeated the comments made in relation to country students (above), when describing their own continuing education needs. As students from Lismore and Inverell to Dorrigo and Vincentia have reminded the Inquiry, failure to meet teachers' continuing education needs has consequences for the quality of education received by country pupils. Even when training and development opportunities are offered in country centres like Wagga Wagga, teachers throughout the school District have to decide whether to miss part of their day's teaching (thereby imposing a burden on colleagues), possibly drive up to 200 kilometres each way, arrive home late and be ready to teach the next day. When the desired professional development opportunity is in a major city, then the travel, accommodation and enrolment costs are considerable. An additional expenditure for hiring casual teachers is similar in both the city and the country but securing the services of a casual teacher is extremely difficult in many country areas.

A number of possible ways of narrowing the gap in educational opportunities available to country and city students have been placed before the Inquiry.

They range from, wherever practicable, bringing more educational opportunities to country centres (sometimes by reviving past touring arrangements and assisting regional universities to host HSC workshops), to lessening the costs of city stays by means of government provided hostel accommodation, and weighting the operating grants of non-metropolitan schools to make country and city funding more equitable. These proposals are evaluated in relevant chapters of the report.

PUBLIC EDUCATION FUNDING

Finally, much can and will be said concerning the funding of public education in the full report. What follows is a very brief summary of key issues, noting also that implicit in many of the foregoing comments relating to different aspects of public education, is concern about the adequacy of current funding levels. In fact, this has been one of the most pervasive issues raised during the Inquiry, and has been expressed in several different ways. Some teachers and professional bodies have pointed to Australian expenditure on education compared to equivalent OECD countries. Some have provided detailed information on Commonwealth and State government expenditure on public education over the past few years. Evidence for the increasing costs of education has been provided and includes the rise in Year 12 retention rates over recent decades, the introduction of technology in schools, the integration of significant numbers of students with disabilities, and the increase in social dislocation in society that impacts on children and schools - to name a few relevant considerations. Other commentators have focused on levels of funding to private schools, or on the adequacy or inadequacy of school global budgets and staffing formulae, or on the wage relativities of teachers. Much detailed material has been provided to the Inquiry concerning these issues. In each case, it is claimed that public education has come off second best in funding terms, with either less money expected to cover more, or the same money expected to suffice, despite greater expenses. Concerns that public education is under-funded are exacerbated by a strong perception among teachers, parents and other community members that many private schools can now afford lavish facilities, while many public schools are struggling to provide basic amenities. Clearly, the accuracy of these claims needs to be tested, and this is addressed in the full report. However, the Inquiry is persuaded that public education in New South Wales has been significantly under-funded over a considerable period of time. Funding is not simply an issue of limited resources. As many individuals have indicated, it is an equity issue, and the reduction in funding to public schools is seen to have affected the most disadvantaged schools disproportionately. This in turn has implications for the quality of education that can be provided in the public system, and for the extent to which education can continue to offer avenues of real opportunity to students in need.

The *Preview* of concerns raised in school visits, submissions and public hearings having been completed, attention will now focus on the Inquiry's findings, staring with the issue of Teacher Professionalism.

CHAPTER 1
THE ISSUE OF TEACHER PROFESSIONALISM

Teachers are under pressure not to think of themselves as professional educators. We are more and more interpreters of the written word from above and required to respond to the pressures that arise from the community. The system does not recognise the vocational functions that we perform and for which we are not paid. We are educators. We make a professional input at every stage, from the curriculum to the building we work in. We should actually start taking the high ground and say these are the things that, as professional educators, we insist on having a strong say in and control of. The whole idea of professional educators giving away the curriculum to a non-teacher body is ludicrous. We all sit here and complain, and I do too, about the incredible pressures this situation puts on us as professionals. We are asked to try and teach someone else's recipes that don't fit our particular students, our particular communities. There is a continual mismatch because we are trying to do something that our profession knows we can't do properly.
A country teacher, Dubbo Hearing, August, 2001.

The above statement was made at the first hearing of the Public Education Inquiry, held in conjunction with a meeting of country teachers at Dubbo in late August, 2001. While the public school and TAFE teachers present raised a wide range of issues, the idea of 'loss of professionalism' was a recurring theme. It has remained so throughout the Inquiry. The teacher, whose thoughts are featured above, made her comment after colleagues had made a series of remarks about status aspects of their role. They had referred to deterioration in:

- the respect extended to them by students, parents, and governments,
- salaries, relative to other vocational groups, and
- their working environment, including the physical state of staff workrooms and facilities.

Many of the submissions received from, and numerous comments made by, teachers during school visits and public meetings have been of a similar nature. Issues of the type identified above affect the recruitment, retention and sustained commitment of the single most important component of the public education system, the teachers, with major implications for the educational advancement and wellbeing of students. What the teachers have to say about the environment in which they work will, therefore, be presented in some detail in this chapter. The teachers' comments are, for the greater part, complaints about policies, administrators, resources and lack of support for the professional conduct of their work, complaints that the Inquiry has attempted to deal with on their merits. Still, it is a sobering fact that many of the things that teachers complain of, while grounded in local circumstances, strongly echo the thoughts and sentiments of their fellow professionals in other Western countries. The evidence for that connection will be presented later in the discussion.

The analysis of professional issues in this chapter proceeds on a basis of locating teaching within an understanding of what is implied by 'professionalism' in our society, the prerogatives and obligations of such a role, and the varied ways in which teachers claim their professionalism has been undermined with consequent damage to their vocational effectiveness. By way of responding to the teachers' claims, priority is given to the most efficacious and economic means of bringing about desired changes, preferably multiple beneficial changes that result from a single

intervention or investment. This strategy will be apparent in the importance attached later in this chapter to the professional development of teachers. Not all of the areas of professional activity that are in need of reform are discussed fully in this chapter but their importance is recognised and indications given of the intention to develop these lines of reform in later sections of the report.

Throughout the chapter reference will be made at different points to the results of a survey of mid-career teachers undertaken as part of the present Inquiry. The full results of the survey of 683 teachers (60.3% primary, 39.7% secondary) will be published shortly by the Inquiry. It will need to be kept in mind that the average age of the 683 respondents was 42.7 years (75% being between the ages of 37 and 46 years), that 73.7% were women and 26.3% men, and 62% resided in the urban areas of Sydney, Newcastle and Wollongong, with 38% being outside of those areas. The survey was conducted on behalf of the Inquiry by two independent academic researchers[1] and the questionnaire made no reference to other findings of the Inquiry. Where the survey findings are inserted into the present text they appear in a grey-toned box.

RESPONSIBLE PROFESSIONALISM

Professional issues raised with the Inquiry

The teacher's comment that introduced this chapter went beyond questions of professional status. She emphasised teachers' need to make crucial educational judgements that are informed by specialised knowledge and experience, and which have the benefit and wellbeing of those served as the primary commitment. The claims that teachers make in these respects are prior to, and ultimately determinative of, claims to professional status.

Inquiry Survey **Table 1.1: Scope to Exercise Professional Judgement**
(sample – 683 teachers in their mid-careers)

LOW	MODERATE	FAIRLY HIGH	VERY HIGH	MEAN	STD DEV
12%	35%	38%	15%	2.57	0.89

At the heart of every profession is sanctioned control over a specialised body of knowledge, and a commitment to service. In the most solidly established professions a measure of autonomous management is granted on the understanding that professionals will put the welfare of the persons served, and society, above their own, and that they will be governed by a code of ethics. This, at least, is the classic conception of a profession and many of the arguments put to the Inquiry appear to have been based on it. Teachers' claims to expertise have been limited to the central task of 'educating', the specialised skills of other participants in schooling, such as human service personnel, being not only recognised but welcomed as a means of enabling teachers to concentrate on what they can do best. The breadth of what is encompassed by education is debated amongst teachers but in varying degrees it includes notions of students' personal development and their assumption of social responsibility. A view commonly presented to the Inquiry is that the business of teaching has been progressively expanded to incorporate so many social components that teachers are distracted from their more central tasks.

[1] Associate Professor Alan Watson, UNSW, and Mr Neville Hatton, University of Sydney

One Sydney-based primary teacher neatly encapsulated the views of many of her colleagues when she informed the Inquiry:

> Teachers no longer have teaching as their core business. A whole plethora of disciplines: medical, integration (of children with disabilities), main streaming, bike education, drug education, child protection notifier (of child abuse), road safety, social work, counselling, mandatory cardio-pulmonary respiratory training have been added to our core business.

There is light and shade to the question of what constitutes an effective and relevant curriculum and the issues are canvassed in detail in Chapter 2: *Curriculum and Pedagogy.* Suffice it to say that in the fulfilment of what they regard as their central tasks, teachers lay claim to that degree of specialised knowledge and commitment to service that warrants trust in their professional judgement. That is, they say that they should be trusted to interpret educational objectives in ways that match the needs and capabilities of their students. The extent to which this expectation currently is extended to professions generally is a question warranting further consideration (below). However, the Inquiry has been left in little doubt that many teachers resent the imposition of limitations on what they regard as the proper exercise of their professional discretion. One country primary teacher regards the current emphasis on teacher accountability as a 'professional straitjacket':

> Accountability has become a mantra for government. In practice, his thas become the de facto purpose of education. It is increasingly evident that teachers teach towards the Basic Skills Tests, where ideally the latter should be but snapshots. Another example is the massive amount of work done by the executive in preparing reports justifying activity, such as the Annual Report. These, in turn, are straitjackets – a *pro forma* based on company reports, dry and irrelevant to most receiving parents. Benchmarking and profiling, using indicators against which specific skills are assessed, has become a further example of fine ideas co-opted to limit creativity and flexibility in favour of maintaining control over teachers and teaching … There is a need to re-establish the professionalism of principals and teachers as educators, rather than as mere elements of a system of accountability.

Another teacher laments the disengagement of his colleagues from curriculum development:

> Many teachers view the process as de-professionalisation. In the past, there was scope for inventiveness of content/methodology whereas teachers must now adhere to the syllabus with its mandatory content and are under constant pressure to ensure students tackle everything in the syllabus because they will be tested at each stage.

Other submissions state resentment of the amount of time and energy absorbed in meeting accountability requirements. One submission by the organisation Specific Learning Difficulties, New South Wales (SPELD) commented:

> It seems that we have become bogged down in the drama of life, a melee of political correctness and paperwork (endless and rather mindless reporting and documenting which appears to serve no particular purpose), rather than concentrating on the simple and specific needs of the individuals to be able to participate in everyday life at the end of the education process.

For some other teachers, the frustration of their sense of professionalism stems from a feeling of constant rush to meet excessive requirements imposed by others detached from the realities of busy classrooms. A Western Sydney primary teacher stated:

> I am a Year 6 teacher at (an outer-metropolitan Sydney) Public School with over 16 years of teaching experience. I have a class of 31 children with a huge variation in academic ability. There are three children in my class who are borderline IM students who get only an hour or so of (special learning) support a week, which is ludicrous. *Everyone* in my class is from a non-English speaking background. The curriculum is so overcrowded that I find I am rushing everything just to get through the required content. This is not much help to my students with learning difficulties. This feeling of pressure is also due to the fact that we are constantly required to assess and re-assess each child, collect work samples as well as report on each child's progress in detail using the numerous outcomes for our stage. This year we are grappling with across-the-school benchmarking and collecting data, which is time-consuming. This is not counting the many other KLA meetings I attend, which are just as overwhelming because of the unrealistic number of new syllabi that have been released in recent years.

Teachers at a Sydney primary school expressed similar sentiments:

> Teachers are being asked to take on more and more responsibilities; they are expected to undertake professional development in their own time; understand and implement curricula and policies which are arriving at schools more and more frequently; they are open to abuse from members of the public and media with no help or support from their employers and are asked to integrate more and more students with special needs into their classrooms. They are asked to complete a curriculum for which there are not enough hours in the day and to cater for individual differences in a class of up to thirty students where abilities can range from Stage 1 to Stage 4. For our public education system to work effectively these stressors must be dealt with and something done about low teacher morale.

What this sense of rush reflects, according to the Secondary Principals' Council is a situation:

> …in which schools and principals are forced to demonstrate increased performance, while exercising diminishing control over the curriculum against which much of the performance is measured. Along with teachers they are faced with increasing workloads and demands for accountability, often in a context of increased scarcity of resources and, in New South Wales, a relative lack of discretion over how those resources are applied. The imposed change agenda usually conflicts with the changes *that principals and teachers believe are needed to engage their students in a love of learning and meaningful pedagogy* (emphasis added). They see recurrent and mandatory testing as doing nothing for engagement. They see curriculum crowded by political impositions and narrow workplace training …The opportunity cost for schools is that meaningful change agendas, the priorities of which are based solidly on research and usually supported by the profession, are difficult to sustain and are rarely supported by systems and government.

The Inquiry agrees with the Secondary Principals' Council's view of the consequences of the present (over-) emphasis on accountability on the proper exercise of professional knowledge and development of meaningful pedagogy. Later in this chapter what the Inquiry believes to be more productive, developmental forms of accountability are recommended.

Inquiry Survey **Table 1.2:** **Degree of Agreement with Statements about the Professional Life of Teachers**
(sample – 683 teachers in their mid-careers)

	A GREAT DEAL	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	MEAN	STD DEV
Teaching in today's schools has become too stressful	67%	32%	1%	1.35	0.50
The rate of curriculum change is too fast for teachers to cope with	53%	41%	6%	1.58	0.61
Teachers' views on school issues are being taken sufficiently into account	7%	35%	58%	2.51	0.62

Two out of three of the teachers surveyed appear to be strongly of the view that teaching is stressful with just 1% disassociating themselves from this opinion.
More than half of the respondents strongly believed that the rate of curriculum change is beyond coping with, an opinion with which just 6% disagreed.
Almost three out of every five of the teachers disagreed that teachers' views on school issues are being taken sufficiently into account, just 7% being of the opposite opinion.

At the outset of the Inquiry, it was decided to collate a body of information on pedagogic experimentation throughout the State. In Chapter 2: *Curriculum and Pedagogy*, the Inquiry shows that, notwithstanding the generally high levels of skill and commitment displayed by teachers, there is a limited amount of such experimentation. The Inquiry attributes this deficiency to two things: the afore-mentioned system-wide absorption with narrow accountability measures and externally imposed requirements, and the absence of an effective strategy for disseminating and encouraging educational innovations. Much of the remainder of this chapter is devoted to the development of strategies (and recommendations) for overcoming these problems. A recent DET initiative involving the merging of the department's training and curriculum functions will contribute more to the improvement of teaching practice than the largely unopened, formidable glossy folders of curriculum information that currently clutter the shelves of principals' offices. At the same time, the Inquiry acknowledges that some of the current accountability requirements (particularly the Basic Skills Tests in Years 3 and 5) are playing a constructive diagnostic role in assisting the learning of individuals and groups of students. This has been illustrated in schools catering to the extremes of scholastic aptitude. The problem is that the present level of externally imposed requirements denies and dulls the flexibility and creativity required of executive and classroom teaching staff if they are to meet the diverse needs of today's students. In order adequately to respond differentially to those needs, teachers need to reclaim that measure of informed judgement and discretion that is the due of trusted professionals.

That said, it must be acknowledged that the stage is rapidly passing when the members of any prestigious vocational group are all automatically presumed to be skilled and dedicated practitioners. Increasingly in our society, the emphasis is shifting from *who* you are, to the skilful, productive *performance* of one's professional role. To that extent, the general shift within New South Wales towards seeking to assess the outcomes of such an important and relatively costly undertaking as the public education system is in keeping with general community expectations. Teachers are no more able to escape scrutiny of their endeavours, or rely on time-honoured methods where change is necessary, than other vocational and professional groups. There is now a widely shared understanding that the continued trust and confidence of the public turns on the appropriateness and skill of a professional practitioner. Greater legal, market, client and bureaucratic controls temper the self-regulating capacity of professionals and their claims to monopoly and privilege[2]. For professionalism to survive in today's radically changed social and political environment, it is incumbent on practitioners to re-establish the rationale and justification for the privileges they enjoy. This requirement applies even to the most prestigious of professions. For example, medicine needs to explain the value of its special knowledge to the public - that is, the contribution of medical care to the public's health[3].

The rejuvenation that must take place in New South Wales public education will require action on many fronts, involving more adequate funding, more appropriate initial and continuing teacher education, classroom conditions conducive to good learning, and a range of other necessary initiatives that are dealt with in detail throughout this report. The impact of these proposed measures will be blunted in the absence of both the opportunity for, and the authentic participation of teaching staff in, the development of a clear set of practice standards. These standards need to be of such a nature that they constitute informed and agreed guidelines for effective professional practice and can be used to monitor its presence or absence. The standards need to clarify and operationalise general terms frequently encountered during the Inquiry - like 'quality teaching' - without the pretence of transforming art into science. As the Director-General of the DET has argued, "The main game of teacher professionalism is about the development of a critical mass of excellent practitioners with knowledge about their practice, and about the monitoring of that knowledge and practice through standards" [4].

Focusing on such a task would be a powerful step forward from the lament for lost professional status that has been one of the dominant sentiments encountered throughout the Inquiry. Brock[5] has aptly observed that "One of the great challenges facing the teaching profession world-wide is the crucial issue of articulating, abiding by, indeed championing professional standards of practice for teaching, *owned and developed by the profession* (emphasis added). Thereby we could more effectively identify and reward outstanding teachers and help rejuvenate those who may have become stale …". To these potential advantages can be added that agreed upon practice standards could introduce a greater degree of fairness and consistency into the appraisal of unsatisfactory performance, an infrequent but frustrating problem to many of the students and teaching staff encountered in the course of the Inquiry.

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[2] Roach Anleu, S. L., (1992) "The professionalisation of social work. A case study of three organisational settings," *Sociology,* vol. 26, No. 1, p.23

[3] Freidson, E., (1997) *Professionalism Reborn: Theory, Prophecy and Policy,* Cambridge, Polity Press

[4] Boston, K. (1999) "Looking Backwards Towards Tomorrow: Reflections on the foundation and future of the Australian College of Education", *The Bassett Oration – The Australian College of Education Queensland Chapter,* Brisbane May

[5] Brock, P., (2000) "Priorities for the Teaching Profession in the New Millennium International Conference, 2-5 July, Leura p.6

Formulating the requisite standards is a task already well advanced. A National Discussion Paper, "Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms"[6] is an indicative framework for defining quality teaching standards and encouraging their achievement. The Inquiry accepts that despite its interim status, the formulation of the statement (hereafter referred to as *Professional Standards)* follows wide consultation and carries considerable authority. The statement sets out the characteristics of an accomplished teacher in summary form and these are reproduced in an attachment to this chapter.

The *Professional Standards* document refers to the attributes of an accomplished teacher, but there is research evidence that this is not entirely a matter of individual striving. Teachers who participate in strong professional communities within their subject area units or other teacher networks have higher levels of professionalism than do teachers in less collegial settings[7]. On average, they report higher levels of shared standards for curriculum and instruction, evidence a stronger service ethic in their relations with students, and show stronger commitment to the teaching profession. Hence, the Inquiry attaches major strategic importance to the promotion of collaborative endeavour among teachers as part of the development of an informed and effective profession.

Local research into sources of teacher satisfaction and dissatisfaction

Throughout the 1990s, University of Western Sydney academic Dr Steve Dinham and his Associates conducted a number of studies of the teaching profession. The findings of their research into sources of satisfaction and dissatisfaction among teachers[8] indicates that the greatest source of satisfaction is pupil achievement, in the sense of facilitation of pupil learning rather than the mere transfer of knowledge. The sources of dissatisfaction identified by teachers tends to be school and system centred. Relationships with superiors and educational employers, together with the standing of teachers in society, are common sources of dissatisfaction.

More recently, Dinham[9] has summarised the professional implications of his extensive studies and the following brief précis resonates strongly with many of the findings of the present Inquiry. It is apparent that teachers increasingly feel unappreciated and criticised by society. Of almost 900 government teachers surveyed in Western Sydney, the status of teachers in society overall was found to be satisfying by only 6% of those surveyed. Teachers feel that they have had to assume many of the responsibilities formerly borne by the family and community. While the satisfaction of teachers depends on a much wider range of factors than their remuneration, salary is of inherent importance and is seen as a tangible rating of the value society places upon their occupation. Beginning teachers commonly state they are unprepared for both the workload and the social problems they encounter especially in 'difficult' schools.

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[6] Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Australian College of Education, Australian Association for Research in Education, (2000) S*tandards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms,* Deakin West

[7] Talbert, J. E., McLaughlin, W., (1994) "Teacher Professionalism in Local School Contexts," *American Journal of Education,* February, *v*ol. 102, 123-153

[8] Dinham, S., (1995) "Time to Focus on Teacher Satisfaction", *Unicorn, v*ol 21, No3

[9] Dinham, S., (1997) "Teachers and teaching: Some Key Issues", Paper presented to North Harbour Group, Australian College of Education, May 2

Dinham's recent revisiting of the question of teachers' professional satisfaction showed that the overwhelming majority of those surveyed found the 'core business' of teaching - facilitating pupil achievement, their own professional growth, and working with others - to be highly satisfying. Issues of status, imposed expectations and responsibilities and educational change generally, were found to be uniformly dissatisfying. The latter were seen to be driven by non-pedagogic concerns in many cases[10].

Inquiry Survey Table 1.3: Overall Level of Satisfaction in Present Position
(sample – 683 teachers in their mid-careers**)**

	VERY LOW	FAIRLY LOW	MODERATE	FAIRLY HIGH	VERY HIGH
Primary teachers (n=401)	3.5%	13%	42%	42%	7.5%
Secondary teachers (n=264)	7.5%	15%	40%	30%	7.5%

Inquiry Survey Table 1.4: Level of Commitment to Teaching

Present level of commitment	**LOW**	**MODERATE**	**FAIRLY HIGH**	**VERY HIGH**
Primary teachers (n=406)	4%	17%	44%	35%
Secondary teachers (n=268)	9.5%	20.5%	37%	33%

Change in level since early years of teaching	**HIGHER**	**THE SAME**	**LOWER**
Primary teachers (n=405)	23%	48%	29%
Secondary teachers (n=269)	22%	35%	43%

In interpreting the level of satisfaction of teachers in their work, it needs to be remembered that three out of five survey respondents are people who have remained in teaching for upwards of seventeen years. The fact that only 40% - 50% of them noted their work satisfaction as being 'fairly' or 'very' high is not, in itself, an encouraging sign. The appraisal of *commitment*, on the other hand, revealed a more positive state of affairs. Both primary and secondary teachers were inclined to rate their commitment as being 'fairly' or 'very' high (79% and 70% respectively). Either because of real changes that had occurred in their outlook or because of memories coloured by the passage of time, a substantial number of teachers rated their commitment today as being lower than it was in their early years of teaching. This was particularly the case with secondary teachers, more than two out of every five believing there had been a decline in their commitment to teaching.

The main reasons given for teachers' commitment having remained the same, or changing, were as follows:

Same or Higher	**Lower**
personal efficacy, achievement	little support/recognition from DET
job-related opportunities	excessive workload, stress
sustained ideals, values	student behaviour, lack of motivation
working smarter	lack of support from other staff
support from school staff	loss of ideals, disillusioned
	greater family pressures
	low salary, lack of recognition
	not much community respect

[10] Dinham, S., Scott, C., (2000) *The teacher 2000 Project: A Study of Teacher Satisfaction, Motivation and Health,* December, Faculty of Education UWS Nepean

International perspectives

A recent authoritative international review of professionalism in teaching by Hargreaves and Lo demonstrated that in industrially developed and developing societies, it is teachers, above all others, who are expected to build learning communities, create the knowledge society and develop the capacities for innovation, flexibility and commitment to change that are essential to economic prosperity in the 21st century. Yet, "Just when the very most is expected of them, teachers appear to be being given less support, less respect, and less opportunity to be creative, flexible and innovative than before"[11]. This observation resonates with evidence presented to this current Inquiry. Hargreaves and Lo contrast the social optimism surrounding teaching in the thirty years following the Second World War with the present era. In the former period education in the world's leading economies was widely viewed as an investment in human capital, in scientific and technological development, and in a commitment to progress. There was pride in being a professional as a young generation of teachers developed the bargaining power to raise their salaries, became an increasingly well qualified profession, and were accorded greater status and more flexibility and discretion in how they performed their work.

Since the 1970s, there has been a contraction in state allocations to education along with other state social expenditures. One could be excused for mistaking Hargreaves and Lo's commentary on subsequent developments for a summary of the criticisms of government education policies presented to the current Inquiry:

> Structures were re-organised, resources slimmed down and policies of market choice and competition between schools began to proliferate. Curriculum control was often tightened … Change became ubiquitous and was implemented with an escalating sense of urgency. And teachers were blamed for everything by everybody - by governments, by media and by the newly instituted league tables of school performance that shamed the 'worst' of them (usually those who taught children in the poorest communities) … The result was extensive pressure on teachers. Many teachers started to feel de-professionalised as the effects of reform and restructuring began to bite. Teachers experienced more work, more regulation of their work, and more distractions from what they regarded as being the core to their work (teaching children) by the bureaucratic and form-filling burdens of administrative decentralisation[12].

Taken at its most general, the foregoing dismal picture of teacher professionalism indicates that many, perhaps a majority, of the matters complained of by New South Wales teachers amount to a local manifestation of international trends. It is useful to see local public education issues in this wider context of the contraction of social expenditures, commitment to debt reduction, and the state's facilitation of private initiatives. However, the observation of similarities between the plight of teachers in our country and state, and their colleagues elsewhere, is silent on the question of the place of public education within the traditional values of Australian society. Nor do the comparisons address the findings of several national surveys that have shown that when the issue is posed in a neutral fashion, an overwhelming

[11] Hargreaves, A., Lo, N. K., (2000) "Professionalism in teaching", *Prospects,* vol.30, No.3, p.168 (www.ibe.unesco.org/International/Publications/Prospects)

[12] Hargreaves and Lo,(2000), *ibid*., p.170

proportion of adult Australians would voluntarily pay additional tax to strengthen the public education system[13].

At the century's turn a new economy and society began to take shape, the *information society,* in which knowledge is a flexible, ever-expanding and ever-shifting resource. If, as is widely contended, the shapers and drivers of this society will be the 'symbolic analysts' who are able to identify and solve problems, think strategically, and communicate as well as work with others effectively, then the importance of teachers (using relevant and engaging methods of education), is only too apparent. The ramifications of changes associated with the information age impact upon many areas of society but as one commentator on their economic consequences has observed, education is the key quality of labour[14].

Because of the changes just described, the international educational horizon for teacher professionalism is assuming a less dismal hue. Governments are beginning to recognise, and support, forms of educational preparation that enable young people, especially those who come from socially disadvantaged backgrounds, to engage in systems thinking (seeing how parts and whole, cause and effect, are interrelated), to acquire skills of creativity and experimentation, and to collaborate effectively. The development of this theme is the province of the next chapter on Curriculum and Pedagogy but at this point mention must be made of a paradox that surfaced continually throughout the Inquiry process. The executive and classroom teaching staff generally showed a high level of commitment to the education and wellbeing of their students, yet simultaneously displayed a clear awareness of pedagogical approaches, currently not being implemented, that would better serve the educational interests of their students. It was as though teachers were caught in a web of many strands - poor or unsuitable physical infrastructure, discouraging attitudes, the distraction caused by some students, curriculum standardisation, the extent of basic testing, administrative load, and other concerns, - that locked them into traditional teaching formats and procedures. Here again there is a remarkable overlap between the New South Wales situation and that described as existing internationally. The similarity is instructive both in terms of understanding the constraints upon educational innovation and the implications for a 'new professionalism' that could revitalise teaching in our public schools. The international overview of teacher professionalism puts the dilemma in these terms:

> While teachers and schools are the catalysts of change in the informational society, they are also its casualties - casualties of the weakening of the welfare safety net, casualties of reduced expenditure on the public good, casualties of students' families caught in social upheaval, casualties of the widespread de-commitment to public life. In many ways, the forces of de-professionalisation, declining support, limited pay, restricted opportunities to learn from colleagues, work overload and standardisation, have continued to intensify for teachers. The very supports that teachers need to meet the goals and demands of the informational society are being withheld and withdrawn from them, hobbling them in their efforts to make great leaps forward in their effectiveness and professionalism[15].

[13] Withers, E., (2001) "The Budget, the Election and the Voter", *Australian Social Monitor, v*ol.4, No.1, 9-14; Baldry, E.,Vinson, T., "The Current Obsession with the Reduction of Taxes," *Just policy,* No. 13, 3-9.
[14] Castells, M., (1998) *End of Millennium,* Oxford, Blackwell
[15] Hargreaves and Lo (2000), Op cit., p.173

The 'casualties' referred to in the international overview have their Australian and New South Wales counterparts[16]. What is required, according to Hargreaves and Lo is the creation of a *new professionalism,* the characteristics of which are as apposite for New South Wales as for elsewhere. In outlining these characteristics the Inquiry is cognizant of the futility of doing so unless the previously identified supports that teachers need to meet the goals and demands of the informational society receive appropriate attention. Both sides of the equation, including a professional's responsibility for contributing to his or her own professional development, receive attention in following sections.

Within the framework of a *new professionalism,* established teachers must learn to teach in ways that they were not taught themselves. Fortunately, as will be shown in Chapter 2, foundational work has been done in Australia to assist young people to identify and solve problems, think strategically, and communicate as well as work with others effectively. Teachers need to make a reality of the oft-heard phrase *lifelong learning,* progressing well beyond their initial qualifications and remaining committed to the search for effective teaching as the defining task of their profession. That pursuit needs to be supported at the school and system levels in ways that will be identified but its success also depends on a professional openness to learning from, and working collaboratively with, other teachers, and responding to the educational and social changes around them. These and other developments of the new teacher professionalism need to be guided by agreed moral and ethical principles, with caring concerns as their core - what Goodson refers to as *principled professionalism*[17]*.*

STEPS NEEDED TO RESTORE PROFESSIONALISM

Planned coverage of professional issues

Much of the present report outlines the Inquiry's recommended responses to the major professional issues that have been raised by teachers or arise from the

[16] Numerous authors have delineated the recent weakening of the Australian Welfare State (see for example Weatherley, R., (1994) "From entitlement to contract: reshaping the welfare state in Australia", *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare*, Vol. 21, No. 3, 153-173; Bryson, L., (1994) "Directions and developments in the Australian welfare state: a challenge for educators", *Australian Social Work, v*ol. 47. No.4, 3-10; Considine, M., (2000) "Selling the unemployed: the performance of bureaucracies, firms and non-profits in the new Australian market for unemployment assistance", *Social Policy and Administration*, vol. 34, No.3, 274-295). Similarly, there is a substantial literature on the de-commitment to public life (Aulich, C., (1999) "Privatisation and contracting out", *The Howard Government,* UNSW Press: Sydney, 162-173; Wettenhall, R., (1999) "Reshaping the Commonwealth public sector", *The Howard Government*, UNSW Press: Sydney, 65-95; Hood, C., (1997) "Which contract state?: four perspectives on over outsourcing for public services", Australian Journal of Public Administration, vol.56, No.3, 120-131; Grattan, M., Lawson, M., (1998) "Privatising the unemployed", *Australian Financial Review,* 27 February, 35.) The comparatively restricted expenditure on the public good is reflected in the percentage of GDP allocated to social expenditures by the Australian Government. A recent OECD report places Australia 21st among a list of 29 OECD countries in terms of social expenditure. OECD., (2001) *Society at a Glance - OECD Social Indicators*. OECD Publications: France, 73.
After taking account of the introduction of accrual accounting in 1998/99, expenditure on the education policy area as a percentage of all NSW Government expenditure has declined from 28.4% in 1989-90 to 22.0% in 2001-2002. (Pie Chart Series, for Budget Paper No. 2) Comparative data on "families caught in social upheaval" is less readily available and less easily defined but the Inquiry has found persuasive the consistent observation of executive and classroom teachers that the number of children with markedly disturbed family backgrounds coming to their attention, often because of indiscipline, has increased substantially over the past two decades (see later chapter on student discipline and welfare).

[17] Goodson, I., (2000) "The Principled Professional", *Prospects,* June, No. 2, 181-188.

foregoing discussion. 'Professionalism' is such a powerful concept in the analysis of public education that potentially it could draw into a single chapter many, if not most of the important questions dealt with by the Inquiry. That result would not be in the best interests of a clear exposition of the problems and opportunities facing the system in some areas. Accordingly, as summarised in the following table, some issues will be responded to in the present chapter, others can more effectively be dealt with in subsequent chapters dealing with more specific topic areas:

Table 1:5 Location of Responses to Professional Issues Throughout Report

ISSUE	LOCATION
Concerns • Professional development • Salaries • Complaints against teachers • Respect from students • Wider community respect *Obligations* • Teacher accountability • Registration	Chapter 1: The Issue of Teacher Professionalism
Non-executive career advancement	Chapter dealing with disadvantaged schools
Transfers and promotions	Chapter dealing with resource allocation, transfers and promotions
Reducing paperwork and administrative overload	Chapter dealing with administration issues
Appearance of schools, work areas, work stations	Chapter dealing with buildings and amenities
Having the wherewithal to do the job	Chapter dealing with funding
Having the time to concentrate on learning	Chapter dealing with staffing and resource allocation

In what follows, the Inquiry outlines several steps to restore teacher professionalism, under the following headings:

- Professional Development;
- Salaries;
- Complaints Against Teachers;
- A Teacher Performance Management Scheme;
- Teacher Registration.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

In order properly to discharge their professional obligations, teachers need to keep abreast of current developments in pedagogy and developments within their fields of specialisation. This is the view not only of teachers themselves but also of students and their parents. The several hundred students interviewed included the preservation of teachers' expertise in their disciplinary fields, and teachers remaining intellectually stimulated throughout their careers, as key characteristics of effective teachers. Setting aside the question of how the situation arose, there can hardly be a more obvious shortcoming within the public education system than the absence of more than token professional development funding for teaching staff. At school after school visited by the Inquiry it has been stated that the annual amount available per teacher for professional development is approximately $25. The submissions tell the same story. Given that the daily cost of replacing a classroom teacher with a casual is $200, the average allocation is akin to zero:

> Some years back we seem to have stopped using the term professional development and started using training and development. I vote we change it back. Let's start to walk the walk and talk the talk. The primary focus of professional development for the past decade seems to have been one of explaining policy or new curriculum documents. Very little emphasis has been given to pedagogy, the real stuff of teaching. Very keen members of staff have accessed some very good programs such as the Team Leadership Course and Certificate of Teaching and Learning, but they have often done so using their own money to fund travel, accommodation and enrolment. The provision of funds in schools for professional development is appalling. For most schools the "bucket" extends to one day per person if you provide your own travel and accommodation. This does little to encourage the participation of staff who may be in need of professional development.
> (Submission from a Central School Head Teacher of Science).

The teachers who decry the absence of professional development opportunities come from both city and country schools but it is the latter who face the greater out-of-pocket expenses. The staff of a South Coast High School have pointed out that the average cost of a colleague attending a one-day program, including accommodation and meals, drastically overspends the training budget:

> Add to this, the support staff's needs, and it is apparent that schools are drastically under-funded. In rural areas the added cost of travel to the training venues also needs to be included in the cost of Training and Development (T&D). The fact that most professional development activities are organised in Sydney represents an extra barrier for country teachers.

A country teacher at the Dubbo Hearing asked simply "How can I put my principal and colleagues in the position of supporting my need for professional development when the result will involve taking funds away from essential purchases for the school?" The Inquiry is aware of the added costs facing rural teachers attempting to develop their knowledge and skills through continuing education and believes that professional development funding should recognise this problem. Even if, as we propose in a later chapter, more emphasis were to be placed on bringing educational opportunities to rural teachers and students rather than requiring expensive travel to larger population centres, additional costs would still be entailed.

Many teachers share the view of the previously quoted Head Teacher at a Central School that in recent times T&D has focused on curriculum changes. The Board of Studies uses a 'Train the Trainer' approach to disseminate information about curriculum changes and a majority of teachers had this approach in mind when commenting on the opportunities available for T&D. However, they expressed concern not only about the limited breadth of educational opportunities afforded by these programs but also their inherent unreliability. Many principals, executive and classroom teachers spoke of the process of transmission of information from the 'trained' teacher to colleagues as being quite unsatisfactory. They compared the accumulated distortions in the message transmitted to *Chinese whispers.*

What many teachers are seeking is greater flexibility (as well as substance) in the provision of professional development. The staff of a metropolitan Sydney Girls High School made the following proposal: "Ongoing professional development would be enhanced if teachers' HECS, tuition and textbook fees were paid by the employer and leave provisions were more generous". The staff of a country high school also

focused on the recognition afforded a postgraduate qualification: “There is no real incentive to spend $10,000 in fees to gain a postgraduate qualification. If there were, then some more young people would be attracted to the profession and older more experienced teachers would be keen to upgrade their existing qualifications”.

The Inquiry is in no doubt that the present funding for teacher professional development is grossly inadequate. Several specific areas of need were frequently mentioned in submissions concerning professional development. These included special education, technology, and gifted and talented education. Attending to these and other areas of professional development would have flow-on benefits beyond valuable gains in pedagogical and subject knowledge. If the allocations recommended by the Inquiry were linked to the promotion of contemporary teacher professionalism as outlined earlier in this chapter, incentives could be provided for teachers to acquire and practice new forms of pedagogy needed to meet today’s challenges (see also Chapter 2). Adequately funded and appropriately directed professional development could nurture the growth of communities of learners adaptive to the educational and social changes taking place around them. The allocation of appropriate professional development funding would be one of the most tangible indications to teachers (and those contemplating a career in teaching) that professionalism is a matter of high priority within the public education system. Staff morale, which the Inquiry has found to be at a creativity-sapping low level, could be expected to rise.

Inquiry Survey Table 1.6: Degree of Agreement with Statements about Professional Development
(sample – 683 teachers in their mid-careers)

	A GREAT DEAL	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	MEAN	STD DEV
opportunities for teachers to access professionally relevant knowledge are too limited	50.5%	39.5%	10%	1.6	0.69
teachers do take sufficient responsibility for their own professional development	9%	45%	46%	2..37	0.65
teachers welcome the need to introduce new and innovative approaches to teaching	25%	68%	7%	1.82	0.54
teachers do not get enough feedback on their teaching from their supervisors	20%	51%	28%	2.08	0.70
recognition or reward should be given to teachers who act as mentors for others	52%	40%	8%	1.57	0.64

All but 10% of teachers agreed, at least ‘to some extent’, with the proposition that professional development opportunities are too limited. That being so, there is still scope for teachers to take more responsibility for their own professional development. This was the decided view of a little under half of those surveyed with an almost equal proportion implying at least some scope for greater individual action. One in four believe their peers embrace the need to introduce new and innovative approaches to teaching, most of the remainder expressing a more guarded optimism regarding their colleagues’ interest in pedagogic innovation. On the other hand, there was some enthusiasm for recognising and/or rewarding teachers who act as mentors. All but 8% indicated some support for the proposal, a finding all the more understandable because of the view of seven out of ten of the respondents that teachers would benefit from more feedback on their teaching from their supervisors.

These positive developments will not occur in the absence of strong management, and the proper locus of that management is the local school. School principals work with remarkably limited resources, both in the sense of professional authority and flexible funding, when it comes to shaping the performance of what are frequently substantial organisations. The enhancement of their managerial capacity will be the focus of a later chapter. However, a significant step that would simultaneously serve to strengthen local management, the educational leadership of principals, and promote the type of collegial professional development that is needed, would be to locate the management of each school's professional development in a committee presided over by the principal. The Professional Development Committee (as it will hereafter be called) would need to work on a confidential basis and should not be large. In its standard form, it should include an elected representative of the school executive, three elected representatives of the classroom teaching staff, and a parent/community representative, together with the principal. To the maximum practicable extent decision-making should be by consensus with the principal having a reserve additional vote when the number of members in attendance permits a tied vote. With the exception of the principal, the ordinary period of appointment to the Committee should be for two years[18]. Membership entails ethical responsibilities, including those encompassed by Principle IV of a published National Staff Development Code of Ethics: staff development leaders should read widely, attend workshops and conferences, consult with researchers and professional colleagues, and reflect on the effectiveness of their own practice[19].

The main purpose of the Professional Development Committee is to distribute pooled *per capita* allocations in a flexible, equitable manner that best meets the educational objectives of individual staff, the school, and the requirements of the *new professionalism* as earlier described. In Recommendation 1.2 below, a substantial increase in the per capita funding for professional development is recommended. The Inquiry is wary of adding to teachers' paperwork but believes that the reasonable discharge of accountability requirements for the expenditure of the substantial sums involved can be achieved in brief form and without excessive bureaucratic restrictions. This is an occasion for the exercise of local discretion guided by an agreed set of standards. An application for support should be contained in a single page document setting out the educational objectives of the proposed program. The program could be deferred for a year in order to accumulate the funds needed for it to be successfully undertaken. One of only three provisions that should be imposed is that in any year at least half of the total allocation to the school should be spent on pedagogy and what constitutes effective learning. Otherwise funds may be allocated for professional development of staff on the initiative of applicants and the Committee's assessment of the needs of the school. The second provision is that at least 60% of the per capita allocation attracted by each teacher should be available to that individual. The reason for recommending the possible withholding of 40% is that in order to be effective, the Professional Development Committee will need to sponsor some activities that hold promise of benefiting groups of staff members and the school generally. The third provision is that each three years an amount approximately equal to the total allocation for that period should be expended. In other words, there should be no long-term accumulation of funds. Teachers who transfer to another public school should be able to have their allocation transferred with them, the management responsibility being vested in the Committee at their new school.

[18] At the completion of the first year, the executive representative and one of the classroom teacher representatives should retire to enable the appropriate cycle to be established.

[19] National Staff Development Council, (2000) "A Staff Development Code of ethics", *Journal of Staff Development,* Spring, vol. 21, No. 2

The proposed scheme affords another system gain in that it provides a platform for principals to exercise their role as practitioner leaders. If learning is to occupy the absolutely centre stage position that it needs to, then principals will need to be supported by other changes that are recommended in this report. However, the Professional Development Committees would oblige principals in their role as school managers to formulate educational goals and purposes and at the same time provide them with enhanced influence to pursue those goals and purposes. In turn, they would be responsible for reporting their professional development plans, expenditures and achievements to District Superintendents at two yearly intervals, as well as reporting to the school community in suitably abbreviated form *via* school reports[20].

The discharge of these general responsibilities would require a high level of ethical conduct of members of the Professional Development Committee. Later, in presenting a proposed staff performance appraisal scheme it will be seen that even more stringent ethical requirements attach to the duties of the Professional Development Committee in attempting to assist teachers who are experiencing difficulties. Colleagues will have good reason to weigh carefully the professional abilities and character of candidates for appointment to these committees.

Employer supported programs are not the whole of the story of professional development. Some commentators would say that they are only the beginning. Here teachers can learn from neighbouring fields. The view taken by the national body of professional librarians is that the responsibility for professional development rests primarily with the individual practitioner because no other is as precisely aware of individual and specific needs. The professional body adds this requirement of individual responsibility for professional development to the standard list of those characteristics which distinguish the professional from other levels of occupation. The fulfilment of this individual responsibility can be played out in a number of ways, not all of them involving attendance at programs or participation in group learning.

One professional development framework that is being applied to professional groups as varied as business managers, psychotherapists and teachers, emphasises the value of development taking place in practice environments[21]. It has been found that reflection and experimentation can be most effective while individuals are actually involved in their work. This approach is based on the idea that professional development should not be remedial, but part of an everyday process of improvement that takes place in its natural setting. But, if it is possible for 'silent in-services' to assist with some aspects of professional development, there are other challenges for which collegial conversation is more apposite. Hence the considerable interest in professional development networks in which teachers come together to address difficult problems of teaching through an exchange among members. With varying degrees of formality such opportunities are a common and valued characteristic of life in a variety of professions. Teacher networks usually focus on particular subject areas, teaching methods, or approaches to reform to give members a common purpose[22].

[20] As part of our concern to decrease the present stifling weight of 'paperwork' the Inquiry reviews the requirements for school annual reports later in this report.

[21] Robertson, D. c., Morrison, P., (1996) "Professional development: the individual perspective", *Business Strategy Review,* Winter, vol.7, No.4

[22] Pennell, J. R., Firestone, W. A., (1998) "State sponsored Teacher-to-Teacher Professional Development", *The Education Digest,* 63, 62-7

There would be valuable opportunities for school Professional Development Committees to facilitate the formation of such networks around teacher leaders, in some instances spanning several schools, and drawing upon professional associations and tertiary institutes, as well as network members, for knowledge inputs. The harnessing of university resources for this kind of value-adding exercise appears to be quite under-developed in New South Wales, particularly in the country. The possibilities for building partnerships with rural universities have been illustrated by a modest experiment in the north of the state, conducted in the course of the Inquiry. Following arrangements initiated by the Inquiry, a high school library has engaged in a three-month trial of the professional advantages afforded teachers by providing them with access to electronic journals and databases *via* a regional university. While the project has yet to run its course, its instigation has met with enthusiasm on both sides. The university is willing to consider other ways in which it might be of service to local teachers. This partnership might initially need external nurturing but eventually its cultivation could be part of the responsibility of the local Professional Development Committee.

Recommendation 1.1: In each school with more than fifteen equivalent full-time teaching staff, a Staff Development Committee should be created. The Committee, comprising the principal as chairperson, four other teaching staff and a community representative, appointed in accordance with the principles and methods described in the text, should function as the primary professional support unit within each school. Where a school has between five and fifteen full-time equivalent teaching staff, a Professional Development Committee comprising the principal and two other elected staff members should operate in accordance with the same principles and pursue the same functions. In smaller schools the principal should operate as the equivalent of a Professional Development Committee.

Recommendation 1.2: An annual *per capita* professional development allocation should be made to each school in accordance with the number of full-time equivalent teaching staff and administered by the Staff Development Committee in accordance with the principles outlined in the text. The size of the *per capita* allocation should be $800 in the case of schools based in the major urban areas of Sydney-Newcastle-Wollongong and $1,200 in the case of all other schools. Using data provided by DET's Finance Branch the cost of this proposal is estimated to be $48 million per annum[*].

[*] Professional development for school administrative support staff (SASS) is dealt with in the chapter dealing with school administrative issues.

SALARIES

The issue of teachers' salaries poses a dilemma for the Inquiry. It has an enormous bearing on the restoration of the professional identity of teachers and the successful implementation of many of the recommendations issuing from the Inquiry. It would be less complicated if it were otherwise but unfortunately, the question of remuneration has become entangled with teachers' perceptions of lack of employer respect. This perception is partly grounded in actual salary levels, and partly in obviously painful recollections of the environment that surrounded the last round of salary negotiations.

The problem is that recommendations made by an inquiry of the present nature with respect to the desirable scope of salary adjustment, no matter how well based, can never be a substitute for hard-nosed bargaining within the framework of prevailing industrial relations practices, and competing claims upon the public purse. It would, however, be a strategic error to minimise the importance to the overall reform agenda of both the tangible and intangible bases of teacher dissatisfaction with their remuneration. The revitalising of public education will demand a willingness on the part of teachers to venture into unfamiliar and somewhat threatening territory. It is hard to see how that step will be taken without evidence of positive employer identification with the tasks and recognition of the scale of what is required. The industrial climate, especially post-1989, has evolved to a point where no other gesture can be an effective substitute for increased salary. The Inquiry believes that there is a practical way of signifying governmental support for a new professionalism in teaching, and new expectations of teachers, while preserving a role for standard industrial bargaining in the customary forums. The latter needs to occur without the public acrimony that has characterised such proceedings in recent times. Because the question of salary is of central importance to teachers' professional identity, data pertaining to their present salary position will be presented here. However, a specific recommendation that inevitably involves considerable expenditure, will best be considered within a framework of the total estimated cost of the Inquiry's recommendations and possible off-setting reductions in expenditure. Therefore, the detailed proposal is presented in a later chapter dealing with finances.

The current salary rates for teachers range from approximately $29,000 to approximately $54,000. Two instalments of the current award, to be paid in the course of the next year, will add 9% to teachers' salaries. Teachers believe that their salaries rate poorly alongside those of comparable professional groups. This was certainly the finding of two predecessor Review Committees (Scott and Carrick) at the beginning of the 1990s[23]. Scott reported that teachers' salaries increased by only 76% of the average increase in weekly earnings for males in all occupations during the period 1972-1988 and he believed the slippage with respect to female average weekly earnings was even more striking (half of the increase for women in all occupations)[24]. The present Inquiry, having had the benefit of more refined calculations by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, believes that, in fact, the rate of increase of teachers' salaries was two-thirds of the increase for women in all occupations.

[23] Report of the Management Review, New South Wales Education Portfolio, Sydney, 1990, Report of the Committee of Review of New South Wales Schools, Sydney, 1989

[24] Report of the Management Review, op.cit, pp 89-92

What has happened since 1988? Has the rate of increase in teachers' salaries kept pace with the comparative salaries and indexes used by Scott? A table similar to that devised by Scott, comparing changes in salary levels between 1988 and 2001/2, appears below. The commentary parallels that of Scott's earlier report. It has not been possible for the present Inquiry to confirm the accuracy of Scott's comparisons dating from 1972. The earlier tabulations have simply been taken as the point of departure for the present exercise. The table that follows shows that over approximately the past fourteen years (1988-2001/2):

- School and TAFE teachers' salaries grew at a rate at or above the CPI, while principal and clerk positions increased at a rate above the CPI. The percentage increases in salaries for the categories of four-year-trained teacher (56.1) and TAFE teacher graduate year nine (47.3) were lower than the percentage increases in average weekly earnings for males (71.2) and females (65.2).

- Teachers' salaries increased by only 79% of the increase in average male weekly earnings and 86% of the increase in female earnings.

- Salary increases for most principal categories were in line with or above increases in average earnings. The category of primary school principal grade three recorded the highest increase at 100.2%, followed by primary school principal grade four (93.5%) and primary school principal grade one (87.1%).

- In comparison, the clerk grade six salary increased by 82% of the increase in average weekly male earnings (89% of female), while the clerk grade 12 salary increased by 79% of the rise in average male weekly earnings (86% female).

Overall, although salaries for all the selected occupations have increased significantly since 1972, percentage changes in teachers' salaries have consistently been lower than percentage changes in average salaries. Between 1972 and 1988 the increase in teachers' pay was 24% less than the increase in average male weekly earnings. This trend continued between 1988 and 2002 when the increase in teachers' pay was 21% less than the increase in average male weekly earnings. Between 1972 and 1988 the increase in teachers' salaries was 34% less than the increase in average female earnings. During the period 1988 to 2002, the increase in teachers' pay was 14% less than the increase in average female earnings.

In 1988 increases in principal salaries were lower than increases in teacher salaries. This shifted significantly between 1988 and 2002 when increases in principal salaries matched or exceeded increases in both teacher salaries and average weekly earnings.

TAFE teachers, who had a higher percentage increase than teachers between 1972 and 1988, had the lowest percentage increase between 1988 and 2002.

Table 1.7: Comparative Changes in NSW Salary Levels - Selected Occupations[25]

	1972	1988	% change	1988	2001/2	% change
Consumer Price Index	41.3	174.5[26]	322.5	92.0[27]	135.4	47.1
Average Male Weekly[28] Total Earnings	$92.97	$490.80	427.9	$468.20	$801.60	71.2
Average Female Weekly[29] Total Earnings	$55.30	$322.10	482.4	$322.10	$532.30	65.2
			Annual Salaries ($)			
	1972	**1988**	**% change**	**1988**	**2001/2**	**% change**
School teacher (4YT)[30]	6,910	29,072	320.7	29,072	45,403[31]	56.1
TAFE teacher (grad year 9)	6,922	30,811	345.1	30,811	45,403	47.3
Clerk grade 6 (max salary)	8,601	33,373	288.0	33,373	52, 798	58.2
High School Principal[32]	12,100	48,891	304.1.	48,891	83,440 ph2	70.6
					87,088 ph1	78.1
Primary School	10,950	44,586	307.2	44,586	76,945 pp2	72.5
Principal (Lvl 1)[33]					83,440 pp1	87.1
Primary School	8,930	36,862	312.0	36,862	71,351 pp4	93.5
Principal (Lvl 2)[34]					73,827 pp3	100.2
Professor[35]	15,388	63,397	302.1	63,397	99,129	56.3
Clerk grade 12 (max salary)	14,105	52,936	275.3	52,936	82,914	56.6

It would be difficult to overstate the intensity of teachers' feelings about their salaries. Sometimes that feeling breaks through at most unexpected moments. One such encounter for the Inquiry involved a quietly spoken deputy principal of a high-achieving school. This gentleman waited until all other matters had been soberly discussed at length before delivering with unsuppressed anger a statement that he would not recommend a career in teaching to any young person. In a reference to the last wage case he said "After a dedicated career of service I have been completely denigrated by my employer". A submission from a country high school teacher declared "Morale has been severely eroded particularly by the employer in the past two salary cases. The employer has under-valued our work to save on remunerating staff." The North Coast teacher with almost thirty years experience to whom reference was earlier made, stated in his submission that "There is a

[25] Sources: Report of the Management Review: New South Wales Education Portfolio 1990, School Centred Education – Building a More Responsive State School System (The Scott Report); Australian Bureau of Statistics consumer price index and average weekly earnings data; Crown Employees (Teachers in Schools and TAFE and Related Employees) Salaries and Conditions Award, NSW Industrial Gazette, 2001.
[26] CPI as recorded in the Scott Report.
[27] CPI adjusted to reflect 1989/1990 reweighting.
[28] As at August 1972, 1988 and 2001.
[29] Amounts quoted in the Scott Report were based on quarterly figures for 1971/72 and 1987/88 averaged. For the purpose of current comparisons the method used on this occasion (ABS figures as at August for each year) is more accurate.
[30] Four year trained Certificated Graduate Assistant Five Years experience.
[31] All teaching salaries are as at July 1, 2001.
[32] High School Principal of 1972 and 1988 now equates to High School Principal grade one (ph1) or grade two (ph2).
[33] Primary School principal level one now equates to Primary School Principal grade one (pp1) or grade two (pp2)
[34] Primary School principal level two now equates to Primary School Principal grade three (pp3) or four (pp4).
[35] University of NSW Award as at March 2, 2001.

continuous battle with employers over salary levels. This is always aired in public and is totally demoralizing to teachers...Teachers' sense of worth has declined since the 1980s when governments began to divest themselves of public responsibility in favour of the user pays system of servicing the community and private education". These latter statements are but illustrative of sentiments that there would be no point in raking over but for the fact that they indicate the urgent need for an improved salary platform upon which to build a revitalised profession.

Inquiry Survey Table 1.8: Degree of Agreement with Statements about the Professional Life of Teachers
(sample – 683 teachers in their mid-careers)

	A GREAT DEAL	TO SOME EXTENT	NOT AT ALL	MEAN	STD DEV
teachers actively discourage their students from entering the teaching profession	22%	50.5%	27.5%	1.73	0.68
teachers are in the main optimistic about the benefits of public education	40%	47%	13%	1.73	0.68

More than seven out of every ten respondents believe teachers, to at least some extent, actively discourage their students from entering the teaching profession. However, almost nine out of ten attribute some degree of optimism to their colleagues when it comes to assessing the benefits of public education.

COMPLAINTS AGAINST TEACHERS

> *The procedures for child protection do not meet the requirements of natural justice for teachers. I understand the need to ensure that the profession is not infiltrated by paedophiles, but the clandestine and Macarthyist methods of investigation to which accused teachers are subjected are disgraceful. Teachers should be made aware of the precise nature of the accusation, and matters should be efficiently and thoroughly investigated, and speedily concluded* - Submission to the Inquiry from a country high school teacher.

A disproportionate fear of being the subject of complaints about their behaviour is distorting the professional work of teachers. The resolution of this issue may lie, as much as anything, in disseminating clear and authoritative information about teachers' actions that can be locally investigated and resolved, and those that must be referred for independent and often protracted investigation. The background to the problem will be presented before outlining a recommended solution.

Extensive research both here and abroad in recent decades has revealed a level of sexual and physical abuse against children that hitherto had either been ignored or passed unnoticed. Many studies have focused on sexual harassment at school, the results indicating that a large proportion of high school students have been subjected to significant unwanted sexual pressure in various forms with serious personal and

educational consequences[36]. For the greater part small percentages of student victims (around 3-5%) report having received inappropriate attention from teachers[37]. However, the fear of litigation among many teachers is great and they believe that even the flimsiest allegation is given credence and leads to actions that approach persecution[38]. Teacher unions believe that when teachers are stood aside and investigations continue for months, the teacher is left under a cloud of suspicion. It is claimed that it is difficult for reputations to remain unharmed[39]. On the other hand, researchers claim that it is more likely that students will fail to report actual incidents than that they will fabricate incidents[40].

One consequence of the focusing of attention upon the issue of harassment has been the 'chilling' of the classroom climate. Many teachers and administrators say that the spectre of being accused of sexual harassment is fundamentally changing classrooms. "Teachers are worried about their actions being misunderstood, about students who might maliciously distort innocuous gestures … Every pat on the back has become suspect, each congratulatory squeeze to the shoulder a source of potential problems"[41]. Such apprehension, according to one analyst, conflicts with the caring nature of schools[42]. A recent court case suggested that students tacitly consent to receiving tactile encouragement (such as a pat on the shoulder), and that not allowing this would make schools sterile places. But, the Victorian court added that children do not consent to prolonged or effusive physical contact[43].

The issue is not one to be resolved by favouring the interests of one party over the other. Children and young people are obliged to attend school, a requirement that, in turn, places a special obligation upon school authorities to protect students from harassment. Accordingly, complaints must be considered most seriously. On the other hand, the vulnerability of teachers to false accusations of impropriety is evident both from consideration of the structure in which they operate and the evidence of some maliciously motivated cases[44].

Developments in New South Wales

The Inquiry has been struck by the similarity of local teachers' responses and those of their overseas counterparts to increased measures to protect students from harassment. In visits to schools and meetings with staff, teachers also have bemoaned the "chilling of the classroom environment". Even more pronounced have been teachers' expressions of fear that they might inadvertently provide grounds for an accusation of sexual harassment, for example, by brushing against a student in

[36] Yaffe, E., (1995) "Expensive, illegal and wrong: sexual harassment in our schools", *Phi Delta Kappan,* November, vol. 77, No 3; Shakeshaft, C., Cohan, A., (1995) "Sexual Abuse of Students by School Personnel", *Phi Kappan,* March; Thaler, J. A., (1999) "Are schools protecting children from harassment?", *Trial,* August, vol 35, No.8, p.32; Linn, E., Fua, R. B., (1999) "The role of school mental health professionals in resolving school-related sexual harassment complaints", *Social Work in Education, v*ol 21, No.4; Stein, N., (2001) "Classrooms and Courtrooms: Facing Sexual Harassment in K-12 Schools", *Harvard Educational Review,* Spring, vol 71, No.1

[37] Bennett, J., (1998) "Sexual Abuse, Education and the School", Council of Europe Childhood Policies Document CDPS/IX/LITH

[38] Yaffe, 1995, Op.cit.,

[39] Sileo, C. C., (1994) "As kids accuse teachers, society learns a lesson", *Insight on the News,* October 3, vol 10, No.40

[40] Cited by Shakeshaft, p. cit.,

[41] Cited in Yaffe, 1995, op.cit., p.13

[42] Zirkel, A., (2000) "Don't Touch"' *NASSP Bulletin, v*ol 84, No.614

[43] Hopkins, A., (2000) *Teachers, students and the law,* Melbourne, Victoria Law Foundation Publishing

[44] Stover, D., (2000) "Fairness for teachers charged with harassment", *The Education Digest,* November, vol 66, No.3

a corridor or confined space. No one has disagreed with the idea that the Department has an obligation to protect students from paedophiles. However, teachers describe as "farcical" their alleged inability to separate two or more students who are fighting or, as described by one teacher, move a student who will not obey an instruction to leave a classroom, from the room. (The teacher involved in this last incident claims that he was subsequently instructed by the principal to remove the class in order to avoid contact with the student in question). Finally, there is widespread dissatisfaction with the time taken to investigate complaints against teachers.

The steps to be taken when a complaint is made about the sexual conduct of a New South Wales teacher are set out in a document *Procedures to be Followed in Response to Allegations of Improper Conduct of a Sexual Nature by a Staff member Against a Student (March, 1997)*[45]. The stipulated requirements generally accord well with those promulgated overseas on the basis of research and experience[46]. For example, depending on the nature of the allegations and the staff member's circumstances, the staff member will be advised of the extent of the contact he or she may have with students and staff of the school and the need to maintain confidentiality. The Case Management Unit will assess the seriousness of the allegation and arrange for it to be investigated as quickly as possible and in a sensitive manner. The staff member also is to be advised of potential sources of support during this period. Additional procedural requirements are specified and the Inquiry is of the view that these procedures are designed to protect the rights of the teacher complained against, as well as the rights of complainants.

As a result of the *Ombudsman Amendment (Child Protection and Community Services) Act* 1998, the New South Wales Ombudsman is now responsible for overseeing and monitoring the handling of child abuse allegations and convictions against employees of certain government agencies, including the DET. The head of each designated agency is required to advise the Ombudsman of an allegation or conviction against an employee and must, among other things, advise on whether or not it is proposed to take disciplinary or other action in relation to the employee, and the reasons for taking or not taking any action. Under the provisions of the legislation the Ombudsman has determined, after consultation, that a number of kinds of allegations against employees of the DET need not be notified. That information is reproduced here because it indicates a greater degree of common sense in the handling of these matters than teachers often assume to be the case. While the non-necessity of reporting these incidents does not mean that the Department can ignore them, the Ombudsman's determination should be a strong guide as to what constitutes reasonable behaviour.

Matters that need *not be* notified to the Ombudsman:

- Comforting a distressed child in the playground or in a classroom;
- Attending to a child who has hurt him/her self in the playground or in the classroom;
- Guiding a child by the shoulders, arms or hands;
- Patting a child on the back by way of congratulations;
- Turning a child's chin to attract attention without the use of force.

In addition to the above, first time allegations of physical assault by teachers on students, irrespective of whether they are sustained or not sustained, need not be reported to the Ombudsman in so far as they involve minor acts of aggression

[45] Dept of Education and Training (1997) *Procedures to be Followed in Response to Allegations of Improper Conduct of a Sexual Nature by a Staff member Against a Student DM/02/00132*
[46] Stover, (2000) Op.cit.

(that are specified) and where there is no apparent harm or injury to the child. The same concession applies to use of restraint or force in a situation which is reasonably perceived to be harmful or threatening to the safety of a child or group of children, including intervention in an actual or reasonably apprehended fight between children where there is no apparent or injury to those children. There are additional matters that can be harm locally determined but the ones cited above relate to situations where many teachers believe no flexibility applies and that their only course of action is to take none. More printed information on these matters is unlikely to communicate the information needed by teachers to have a balanced understanding of current policies.

Recommendation 1.3: That an authoritative representative of the Office of the Ombudsman make a videotape setting out the reporting requirements with respect to complaints against teachers and the range of matters that can be locally determined. A copy of the videotape should be made available to every public school and screened for the benefit of staff and all interested parties.

A TEACHER PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT SCHEME

Professionalism entails both rights and responsibilities. To this point, under the heading of "Steps Needed to Restore Professionalism," a number of measures needed to strengthen teacher professionalism have been presented. These measures are a combination of professional entitlements, and changes that will help to produce a more effective work environment. However, the primary justification for all of the recommendations is that they will enable teachers more effectively to contribute to the education and wellbeing of students. In circumstances where that capacity has been strengthened at substantial public cost, it would be appropriate to hold teachers accountable for their professional performance. That accountability should begin with the academic progress of students but spread to encompass the wider responsibilities of teachers, a prospect made less politically and institutionally fraught by the profession's own shaping of the earlier mentioned "Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms."

One commentator on these issues recently stated "Some form of teacher evaluation is necessary to infuse public education with more credibility, [but] the *how* of doing that is tricky. Designing a system that requires accountability without alienating good teachers will be a challenge"[47]. While this caution is warranted, it must also be acknowledged that good teachers and good students stand to be alienated by failure to do something about poor teaching. One submission to the Inquiry from a teacher commented that failure to remove incompetent teachers leads to significant cynicism among their colleagues. A number of submissions from P&C groups emphasised the importance of the issue. One from a Sydney P&C group argued that teachers need performance feedback and support, including annual appraisals and coaching. Another stated:

[47] Gorman, S., (1999) "How should teachers be evaluated?", *National Journal,* December, Vol. 31, No.49, p.3479

> The worst aspect is that performance management tends only to be applied as a last resort once a serious problem has developed – too late for the students, and perhaps too late for the teacher. A proposed management system for teachers seems to have shortcomings in that it does not seem to provide meaningful coverage of the full range of teacher performance, and is not linked to improvement strategies, such as personal development programs. A well structured performance management system, which raises expectations of performance across the spectrum and provides appropriate feedback, has the potential to raise the morale of all teachers, improve their professionalism and self-respect, and improve their satisfaction in the workplace.

In the course of the Inquiry, secondary students, while praising the overall commitment and ability of most teachers, indicated that their academic progress can be retarded by having a poorly performing or indifferently motivated teacher. This insight, born of practical experience, is supported by sophisticated statistical research. Proponents of this research claim to be able to measure the 'value' a teacher adds to her or his students' performance after factoring out such variables as socio-economic status. Some of the findings of such research, such as "Children who have weak teachers for two consecutive years never overcome that setback"[48] make compelling reading. However, other commentators, with whom this Inquiry is in agreement, see in such claims a further over-simplification of what constitutes learning.

Progress needs to be made on two levels. Both of the recommended developments should supplement rather than replace the present requirement for principals to conduct an annual review of each teacher's performance. Nothing that is now recommended should displace the monitoring of the performance of teaching staff to ensure that students are not disadvantaged by an unsatisfactory teacher. Existing employment termination statistics in education (and other fields) display the inevitably limited outcomes achieved by reliance on disciplinary sanctions even though, of course, they must exist**.** The underlying rationale for the approaches recommended by the Inquiry is the now well established knowledge of what helps adult professionals to grow and develop. They respond primarily to positive reinforcement, they want to be involved, and they prefer to operate in a collegial and collaborative environment while pursuing mid- to long-term professional development plans that reflect individual and collective needs.

Two performance management schemes will now be discussed. The first *universal* proposal is intended to apply to all teachers, from principals to novices, and is based on peer-assisted self-reflection. The second *remedial* proposal focuses on teachers whose teaching performance is causing sufficient concern to a principal to warrant specific attention. The intention is to place additional, constructive tools at the disposal of the principal. In both instances, peers should play a vital part, the emphasis being on the positive development of the teachers concerned[49]. The activities undertaken would articulate with the work of the previously mentioned Professional Development Committees. Both would be informed by the hallmarks of an effective teacher, such as those defined in the *Professional Standards* framework. A difference would be that with the *universal* scheme, the record of a teacher's review, occurring perhaps once or twice a year, would remain the confidential knowledge of the teacher and the peer reviewer. On the other hand, the report of the

[48] Gorman, (1999) ibid.,
[49] Searfoss, L. W., Enz, B. J., (1996) "Can teacher evaluation reflect holistic instruction", *Educational leadership, v*ol. 53, No.6

remedial work conducted with a teacher about whom a principal is concerned would be shared with the principal without a judgement being made by the peer or peers involved (see below).

Both types of performance management review afford opportunities for teachers to participate in the proper discharge of their professional responsibilities to students, colleagues and the community. Consistent with this approach, the recommendations that appear below refer to procedures that will involve the relevant stakeholders in fashioning the appraisal framework A Working Party comprising equal numbers of representatives of the Teachers Federation and the DET should meet to identify those elements of the *Professional Standards* framework that should be used for performance management purposes. The meeting should be convened by the Director-General of the DET and subsequently facilitated by a mutually acceptable independent person. To avoid becoming bogged down in the endless possibilities of the task, it would be essential for the facilitator and members of the Working Party to maintain focus on the professionally credible foundations already represented by the *Professional Standards*.

The 'universal' scheme

Many influences in a school will help to shape plans to improve teachers' professional performance – daily classroom experiences and student and parental responses, goals and principles emanating from the Department, participation in the working groups and committees of the school, goals promoted by the local administration, and interactions with the Professional Development Committees, are some examples. Self-reflection and self-management should play a large part in the unfolding of the plan but those processes can be structured and aided by the obligation to engage in a periodic, serious but supportive review, with a kindred professional, of aims, accomplishments, obstacles, and the next steps to be taken, without ratings or formal evaluative commentary. It would normally be helpful for the reviewer to be the same person over a number of years and for that individual to be of greater experience and/or seniority than the staff member being reviewed. The main requirement should be that the process holds promise of contributing to improved performance in terms of the framework adapted from the *Practice Standards.* The only records that should be maintained by the employing school are (i) confirmation by an appointed member of the executive of the suitability of a nominated reviewer, (ii) certification by that reviewer of the fact that an appropriate appraisal process has occurred, and (iii) an up-dated list of the teacher's professional goals for at least the next year but possibly beyond that period. Nothing more is envisaged than a listing that can operate thereafter as an *aide mémoire*. To underline the importance attached to this form of professional accountability, incremental progression on the salary scale should depend on the completion of this process.

The recommended form of the *universal* performance appraisal might be considered a basic, orthodox way of maintaining professional momentum. There is, however, a variation on this approach which, if the types of development in teaching methods projected in the next chapter on curriculum and pedagogy were to be implemented, could see a new orthodoxy emerge. In countries where teachers have been encouraged to do many things in teams, it has seemed a logical extension to construct professional development plans for teams. This type of evaluation also has fitted in well with the notion of principals being primarily leaders in learning. In New South Wales this type of practitioner leadership would require relief from a host of administrative and other duties that currently absorb principals' time. The present

report has this necessity in mind (see later chapters). Where teams have been used as the basis for development plans executive staff have tended to become facilitators, coaches, and resource providers[50]. Teachers might develop a new classroom program, obtain the necessary training, and write curriculum materials, or they might undertake action research projects. Sometimes the professional development teams coincide with existing organisational units so that additional work is not required. The same type of accountability that is appropriate to the vast majority of teachers encountered during this Inquiry, can apply at the team level.

The 'remedial' scheme

The origins of worrying teacher performance can be varied: disinterest, personal or work-related pressures, lack of subject knowledge, intense disagreement with official policies, sheer personal unsuitability for the job. The Inquiry has directly and indirectly observed these and other impediments in the course of its fieldwork. Since difficulties can arise in any career, a first obligation on the school is to see whether a teacher's performance can be improved. To that end, after making an initial assessment and possibly attempting to assist directly in the form of feedback on teaching or by offering coaching, the principal may seek the involvement of colleagues in developing a professional support program for a teacher in difficulties. This needs to be done in confidence and the appropriate peer assistance should come from members of the Professional Development Committee whose own professional standards will need to be of a high order. Nothing is contemplated that would conflict with the support and guidance steps outlined by the Training and Development directorate[51]. A program of assistance designed to lift teaching performance could be set over an agreed period of time with accomplishments reviewed at regular intervals. It would be the Committee's task to provide factual reports to the principal but the evaluation of their significance for the longer-term employment of the teacher would be the responsibility of the principal. Whatever the outcome, the Committee could draw professional satisfaction from the fact that a constructive effort had been made to respect students' rights to quality learning and a colleague's claims to fair treatment had been justly handled.

Recommendation 1.4: The Director-General of Education and Training to convene a Working Party to develop a professional performance appraisal template based on the draft Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms. The composition of the Working Party and the procedures adopted should conform with the details recommended in the text.

[50]Brandt, R., (1996) "On a new direction for teacher evaluation: a conversation with Tom McGreal," *Educational leadership,* March, Vol. 53, No.6, pp.30-34

[51]Training and Development Directorate (2000) Improvement Programs Supporting the procedures for managing teachers who are experiencing difficulties with their teaching performance, Sydney, Dept of Education and Training

Recommendation 1. 5: A professional performance management scheme for all teaching staff should be instituted with the template resulting from Recommendation 1.4 being the guiding framework. The transactions between each staff member and the peer reviewer should remain confidential but for certification of the appropriateness of the reviewer, the satisfactory completion of the review, and the furnishing of a list of professional objectives for at least the coming year. The timing and frequency of the reviews should be at the discretion of the staff concerned but should occur at least annually as one requirement for salary progression.

Recommendation 1.6: Without limiting the discretion of the principal to take urgent action where that is warranted, in cases where a principal is concerned about a staff member's performance the latter should be offered special assistance from the Staff Development Committee. The aim would be to both remedy problems and engage the staff member in positive career development. Where such action is taken, the principal should be furnished with details of the development program pursued. No recommendation should be made by the Committee concerning the employment status of the staff member.

TEACHER REGISTRATION

Registration … is the hallmark of a respected profession[52]*.*

Lifelong education, a defining activity in many fields, must apply to teachers if they are to have the fullest possible professional credibility[53]*.*

Background

Teacher registration has been on the agenda in New South Wales for a number of years. There are several reasons for this, including moves in the nineteen eighties to allow people to teach mathematics in government schools with minimal training; the broader issue of teacher shortages and determining who should be allowed to teach; concerns about child protection and the registration of those working with children raised by the Wood Royal Commission; and questioning in the media and elsewhere about the professional calibre of teachers. In 1997, a Ministerial Discussion Paper was released entitled "The Establishment of a Teacher Registration Authority in New South Wales", and following a period of consultation, the *Teaching Standards Bill*, was introduced into the New South Wales Parliament in 1998. Despite support for teacher registration from teachers and sections of the private education sector, there was opposition to mandatory registration from non-government schools.

[52] Recommendation to Council on Teacher Registration, NSW Teachers Federation, J1072/97.

[53] *Quality Matters – Revitalising Teaching: Critical times, critical choices*, Report of the Review of Teacher Education, New South Wales, Gregor Ramsay, Nov 2000, NSW Dept Education and Training, p.150.

In addition, a number of specific propositions contained in the Bill were not supported by many of the key players. The Bill did not gain clear support in the Upper House, and lapsed following a State election.

The issue of teacher registration has also been raised with members of this Inquiry, primarily in the context of improving teacher quality and the respect for teachers as professionals. A number of teachers have recommended registration as a means of raising the status of teaching. In addition, teachers feel that when they behave as professionals, for example, voluntarily undertaking professional development and/or higher degrees, this is taken for granted, rather than being valued and rewarded. Parents have expressed concern at some older teachers who have not kept up with new ideas about teaching, new technology and so on, and raised the issue of compulsory professional upgrading. Proponents of registration argue that it has the potential to raise the standing of the teaching profession in its own eyes and in the eyes of the community. They point to other professional groups, such as doctors, lawyers and social workers, where registration has been a catalyst for a sense of professional identity, and has encouraged the profession's involvement in a range of training, development and advocacy roles.

Registration can certainly assist in some of these matters. Registration would enable the teaching profession to become self-regulatory, in line with many other professions. At present, those who employ teachers determine who is qualified to teach. This gives discretion to employers to adjudicate on professional competence, rather than the profession itself taking the responsibility for this. In addition to determining minimum qualifications for entry to the profession, registration usually requires the establishment of protocols accrediting pre-service training courses, developing standards of professional practice, specifying involvement in professional development (possibly as an element of ongoing registration), and outlining procedures for handling unsatisfactory conduct[54]. All of these activities could contribute to the advancement of teacher professionalism itself, and to reassuring the public about the quality of teachers in New South Wales.

How far teachers in New South Wales have to travel to fulfill the requirements of a 'profession' is spelled out tellingly in Gregor Ramsay's recent review of teacher education in New South Wales[55]. Comparing teaching with law, dentistry, nursing, medicine, social work, engineering, psychology and accountancy, Ramsay concluded that on a range of variables, teaching currently falls short:

- First, compared to many other professions, teaching lacks agreed standards of professional practice. There are no generally accepted standards or competencies that document the specialist knowledge and skills of teachers (despite a number of attempts and the *Professional Standards* document identified above). At present, even the basic requirement to hold a teaching certificate (indicating that one is minimally qualified) is not mandatory for those teaching in non-government schools.

[54] See for example, "Ministerial Discussion paper: The Establishment of a Teacher Registration Authority in New South Wales", August, 1997; NSW Teachers Federation submission to The Review of Teacher Education in NSW, undated; Response to discussion paper on the establishment of a Teacher Registration Authority in New South Wales, Independent Education Union, www.nswactieu.labor.net.au/teachreg/resp1, Briefing Paper 6/2000 by Marie Swain on Teacher Registration, NSW Parliamentary Library.

[55] *Quality Matters* Op.cit.

- Second, teaching lags behind other professions in its support for and engagement in professional development. Teaching currently requires no ongoing professional development from its members. Perhaps because of this, teachers currently obtain less support for these activities from their employers, in terms of either time-off or payment, than most other equivalent professions. The paltry funds provided to teachers in relation to professional development have been alluded to above.

- Third, there is an inadequate system of practical training and mentoring in teaching. Of all the professions Ramsay surveyed, teaching includes in pre-service training the smallest amount of practical experience, with no mandated minimum period, and with a narrower range of practicum placements than in most other professions. In addition, new teachers receive minimal induction when they start work compared to other professions, with teaching unique in requiring beginning teachers to be fully responsible for a full-time work schedule from day one. This issue is examined in some detail later in the present report.

- And fourth, teaching has yet to become self-regulating. Teachers lack a self-determined code of ethics to guide their practice. Teaching has historically resisted external attempts to impose accountability, and yet has not taken responsibility for developing internal mechanisms of quality assurance and self-regulation.

In an important sense, then, teaching as a *profession* does not have a clear identity or unified voice, despite the fact that many individual teachers are respected for their skill and professionalism, and many voluntarily engage in professional development, mentoring of others and critical self-reflection. In addition, while a number of academic associations exist in the education sector, none of these has been able to harness the commitment of the bulk of practising teachers, notwithstanding subject-based teacher organisations (e.g history, science) that play an important specialised role. Rather, broad debates about teaching and learning in New South Wales tend to be contaminated by industrial relations considerations, with the DET and the Teachers Federation, as the major employer and union, constantly positioning themselves for the next round of wages and conditions negotiations. During this Inquiry, this has been reflected in the antipathy between many teachers and the Department, such that observations about deficiencies in the education system and in teaching practices often degenerate into one-sided complaints about the Department. In the Inquiry's view, this is inevitable while teachers lack a more neutral forum in which to raise issues of legitimate professional interest and concern. In a real sense, teachers in New South Wales are at present professionally disempowered.

The role of teachers

The reasons for teaching not having a sustained professional identity and voice are many and varied. Ramsay attributes the above deficiencies to the lack of an organised teacher professional association, and to the consequent disproportionate power of the Teachers Federation and the Department. He advocates a three-way partnership between the Teachers Federation, the Department and a professional association of teachers, as a way of maximising the benefits to teachers and, importantly, students. In this regard, he throws down the gauntlet to teachers to join in:

> There is no doubt that the content of teachers' work is professional; [but] they must move to act from professional principles rather than the requirements of arbitrary rules as determined by employers or negotiated with unions. Only in this way will a strong culture of *professional* initiative be established (emphasis added). Teachers must ask themselves whether they want the responsibilities now held by their employers to decide who should be a member of their profession.[56]

The Inquiry echoes this statement. It urges the NSW Teachers Federation, the DET, and teachers themselves, to support the creation of a professional organisation for teachers, and to acknowledge the individual and collective benefits of a formal professional association. The timing is right. Many teachers are aware of the need to revitalise the profession. And the community is demanding tangible evidence concerning the quality of teaching in our schools. It is no longer acceptable for teachers to proclaim effectiveness without evidence. There are responsibilities attached to being a member of a profession that must be demonstrated. Agreed and transparent standards of professional teaching practice need to be endorsed. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the world is changing, and in most jobs, ongoing evidence of competence and upgrading of skills is required. Without a professional association to promote quality assurance in an internal, self-regulated manner, the teaching profession in New South Wales leaves itself subject to external evaluation only, and in ways that may not be appropriate. Both internal quality assurance procedures that are developed by and on behalf of teachers, *and* external accountability procedures developed by government as the employer (preferably with expert input from teachers), are needed to ensure the status of teachers into the future.

An Institute of Teachers

All of the observations above point to the need for teaching to take steps to become a self-regulated profession. In line with Ramsay, the Inquiry believes that this will involve the establishment of a professional association for teachers, with clear terms of reference in relation to quality assurance and the ongoing development of professional standards and competencies[57]. This will ensure that its establishment is linked with raising the quality of teaching and learning in New South Wales, as well as with the public's perception of professionalism among teachers. In addition, given the importance of teachers in the lives of young people, and in the community at large, the Inquiry is also of the view that mandatory registration for all teachers in New South Wales should be required by law, such that misconduct and incompetence, investigated with due regard for natural justice, can mean denial of a license to practice. The alternative, for teaching to become a more voluntary self-regulating profession, without the power to prevent individuals from practising, is inconsistent with the responsibilities of teachers in relation to children and young people.

[56] Ibid. Page 118.
[57] The recent *Review of Non-Government Schools in NSW*, 2002, conducted by Warren Grimshaw also endorses the establishment of a professional standards framework along the lines recommended by Ramsey.

In his report, Ramsay presents compelling evidence for a registration system. He demonstrates clearly that in professions that require registration, whether by law or custom (including all of those listed above), the likelihood of strong professional standards also existing is very high. He also illustrates how developments overseas frequently link registration with professional accountability. And yet Ramsay shies away from mandatory registration for teachers in New South Wales, opting for the establishment of an *Institute of Teachers* to undertake most of the professional activities outlined above. He states:

> Registration, by itself, is a relatively blunt instrument for guaranteeing and enhancing the quality of teaching. Registration can only imply minimal standards and is primarily concerned with regulating who should be able to teach, and who should remain in the profession. Compulsory registration virtually requires everyone employed in any teaching capacity to be registered. It rarely prevents ineffective teachers from being employed, and because of its static nature, contributes little to the on-going improvement of the profession[58].

Ramsay bases these criticisms on a minimalist, one-off notion of registration; and yet clearly other models are available. Ramsay's Institute of Teachers, for example, could include amongst its activities a registration and de-registration responsibility, or a separate registration authority could be established. Ramsay is right in suggesting that registration based on minimal standards will not in itself raise professional standards in teaching. However, registration, in the light of the evidence he presents and in the Inquiry's view, is a necessary but not sufficient step in the creation of a teaching profession comprised of high quality practitioners.

Ramsay seems unduly influenced by the fact that much of the private education sector in New South Wales is opposed to mandatory registration. While this may be so, it is in the Inquiry's view no reason to reject registration. Where the education of children and young people is concerned, the most basic assurances concerning the competence and suitability of teachers need to apply across the entire community. We are all, as a society, damaged if young people are exposed to incompetent or unethical teaching. The essence of a profession is that it insists on the right to determine who is qualified to be a member, and takes responsibility for protecting the interests of the public in doing so. Given that the majority of teachers in private schools fulfil the requirements of a teaching certificate from the DET (i.e. are appropriately qualified), and given that substantial funding is provided by Federal and State governments to non-government schools, it is simply not justifiable for the private sector to oppose teacher registration. This is not to say that transition arrangements for those without teaching qualifications who currently work in schools cannot be made.

On a different point, the Inquiry is not persuaded that there are significant impediments to teacher registration caused by National Competition Policy requirements. As earlier attempts to set up a teacher registration authority in New South Wales indicated, these merely require demonstration of significant public benefit. With this in mind, the Inquiry believes that universal, mandatory teacher registration should be included among the responsibilities of a professional body such as Ramsay's proposed Institute of Teachers. In relation to membership of the proposed Institute of Teachers itself (or similar body), this should be optional, possibly with initial membership provided at a discounted fee to encourage participation. In other words, while registration would be compulsory, membership of

[58] *Quality* Matters Op.cit., p.149.

the Institute would not. This is because to be credible, any Institute of Teachers must be able to attract members by virtue of the services and advantages it provides, rather than on the basis of compulsion. In his report, Ramsay outlines levels of accreditation that teachers can work towards at different stages in their careers, in order to demonstrate that their skills are of a higher order. The levels are designed to raise professional standards and ideally, form the basis of differentiated levels of remuneration. Through activities such as on-going standards development and skills accreditation, the reputation of an Institute of Teachers should ensure that a majority of teachers become members.

It is essential that the membership of the Institute of Teachers include a strong representation from practising teachers, who are nominated and/or elected through transparent and democratic processes. Teachers must be allowed to own the Institute and to feel that its activities are genuinely in their best interests. The State Government has an important role to play in the establishment of an Institute of Teachers and teacher registration scheme for New South Wales. In Australia and overseas, these developments have required the initiative of governments in their establishment. This includes providing seeding funding and specific purpose funding for research, evaluation and training. However, this support for the formation of an Institute should have absolutely no bearing on the funding of the earlier recommended provisions for school-based teacher professional development which are among the most important recommendations of this Inquiry.

The Inquiry is aware that the Government is currently preparing a proposal concerning teacher registration and a teacher professional association in New South Wales. Models also exist in some other Australian States, including Queensland and more recently, Victoria. In our view, it is most appropriate that the Inquiry indicate the broad responsibilities that should be included within such a body, and leave the fine detail to those with more direct involvement. These responsibilities should include:

- The development and management of procedures for the initial and ongoing registration of all teachers in New South Wales. This would involve determining the minimum standards for initial teacher registration, including appropriate induction programs and the possibility of provisional registration for beginning teachers. It should include the development of transition arrangements and sunset clauses for those who lack teaching qualifications but who work in New South Wales schools, or are transient educational visitors to schools. It should address requirements relating to the registration of overseas trained teachers (in consultation with the National Office of Overseas Skills Recognition, NOOSR), and of teachers returning to practice after a break[59]. And it will require the stipulation of grounds for de-registration and processes for investigating cases of possible de-registration.

- The endorsement and disendorsement of courses and programs of teacher education, both undergraduate and postgraduate, including the amount and nature of practicum training in pre-service courses[60].

[59] The Inquiry has received a number of representations expressing concern about the needs of overseas trained teachers in relation to communication skills and cultural familiarisation with the Australian education system.

[60] This point and the two that follow are taken substantially from *Quality Matters*.

- The development of standards of ethical practice and professional practice standards for teachers at designated stages of their professional development[61]. In regard to the latter, the Institute should develop a system of accrediting teachers against these standards (e.g. with different levels of accreditation), and establish and maintain records of accredited teachers. Given the focus on professional development implied in ongoing accreditation, the Institute should also develop procedures for accrediting providers of professional development to teachers.

- The provision of advice to the Government and community on issues relating to teacher quality and professional standards, and on educational issues more generally. This would involve informing the public about the qualifications and experiences of teachers in New South Wales, promoting the views of the profession on professional matters, and communicating on professional matters among members. In addition, the Institute should advise on areas where research is needed, particularly in relation to pedagogy in order to advance the practical skills of teachers in the State.

The time is right for teacher registration in New South Wales, and for an Institute of Teachers. In the view of the Inquiry, these developments are needed to build upon other recommendations of this Inquiry aimed at revitalising the teaching profession. By drawing on the depth of experience of practising teachers in partnership with teacher educators, unions, professional teacher associations and employing authorities, a collaborative Institute of Teachers could exercise a powerful and positive influence in New South Wales.

Recommendation 1.7: That an Institute of Teachers (by this or similar name) be established in New South Wales, with responsibilities in relation to teacher registration and de-registration, teacher training programs; professional standards and accreditation for teachers throughout their careers; and community and professional relations.

[61] As soon as the Institute of Teachers has determined registration procedures for teachers in NSW, it should consider the development of a code of conduct and practice standards for teachers for accreditation purposes. The Institute should take account of moves to date to develop teaching standards including "Towards Identifying Professional Teaching Standards for NSW Schools", NSW DET, 1998; "Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms, 2000, developed by the Australian Curriculum Studies Association (ACSA), Australian College of Education (ACE), Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE); and the "Professional Standards for Teachers: Guidelines for Professional Practice", 2001-2002 Pilot program, being undertaken by Education Queensland.

ATTACHMENT

Standards of Professional Practice for Accomplished Teaching in Australian Classrooms

It has been suggested that accomplished classroom teachers in Australia demonstrate their professionalism by:

- having a broad, deep, and critically aware knowledge, understanding of and enthusiasm for the intellectual content, discourses, and values associated with disciplines from which the subjects (or curriculum areas) they teach are derived and as appropriate to the specific contexts within which they teach: by being both transmitters and critical interpreters of the knowledge, understanding, skills, and values associated with their subject areas; by recognising that knowledge is often contestable; and by developing programs that fully implement the aims and objectives of the relevant school curriculum;
- enjoying teaching students and by holding the highest expectations of what each student is capable of achieving: being aware of the individual needs, interests, capacities of their students; and challenging their students accordingly by inspiring, motivating, correcting, and supporting their students, even in the face of temporary or apparent failure;
- treating all students honestly, justly and equitably: recognising and appreciating the range of values held by individuals as well as within families, groups, cultures, and the wider school community; and abiding by all statutory, legal, and ethical obligations incumbent upon them as teachers;
- being able to empathise with students;
- having an appropriate sense of humour;
- exemplifying the qualities and values that they seek to inspire in their students: including authenticity, intellectual curiosity and rigour, tolerance, fairness, ethical behaviour, common sense, self-confidence, respect for self and others, empathy, compassion, appreciation of diversity, and acknowledgement of cultural differences;
- being reflective practitioners who critique the impact of their teaching and professional values upon students, colleagues, and others in the wider learning community: by having a critical awareness of the role played by their own educational, social, cultural, religious, financial and other background experiences; and how these experiences may have helped to shape their own values, their approaches to teaching, and their assumptions about education;
- displaying adeptness and discernment in the creative use and critical evaluation of information technologies for assisting their own teaching and in advancing the learning of their students;
- providing regular, accurate feedback to students and monitoring the growth in students' learning: not only to assist in the assessment of students' growth as a basis for reporting each student's achievements against the required learning outcomes regarding what students know, understand, can do, and value as specified by the formal curriculum; but also as a means of judging the effectiveness of their own teaching;
- demonstrating excellence in the practical, pragmatic craft of teaching and in managing a learning environment that is interesting, challenging, purposeful, safe, supportive, positive, and enjoyable: which fosters co-operation and collaboration, independence, responsibility, and creativity;
- exercising high communication and interpersonal skills: being exemplary in their own literacy and numeracy practices; and having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills, and professional values to exercise the crucial responsibility that all teachers have as teachers of literacy and numeracy;

- being committed to their own professional development: seeking to deepen their knowledge, sharpen their judgment, expand their teaching repertoire, and to adapt their teaching to educationally sound developments arising from authentic research and scholarship;
- exercising educational leadership: working collaboratively with their colleagues to develop instructional and welfare policies, curriculum and staff development; and helping to ensure that the essential goals of the school as a learning community are met;
- taking due account of the educational implications of the community's cultural diversity: in particular, by including within the curriculum those indigenous issues and perspectives necessary to help achieve reconciliation between indigenous and non-indigenous Australians; and by being sensitive and responsive to the educational issues generated by and within Australia's multicultural society within the context of continuing to develop a socially cohesive Australian society.

CHAPTER 2
CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY

This chapter examines the links between teacher professionalism, as discussed in the previous Chapter, and the teaching and learning practices within New South Wales public schools that will best contribute to the advancement of students. In order to identify productive practices within any organisation or system, it is first necessary to be clear about the core task of the organisation. In the case of public education that core task is the promotion of learning. The mark of the professional educator is the career-long pursuit of knowledge of what constitutes quality learning and the means by which it can be achieved. Debate can and should occur about the content of that learning, and about those pastoral and social responsibilities that schools and teachers should assume because they are part of a wider community and system of social values. However, the irreducible core of teacher professionalism in public education is the progressive refinement, individually and collectively, of teaching knowledge and practices that serve the needs of children and young people.

How can refined teaching practice be recognised? One sign is the presence of informed choices in matters such as the structuring of learning environments. Another is the conscious design of learning methods and forms of assessment that suit particular tasks and particular students. Refined practice involves decisions about the way education is framed so that students are motivated to give their attention to it and learn, and the choice of information sources and technology that will help students to acquire the multiple literacies needed to function in today's world. A common implication of these choices is that the professional educator remains receptive to individual and collaborative learning and is ready to try different approaches that hold the promise of benefiting students.

Some teachers may manage to maintain this professional stance as individuals. However, consideration of the research literature as well as the Inquiry's review of some New South Wales schools that stand out because of their innovatory educational practices, shows that the refinement of classroom practices is more likely to occur when supported by a professional community of teachers. This is why such importance was attached in the previous chapter to strengthening collaborative work among teachers. This perspective links with the question of what broad strategies can be adopted by an education system like the Department of Education and Training (DET) for achieving pedagogic change – the ultimate policy issue examined in this Chapter. It is valuable that the DET publicly acknowledges the quality of the educational programs offered in certain outstanding schools. The Inquiry has felt obliged to take the further step of asking what strategic initiatives the system might adopt to encourage and assist schools to develop pedagogies that will engage and assist today's students. In that regard, the Inquiry's own analysis of possible courses of action has been assisted by reviewing current practices in some other Australian jurisdictions. The outcome of these reflections will be presented later in the chapter. Meanwhile it is simply noted that in the past, the most common practice internationally has been for materials intended for implementation to be blueprinted, tested and then rolled out with centralised support. Without minimising the importance of the role of central authorities, more recent studies of school reform[62]

[62] Education Queensland (2000, Apr) *New basics project technical paper* (http://education.qld.gov.au/corporate/newbasics/docs/nbftech.doc).

have indicated the productiveness of a different strategic approach, one that emphasises the importance of:

- setting up enabling and generative conditions, and providing intellectual and material resources for a focus on pedagogy,

- facilitating teacher development, ownership and problem-solving around issues of pedagogy,

- identifying and studying which teacher and school-based solutions change student outcomes, and

- consolidating and disseminating those insights and associated resources for broader use across the system.

Such an approach avoids the assumption that there is a universal teaching strategy that is relevant or effective in all contexts. This is precisely the point made by many teachers in the course of the Inquiry, including the country teacher quoted at the outset of Chapter 1:

> …We are asked to try and teach someone else's recipes that don't fit our particular students, our particular communities…

Teachers need to have various strategies that they can draw upon that work in different combinations with different groups of students, and for teaching different skills and fields[63]. Very recent research[64] indicates that when teachers work collaboratively at refining such knowledge, that action itself can enhance school identity and, in turn, generate enhanced student achievement. This does not mean that the choice is between 'centralised' or 'decentralised' administration. As a respected examination of school reform has shown[65], top-down initiation, incentives and support are important, while bottom-up ownership of pedagogic reforms is crucial.

It is not always necessary to look interstate or overseas for examples of educational reform. There are commendable educational innovations taking place within New South Wales public schools. Some of them have come to light in the course of the Inquiry's fieldwork, others have been nominated by the DET at the request of the Inquiry. The presentation of a selection of these examples will serve to illustrate the possibilities of individual and team innovation within existing policies and structures. A noteworthy feature of the innovatory schools that have come to attention is the frequent presence of a strong pattern of teacher collaboration for which the term *professional community* appears an apt description.

Notwithstanding these positive examples, some of which are outlined below, it is necessary to ask why improved classroom practices in New South Wales appear to be of such limited scope, in both the sense of the type of innovations actually occurring and the overall extent to which change is being attempted. Building on the professional development foundations recommended in the previous chapter, the report will present strategies for encouraging improved teaching practices, taking account of research and practice experience elsewhere.

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[63] *ibid*., pp.31
[64] *ibid*., pp.86
[65] Fullan, M. (1993), *Change forces: probing the depths of educational reform*, London, Falmer Press

CHANGED STUDENT POPULATION

Before taking up the above-mentioned issues note must be taken of a profound change that has occurred in recent decades in the retention of students in secondary education. The consequence has been the presence in New South Wales classrooms of pupils of increasingly varied academic motivation and talents. The decade 1968-1978 was crucial for laying the foundation of universal secondary education (the level of education where most 16-17 year olds stayed on at school, either in secondary schools, alternative education programs, or a combination of education, training and work)[66]. In New South Wales, the retention rate from Years 7 to 12 grew steadily from 33.7% in 1973 to double that rate by 1993[67]. In 1999 the apparent retention rate to Year 12 in New South Wales was 68%, slightly reduced from the peak in 1994 of 70%[68]. The percentage of Year 7 students remaining to Year 10 in 1999 was 97% and, while comparisons with the late 1950s are difficult because of changes in the structure of secondary education when the new Wyndham scheme was introduced, only half of the students who commenced secondary education completed three years and only about 10% completed the full five years[69]. Hence completion of secondary education in government schools in the late 1950s was the exception and even the completion of the first three years only occurred for about half the students who commenced secondary education. By the end of the century completion of five years of secondary education was much more the norm as was completion of Year 10. The resultant mix of students includes many young people who previously would have availed themselves of unskilled and semi-skilled job opportunities and apprenticeships. Devising effective teaching practices to meet the range of needs of contemporary students in a rapidly changing world is a formidable challenge.

Retention is not the only factor that has contributed to a changing student population. Contemporary young people, in all their sub-cultural diversity, are very different from their counterparts of an earlier generation. To some degree this is a consequence of the mix of cultural identities cultivated by young people themselves and promoted by the media and commercial interests. The diversity also has its roots in ethnic, race, class and gender differences that characterise the wider society. Whatever its basis, the identity of young people is often formed through distancing themselves from previous generations and from adult authority and this can sometimes be the basis for mistrust and anger between teachers and young people. The challenge for teachers is not only to respond to increased school retention by developing curricula and teaching and learning styles that are inclusive of a wide range of different abilities and interests. Teachers must also acknowledge the personal worth of young people across generational and cultural divides. As the following extract from a submission to the Inquiry points out, not all teachers can easily work across this important divide:

> Society itself has changed and young people are much more aware of their rights without necessarily seeing a commensurate responsibility for their attitudes and behaviour. Dealing with young people requires a much greater level of interpersonal skill than it did in earlier times, and many of the older teachers are unwilling or unable to make the transition.

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[66] Burke, G., Spaull, A.(2001) 'Australian schools: participation and funding 1901-2000', in *Year Book Australia*, 2001.
[67] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) 'Schools, Australia', *Schools Australia*, April.
[68] Australian Bureau of Statistics (1999) *New South Wales Yearbook*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, p.276.
[69] Australian Bureau of Statistics (2001) *New South Wales Yearbook*, Australian Bureau of Statistics, p.87

RESPONSIVE SCHOOLS

The Inquiry team has been fortunate to be able to visit a great many schools throughout New South Wales and talk to students, parents, teachers and principals. While many schools are concerned about the quality of teaching and learning, a few stand out as having a primary focus on pedagogy and/or refined structures that support learning. Below are presented brief profiles of these schools to illustrate the capacity of the professional community within schools to develop innovative and engaging responses to the pedagogical challenges they face. These responses represent the unfulfilled aspirations of many other schools visited in the course of the Inquiry. At the very least, documentation of the practical steps taken to implement the educational innovations encountered should assist other schools to follow suit. More generally, the brief case studies point the way towards policy requirements for revitalising approaches to teaching throughout the public education system. The modest exercise that follows also points the way towards a type of information exchange that could be an important tool for reform (see Recommendation 2.2 at the conclusion of the Chapter). While it has been necessary to draw upon the sample of schools contacted by the Inquiry, there are clearly many other public schools across the state that were not visited that would also be worthy of inclusion.

Before presenting examples of local educational innovations it is necessary to reiterate a basic principle that has informed the Inquiry's approach to this topic. This is a belief that there is no single route to the improvement of teaching practice. That exercise of discerning judgement that teachers claim to be a mark of a true professional (Chapter 1), applies to the choice of pedagogy. Unless reform of this kind is owned by teachers and is generated interactively between centralised authorities and local schools, it cannot make a substantial difference to classroom practices[70]. The continual effort (preferably collaborative) to identify and test pedagogic improvements is, in itself, a source of intellectual stimulation that fosters a culture of learning. Hence the importance attached in Chapter 1 to strengthening teacher learning communities focused on the development of flexible pedagogy. There is available for consideration, however, a rich array of approaches to pedagogy, each having merit for particular educational purposes. In many cases these approaches have been developed well beyond the 'inspired idea' stage. They have been rendered into teaching, learning and assessment procedures capable, in the hands of reflective educators, of adaptation to suit the needs of particular school programs and groups of students.

It is not the intention in this report to present a comprehensive review of current explorations in pedagogy. There is a substantial literature that can be drawn upon for that purpose. Nor is it the Inquiry's wish to devalue the commendable examples of educational innovation by individual schools outlined in the section that follows. However, it is the Inquiry's contention that, as a system, public education in New South Wales currently is deficient in the cultivation of improved teaching practice. There exists, to borrow the words of a recent technical paper[71], "a policy vacuum" in relation to this vital part of the learning process. Adjustments in curriculum and assessment in and of themselves cannot generate changed outcomes without a focus on classroom interaction. In the international discussion of these matters there is an acknowledged need to align the *message systems* of curriculum, pedagogy and assessment to produce improved educational outcomes[72].

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[70] Fullan, M. (1993), Opt.cit
[71] Education Queensland (2000, Apr) *New basics project technical paper, O*pt.cit.
[72] Education Queensland (2001, Oct) *New basics project*.

LOCAL EDUCATIONAL INNOVATIONS

While the innovations reviewed by the Inquiry have taken particular forms in different schools, they have revolved around three major themes that provide a basis for categorising and briefly summarising the achievements of the schools concerned:

i. adapting and devising teaching and learning practices that engage the interest of young adolescent students,

ii. teaching arrangements that assist students to successfully negotiate challenging transitions, and

iii. aligning school practices to more general organisational principles that promote quality outcomes.

A general observation of the Inquiry is that where schools have evolved innovatory practices, these developments are not confined to one sphere. For present purposes, however, it is necessary to be selective and in some instances the full extent of some schools' achievements are under-stated.

Teaching and Learning Practices that engage young adolescents

In recent years, the staff and students at Wallsend High School have experienced the transformation of their school from a stand-alone Year 7-12 comprehensive school to a Year 7-10 feeder school within the Callaghan Collegiate. When the Inquiry visited Wallsend in 2001, it contained the final cohort of senior students, and from the beginning of 2002, it broadened its intake of Year 7 students to become a Year 7-10 junior high school. The principal of Wallsend High School took up her position in 1999 when discussion about future reorganisation was beginning. The retention rate was low and it was particularly difficult to retain students from Year 11 to Year 12. In addition, the level of achievement in the School Certificate and the Higher School Certificate was very low compared to most other schools in the District. The principal was particularly concerned about the 'de-motivation' that seemed to deepen in Years 9 and 10, particularly among the boys:

> The culture is still one of very low expectations of the students. These expectations are held by the students and shared to some degree by the staff and parents…That is very disturbing to me because there are some very bright students who merely coast along in the school and they are not motivated to higher aspirations.

The limited enrolments in Years 11 and 12 resulted in very small class sizes in some subjects. This not only affected the senior school - the range of viable subject choices for senior students was restricted - it also locked up valuable teaching time needed in the junior school. With the reorganisation completed, this tension has been resolved. Class sizes now average around 24 or 25, smaller than they were when the junior school subsidised the senior years. The challenge for the Year 7-10 comprehensive high school is to develop a philosophy and pedagogical approach appropriate for middle schooling. Working with the National Schools Network[73], the teachers have begun to pilot ideas derived from the wider debate about middle

[73] The National Schools Network is an independent teaching and learning agency.

schooling[74]. In 2001, the teachers of two Year 7 classes met regularly as a team to work through common welfare and curriculum issues and come up with strategies to engage the students in learning. Discussion about duplication and coordination of subject content led on to the development of two integrated units ('Seeing and Learning' and 'The Solar System') that spanned three subject areas. Although the teachers did not choose to be part of the teaming experiment, they nevertheless became convinced of its value and in 2002 they developed four teams to cover all Year 7 classes. The cross faculty collaboration with colleagues has led to a greater awareness of students' learning, a reduction of overlap and duplication within teaching programs, and the development of engaging 'rich tasks' and authentic assessment[75].

With the transition to a junior school, the curriculum is no longer driven to the same extent by the external requirements of the Higher School Certificate, and this has provided an opportunity to broaden the range of assessment techniques. The principal describes the rationale in the following way:

> We are trying to instil lifelong learning principles, and the notion that students are responsible for their own learning. The philosophy behind it is that students are not only assessed on what they learn but how they have learned it, and why they have learned it, and how that learning can be incorporated into other aspects of their lives or future projects. It's not just the product but the process of learning that is important.

Through the National Schools Network, the staff has looked specifically at the authentic assessment practices advocated by the Productive Pedagogies Project in Queensland (discussed in some detail later in this chapter). Authentic assessment focuses upon such characteristics as depth of knowledge and understanding, and connections to the world beyond the classroom and to audiences beyond the school[76]. In the first year, the new assessment tasks were developed on a trial basis and evaluated by a panel consisting of teachers, community members and students. This approach has now been integrated into the assessment schedule of every subject from Year 7 through to Year 10. The process, as the principal explained, begins in Year 7 where students are assisted to develop a learning journal:

> We are encouraging our parents to ask their children not just 'What have you done at school today?' but 'What have you learned?' And 'How did you learn that?' The idea is to get the students to reflect on their own approach to learning and how best they learn things.

The new focus on pedagogy has been supported by several staffing changes. Relief from classroom teaching is provided to all Year 7 teachers to meet in cross-faculty teams to plan integrated learning projects. Instead of a single Year Adviser in Year 7, the principal has selected four team leaders to be responsible for both curriculum and student welfare issues. Finally, the collegiate staffing allowance has covered the appointment of two additional head teachers, not in specific subject areas, but to support teaching and learning in Stage 4 and 5 of the curriculum.

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[74] The Inquiry is aware that many discussions of middle schooling include Years 5 and 6 in this category.

[75] Rich tasks and authentic assessment are discussed further on in this chapter under the heading, 'Queensland's New Basics'.

[76] Lingard, B., Ladwig, J,. (2001) *School Reform Longitudinal study: Final report*, vol. 1, Report prepared for Education Queensland by the School of Education, The University of Queensland.

Overall, as the principal has noted, the culture of professional learning has grown within the school:

> Using teams of teachers to think about the development of middle school is almost like learning a new vocabulary to talk about learning and teaching… We have tried to foster the idea that training and development is collaboration and that it comes from the professional dialogue between staff and within our own learning communities, including our primary schools, the Newcastle University and the Hunter Institute. Many of our staff have come from the era of in-service where the only way you got training and development was to have a day off and participate in a seminar delivered by an expert who really didn't know the context of your school or where you were in terms of professional learning. In that regard we really have made a move, and I thank the Schools' Network for that because they have taught us to value each others' opinions and work together on training and development rather than expect it to be given to us.

Another project in Southern Wollongong also has the aim of re-engaging the interest of young adolescents in learning. The project began in 1997 and has gradually come to involve the community of schools that serves the areas of Warrawong, Cringila, Lake Heights and Kemblawarra. The scheme has been shaped by the findings of research into the middle years of schooling and the effects of socio-economic disadvantage. At the outset, an intensive, interactive writing workshop for 13 teachers and 72 students from the high school (Warrawong) and a nearby primary school was held over two, three-day sessions. The proximate aim was to consider how the schools could support their students to better understand the language needed to be successful at school. The ultimate aim was to help students to become more effective in the way they use language to read, write, listen and speak. It was intended to assist students to make connections between the curriculum and their own lives. Students developed their research capacities by using a variety of sources both standard and of more recent development, including CDROM, and the Reuters News Service Data Base. They acquired some computing sophistication in the preparation of reports that were presented orally.

Thereafter, the project focused on teaching students how to write information reports and provide explanations. Teachers were involved in building upon common resource material to develop pedagogy appropriate to their home schools. A CDROM and a web site were created so that examples of student work could be stored. A select group of 20 gifted and talented students took the earlier published documents and created multimedia presentations of the information. A change in direction saw an integrated curriculum approach to literacy around the theme *The Migrant Experience.* An objective has been to improve learning in the area of Human Society and its Environment (HSIE) and literacy learning outcomes through the use of multimedia technology. In telling the migration story of every family in the school community, students made use of primary source materials and engaged the families in helping with the research. The variety of technology used continued to develop.

In 2000 the theme of *Reconciliation* was adopted as the basis of the integrated learning. The focus was upon speaking and listening skills. A major component of the project was the production by a group of gifted and talented students of a video, *Reconciliation - the People's Movement.* The video contains a commentary by the students and the school principal, as well as interviews with public figures. It has drawn commendations from departmental and government leaders. Throughout the course of the entire project staff and students have formed technology learning

teams with staff going on to acquire further skills by a variety of means including team teaching in day-long and after-school workshops. Another form of support has been team teaching with a Computer Coordinator in the classroom. Evaluations by independent assessors, as well as teachers, indicate that as a result of the project students have become:

- more empowered, highly focused and motivated learners who are able to self-direct their learning,

- more able to work both individually and as part of a team in accessing information on internet sites, and

- self disciplined as the student-teacher roles have taken on more of the character of partnerships.

Underpinning these achievements by students has been the development of a particular localised version of a professional community of teachers, both within the high school and also across the feeder primary schools. As can be seen from many of the other examples of educational innovation cited in this section, a sense of unity and purpose seldom occurs in the absence of leadership. The principals of the participating schools have taken on significant roles as leaders and learners. Various members of staff have provided leadership in relation to specific parts of the overall task, including taking the initiative in translating literacy theory into teaching practice, challenging school organisational structures, developing technology skills in staff and students, and the production of appropriate learning resources. While tying endeavours of the kind described to school outcomes is always difficult, at Warrawong High School between 1992 and 2000, the proportion of HSC subject results in the bottom 20% band for the State reduced by half while the proportion of subject results in the top half doubled.

Where the Southern Wollongong schools were able to use information technology as a tool for re-engaging students in learning, a head teacher in the English faculty of an inner-Sydney school has used creative arts to achieve the same end. When the head teacher was appointed to Cleveland Street High School in 2000, he quickly realised that he was faced with a challenge:

> There are problems in the area in terms of engaging students and getting them to come to school. There are cultural problems too, and kids experience racism in the community. In fact they have multiple-disadvantages. When I first arrived as a new Head Teacher in English I was quite open to new ideas. I was still learning how to teach these kids, and I saw that they needed to do something different to become more engaged. You couldn't just go in there and deliver your standard English lesson to them. It needed a higher level of interest and to be more activity based.

The school serves a community with a high Aboriginal and non-English speaking background population as well as an Anglo working class population. Cleveland Street has a long history of welcoming and working with students who have been excluded from other schools or been through juvenile justice procedures. An opportunity for a more creative educational approach arose when the staff of the South Sydney Creative Arts Centre contacted the head teacher. Together they developed a joint video project for Years 9 and 10 students. The overall purpose was for the students to produce a series of films to be screened during the

South Sydney Council Youth Week. The potential of the project, from an educational perspective, was that it would motivate students to produce a highly visible product while at the same time allowing them to learn media skills that involved reading, writing, interviewing, basic script writing, the operation of sound and video equipment and video editing.

The students were divided into three workshop groups that met on a rotational basis with staff from the Creative Arts Centre to learn the skills of video production. The normal teachers were in attendance, and the head teacher coordinated the whole project by ironing out difficulties, dealing with issues of attendance and discipline, and linking skills to the various outcome areas specified by the syllabus:

> I didn't really have a problem fitting the work into the assessment requirements for Years 9 and 10. It can be an English activity - that's how we saw it. You can acknowledge quite a few outcomes when you do a project like this - working in groups, communicating and the like.

By the end of the project, the students had produced and edited four films based upon their own concerns and issues. The quality of the films is reflected in the fact that they won the South Sydney Council Group Project, Youth of the Year Award, in 2000. In addition, the students' self esteem improved significantly, as did their attendance and general engagement with school.

A second opportunity presented itself when the English as a Second Language Consultant approached the head teacher with the suggestion that Cleveland Street High School become part of the Dracon Program. This program, developed at Griffith University, teaches techniques of conflict management through drama and peer tutoring. The suggestion came at an opportune time because staff saw it as an engaging and innovative way to meet the school's needs as regards both the drama curriculum and the anti-racism policy.

Three members of staff attended a workshop to be trained in the approach and they subsequently used their newly acquired skills and understanding to train nine Year 11 students in the techniques of conflict management by using role-plays and theatre. The technique requires the students to draw upon their own experience to create small scenarios of conflict and to deconstruct the elements of the conflict situation by discussion and role-plays. By using drama to understand conflict management, the school was able to achieve a range of important outcomes. Both staff and students gained an improved understanding of conflict management and racism. In addition, the participants developed self-confidence and self-esteem and skills in public speaking, drama and theatre. The program was integrated into the Drama and English in Year 11, and afforded an opportunity for students to experience a real use for drama.

A third project to heighten the engagement of students with learning was developed between the school and PACT Youth Theatre. After a series of intensive performance skills workshops run by professionals in their field, the students staged a successful community performance called 'Stand Your Ground'. The head teacher, who organised behind the scenes, described the ambitious nature of the project:

> The whole process took place over a term with the production itself over two nights. It was a fantastic success. Overall, we found that the kids came to school more regularly while it was on. There is an expectation here that the kids will let you down. But they all turned up, and the place was packed. There was everyone – uncles, aunties. We can get three people

> to a parent and teacher night, but there were three hundred people there during the production… Now they are saying 'When is Stand Your Ground II on?'

A later chapter will focus on pedagogic and other innovations that schools have adopted to try and remedy the disruptive behaviour of some students. Because some of these approaches rest on the philosophy of re-engaging a pupil's interest in learning by emphasising the links between content and the student's world, one such example will be included in this section.

In a visit to Port Macquarie High School, the Inquiry met a young man who had previously been described as 'ineducable', who was making complicated engine calculations. He was one of a number of students who were responding positively to a concerted effort by the school to develop pedagogy relevant to the needs and interests of young men who had turned their backs on more conventionally delivered education. In the past, these students' behaviour was a constant source of friction and disturbance to staff and other students. They were increasingly suspended from school because of their disturbing behaviour, and their level of truancy.

With the support of their colleagues and the school's management, a head teacher and a teaching aide devised an alternate learning program for eight disengaged students, aged 13-16 years. The *Life Skills - Alternate Learning Program* uses a combination of experiences and settings (including a car 'makeover', outdoor ventures, TAFE 'taster' courses, and standard classroom learning) to impart not only social and behavioural skills but also traditional academic knowledge of relevance to problem solving. For example, a Go-Kart used for recreation is linked to a computer and calculations made concerning engine performance. Rules of reasonable conduct are consolidated in outdoor venture exercises. The group soon learns to exercise the controls needed to successfully perform a task.

In order to re-connect alienated students to learning, the staff structures the Alternative Learning Program so as to achieve some very specific social, behavioural and academic goals. They create an environment that meets the students' needs of tolerance, fun, freedom, choice and belonging. Specific learning tasks are developed to increase the students' self esteem. The focus is on teaching a range of practical skills that students can use in their life beyond school. In settings both inside and outside the classroom, the staff re-inforces the school's "Five Fair Rules".

The *Life Skills – Alternate Learning Program* consists of three strands:
- the Outdoor Education Program (for Years 7 & 8),
- the Automotive Program (for Years 9 & 10), and
- RESTART (Recognition and Encouragement of Students At Risk - TAFE program) for Year 10.

Both the Outdoor Education Program and the Automotive Program have been mapped against Stages 4 & 5 outcomes in a range of syllabi. Thus, students are given credit for outcomes achieved in the variety of mainstream subjects they are studying. The Outdoor Education Program operates one day per week with each group of students being involved for one term (10 weeks). Each group normally consists of eight students.

The second component, the Life Skills - Automotive Program, had two main facets: a car restoration project, and a go-cart project. Both aim to provide students with a broad range of skills in the automotive industry. With the car restoration project, students are working on a donated car and in the process learning skills in panel beating, painting and engine maintenance. The go-kart program is an extension of

the car restoration project and introduces the students to data logging and technical maths skills. A key feature of this program and a major factor in its success has been the partnerships established with local clubs and businesses that support the program with donations and expertise. Results of the program have been extremely pleasing with students involved experiencing better attendance and a significant decrease in the number of times they have been referred to the school's discipline system. When the Inquiry met four of the young male participants late in 2001 they all volunteered that they had previously hated being at school but stated that they did not mind attending now. The only point of contention was who, in the past, had been deserving of the title of being the biggest 'pain in the butt' of Macquarie High.

The final component of the Alternative Learning Program is the RESTART program which aims at broadening the range of post-school options for 12-15 students in Year 10 who are identified as being 'at-risk' of not satisfying the requirements of the School Certificate. In the past, the vast majority have ended up unemployed or in sporadic periods of part-time or casual work. RESTART is an effort to break this cycle and it represents a partnership between the Port Macquarie campus of TAFE, the employers of Port Macquarie and Port Macquarie High School.

The 'at-risk' students are identified towards the end of Year 9 in a range of ways. Once selected, the students participate in all three elements of the Program - school, TAFE and work-placements. The students attend school for the majority of the week and complete all their School Certificate courses during this time. They also complete the Work Education Framework by choosing the Work Skills elective as their Year 9/10 vertical elective course. The TAFE component of the program involves students undertaking introductory modules in a range of TAFE learning areas where they gain credit towards further TAFE study once they have successfully completed the modules. At the end of the year they receive a School Certificate, TAFE statements indicating each module successfully completed, and certificates indicating work placements sites, and the skills that are developed. Students completing the Program have available to them a vastly wider range of choices than they would have had if they had left school, without a School Certificate, prior to the completion of Year 10.

Negotiating Challenging Transitions

Every Thursday, at 11.00 am, the Years 5 and 6 students from West Wyalong Public School pick up their school bags and walk across the playground to the adjoining high school campus. In classes of 20 students, they spend the remaining four periods of the school day moving from class to class, taught by high school teachers and using high school facilities. They are given a timetable to follow based on the format of the more complicated timetable they will encounter when they enter Year 7. The young primary school students gain a taste of the specialist high school subjects that they will encounter when they make the final transition into high school - Music, Visual Arts, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, Agriculture, Woodwork, Metalwork, Food Technology and Computer Studies.

The students concerned are participants in the Middle School Program, a collaborative initiative between West Wyalong Public School and West Wyalong High School to ease the transition of learners from primary to high school[77]. The program began in 1993 when staff from the two schools met to discuss the

[77] The two West Wyalong Schools planned and developed the initiative. Recently, a small group of Year 5 and 6 students from Burcher and Wyalong Public Schools have joined the program.

discontinuity between the primary school and high school. Children moving from Year 6 to Year 7 were often confused by the very different teaching strategies and styles of classroom management that they encountered. In the primary school they were at home with a single generalist teacher who used a student-centred approach and cooperative learning methods. Arriving in the high school they encountered a large and sometimes intimidating campus, a complicated school timetable, and a subject-centred curriculum where they might come face to face with up to 16 teachers. The staff were concerned that the sharp break in the learning environment contributed not only to confusion and anxiety in the students, but also to a fall off in motivation and learning of some students as they moved through the junior high school years.

Now, by the time the West Wyalong Public School students come to enrol in the high school, they are already familiar with important aspects of the learning environment on the new campus. They then encounter the second stage of the Middle School project that is designed to maintain their enthusiasm for learning during Year 7. In a departure from the normal high school model, each of the three Year 7 classes is given a home-room and a generalist teacher who teaches the core subjects of English, Mathematics, Science, and Human Society and its Environment. For the remaining subjects, the students move from class to class to be taught by specialist teachers.

In carrying over the one-teacher primary school concept into Year 7, the high school is able to maintain a secure learning environment for the new students and form a bridge between the pedagogy of the primary school and that of the secondary classroom. Within their home classes, the primary trained high school teachers are well placed to offer welfare and pastoral support as well as remedial and extension opportunities. Working across subjects, the home class teacher maximises the transfer of learning between disciplines and uses the flexibility in timetabling to develop a more integrated program. The effect is to maintain the level of motivation, achievement and student satisfaction while reducing the incidence of discipline referrals.

The Middle School Project has been based upon staff cooperation and trust. The two schools have developed a form of K-12 staffing whereby the high school contributes twelve 50 minutes periods each Thursday when its staff teach the Year 5 and 6 students. In return, the primary school teachers teach high school classes or work with high school staff on cooperative ventures. The close cooperation between the principals and executives of the two schools has spread to the staff as a whole. In an external evaluation of the project[78], the principal of the primary school is quoted:

> The readiness to deal as equal partners with each other has provided a context for experimentation and risk-taking and continues to be the cornerstone on which supportive inter-staff relationships are built.

More recently, the primary and high school teachers have collaborated to achieve a greater degree of curriculum continuity across the K-12 curriculum. The main strategies employed to achieve this degree of curriculum continuity have been:

[78] Braggett, E. (1999) *Report on the Middle Years Program, West Wyalong Primary School and West Wyalong High School*. Unpublished external evaluation.

- the identification of literacy and numeracy requirements in all Key Learning Areas in early secondary (Stage 4) and matching them to preparatory knowledge, skills, and understandings in later primary (Stage 3); and

- the construction of Curriculum Continuity Plans for each of the subject areas.

The Inquiry has been impressed by the detailed studies undertaken. They have resulted in a clear and efficient division of labour between the primary and secondary teachers. A somewhat less comprehensive but nevertheless impressive approach to easing the transition between primary and secondary schooling has been developed within the Canterbury region in Sydney. Canterbury Primary School in Sydney's inner-west was established in 1878 and features heritage buildings set in spacious grounds. The school, with an enrolment in 2001 of 241 students serves a culturally diverse community. Innovatory programs of recent times include the collaboration of teachers from Canterbury Public School, Canterbury Girls High and Canterbury Boys High (and Ashbury and Canterbury South Primary Schools) in operating a mentor program to aid the transition of students from Year 6 to Year 7. High School staff teach lessons to Year 6 students. High School students act as mentors in computer technology, Internet usage, photography and drama. Relationships have been formed that ease the transition of Year 6 students to Year 7.

The aim of a current exercise involving teachers in the primary and high schools is to ensure that students are engaged in learning experiences that reflect productive pedagogies and the enhancement of the intellectual quality of the curriculum. Funds have been obtained to support teachers' efforts to work collaboratively and develop a professional peer group that shares the responsibility of providing students with improved learning outcomes. This emphasis on sharing responsibility and operating as a professional community was a striking aspect of Canterbury Public School's culture during the Inquiry's visit to the school.

The Marida[79] Program conducted at Vincentia High School is another middle school project that has been developed to better serve the needs of adolescents entering high school. The program has elements in common with the provisions for Year 7 students at West Wyalong and the Canterbury High Schools in that it reduces the number of teachers a Year 7 student has and their movements around the school. The Year 7 students are placed into three core classes, with around 60 students in each group. Each class has its own large home-room and a four teacher team which is responsible for the core curriculum of English, Maths, Science, Human Society and its Environment, Personal Development, Health and Physical Education, and Languages Other than English. At any one time it is intended that there should be two or three teachers in the room with the students. A recent evaluation of the Marida program[80] which included interviews with 100 students in Years 7-10 as well as with parents and members of the executive and teaching staff indicated that the program has a very positive influence on the transition between levels of schooling. Benefits include the security of having a limited number of teachers giving students a sense of belonging, and a dramatic improvement in student behaviour.

One of the critical transitions children make is from home to school. For some this is preceded by participation in some form of early childhood education or care but even for them the school context can be frightening. The Inquiry has seen a number of innovative programs that not only smooth the transition but also establish a sound basis for learning in the early years of school.

[79] 'Marida' is Aboriginal for sea eagle, the school emblem.
[80] Vincentia High School (2000, Oct) *Marida Evaluation*, Vincentia.

At Brewarrina Central School in Western New South Wales *Kinderstart* introduces children to their school in the last term of the year before entry. Teachers who will take Kindergarten classes in the following year visit the local pre-school with the Aboriginal Education Assistant (AEA), to meet the children and prepare lists of those who will be enrolling at Brewarrina Central. Of the children who eventually enrol, over 95% have attended Pre-School. After the first meeting booklets are prepared for parents with current information about the school and its programs and an introductory letter inviting parents to meet with the teachers. During week eight of Term 3 the teachers visit each of the homes taking the school enrolment forms and sometimes assisting parents to complete the forms. Teachers new to Brewarrina are accompanied by the AEA.

The first day of *Kinderstart* begins with a walk around the school to see classrooms and meet the teachers. The program continues through Term 4 operating on four mornings a week to introduce the children to reading and writing, familiarising them with numbers, and engaging them in music, art and craft. At 1.00 pm the school bus returns the children to their pre school for an afternoon session. Towards the end of term parents are invited to come to see the children showcase the work they have done at *Kinderstart* and meet again with the teachers. By the time the children begin Kindergarten they know the teachers and each other and parents are feeling comfortable about the school and relaxed about asking questions or participating in programs. For the teachers themselves the program is an invaluable aid to transition, orientation, early identification of potential problems and to the preparation of appropriate learning and assessment strategies.

In South Western Sydney at The Grange Public School a highly structured transition program is an integral element of a commitment to successful learning outcomes. In the year prior to entry four sessions are organised on different days over successive weeks during Term 4 to introduce children and their parents to the school's programs and learning materials. Children participate in a range of activities designed to introduce them to new concepts and provide an opportunity for teachers and the area speech therapist to note the children's stages of development and any potential special needs. Over a number of years The Grange has given priority to early learning by maintaining K-2 classes at a maximum of 20 students even though this means that Years 3 - 6 are larger than they would otherwise be. Agreement on the importance of a sound foundation in the early years guides the organisation of the whole school.

Parents are an integral part of the school's programs and information and opportunities for discussion are provided through the pre-school orientation program and later grade information days. Regular evening sessions focus on literacy and structured reading and numeracy; currently 25 parents are attending evening sessions for two hours a week. Twelve to fifteen parents form a core of regular classroom helpers and parents of the Pacific Islander students have formed a dance group in which all students take part. Parents also participate in the school's 'intensive guided reading sessions' that are part of the K-3 Early Literacy Initiative (ELI) Program. One morning each week two classes are combined for the reading sessions and the two classroom teachers are joined by the ELI, Support, and ESL teachers and four parents to provide a ratio of one adult to four students. The range of initiatives promoting quality outcomes at the Grange is made possible by the innovative management of a combination of existing resources, special programs, parent and community support and by working cooperatively with other local schools.

A discussion of challenging transitions would not be complete without reference to the vital transition from school to work, further education and training. The Inquiry was fortunate in visiting a number of high schools that were developing productive linkages to assist at-risk students in negotiating this difficult transition. In 1998, five high schools in the Shoalhaven area gained support from the Full-Service Schools program[81] to help 15-19 year old students with their post-compulsory school decision-making. The initial funding for what became known as Shoalhaven Student Support provided for a part-time Student Support Coordinator, and sufficient resources for teachers to work as school-based coordinators in each of the five schools for one day a week. In 2000, funding from the Full-Service Schools program came to an end. To keep the project alive, the Management Committee attracted additional resources from the New South Wales DET, the City Council and private enterprise. These resources allowed the Coordinator role to became a full-time position, and the project was extended to encompass an additional high school. The high schools now involved are Shoalhaven High, Nowra High, Vincentia High, Bomaderry High, Ulladulla High and St Johns High School.

The project provides support for 15 - 19 year old students who are at-risk of not completing their formal education and who do not have concrete plans or goals about their transition into work or future education or training. Since it began, the program has helped around 800 students with school support and transition problems. The strength of the Shoalhaven approach is that once students are identified as at-risk of leaving school, they can not only be supported by initiatives taken within the school (*via* the school-based coordinator), but also by the external Student Support Coordinator who can activate a range of community resources to support the student. The overall Coordinator meets regularly with the teacher coordinators based in the schools to share ideas about successful initiatives and problems in particular schools. A Management Committee, drawn from a broad range of school, industry, local government and community organisations, manages the overall program and liaises with local industry, government agencies, and further education.

One of the strengths of Shoalhaven Student Support, compared with earlier efforts at transition education[82], is the hybrid vigour that comes from the strong links between the schools, local industry, local council and service providers. Another is the strong independent advocacy for at-risk students provided by local businesses, local government and a Coordinator who works across the participating schools. One particular initiative that has been taken addresses the problem that Aboriginal students are not continuing into the senior high school or accessing vocational training through the local TAFE college. The program organised the visit of thirty Koori students from three high schools to TAFE for a full week to learn about courses, and to become familiar with facilities and staff. This successful scheme has since become a regular event in the mainstream life of the participating schools. A second initiative has been the formation of Shoalhaven Youth Training Forum that brings together on a regular basis all the key local players in the youth, education

[81] In 1998, the Commonwealth introduced a Full-Service Schools Program to meet the needs of students 'at risk'. The Program followed a change to the conditions under which young people could receive unemployment benefits. One result of this change was that increasing numbers of young people stayed on at school beyond the compulsory leaving age, despite the fact that they were not highly motivated to achieve or interested in qualifying for tertiary study. In response to this situation, the Commonwealth directed resources, in the form of the Full-Service Schools program, into 'hot spots' where the problem was particularly concentrated.

[82] Teachers at the school were involved with Transition Eduction programs in the 1980s, and the Participation and Equity Program.

and training fields. Finally, important links have been formed between teachers and youth workers and service providers.

Shoalhaven Student Support began on the assumption that individual case management techniques would be used to counsel young people into further education, training and work opportunities. Case-management, however, has not been sustainable with the lack of resources and the large number of at-risk students. As with the Port Macquarie High School example discussed earlier, the focus has shifted to pedagogical and curriculum changes that re-engage at-risk students with learning.

Promoting Quality Outcomes

In 1991 Castle Hill High School in Sydney's North West was obliged to come to grips with two challenging developments: imposed downsizing and competition from senior colleges, specialist schools and private schools. Enrolments peaked at 1,450 students in 1988 and declined over the next four or five years to around 850. During that period, the school lost six or seven staff each year. The school had to rethink its direction, contemplating such issues as how it could attract more local students, how it could maintain a broad curriculum and how it could offer a quality service. It developed a new focus on quality in a process that has reinvigorated the school. Enrolments have increased to over a thousand students.

In considering various theoretical perspectives on its circumstances and possible lines of development, teachers noted that few schools appeared to be applying Total Quality Management (TQM) tools in their operation. Interested staff considered possible educational applications of TQM by attending business seminars to hear more about the relevant principles. In 1992 a whole-school training and development day was devoted to heightening awareness of quality concepts. An executive position - Head Teacher, Professional Support - was created to facilitate the emergence of new practices and a quality culture within the school. In pursuit of quality, it was considered that changes in attitudes towards teaching styles and learning, parent and community involvement, curriculum, and behaviour management and school management were essential. An international consultant assisted with the development of four *Pathways to Quality* and links were formed with the Australian Organisation for Quality with some senior students participating.

The school significantly increased the budget allocated to research and training relating to curriculum matters and that investment has continued to the present. Specific issue groups were formed at an early stage to consider organisational and management questions. Among those questions was the creation of a new model of decision-making inviting wider staff participation. One consequence was that staff meetings came to provide the opportunity for individuals to address colleagues for an agreed time on issues additional to those nominated by the executive. Cross- faculty discussion groups created a further forum for discussion and the provision of feedback to the issues groups. Currently there is a broadly based group - called the Welfare Team - which comprises year advisers, assistant advisers, the school counsellor, and across-faculty representatives. The Team has a joint welfare/ professional development focus and constitutes a virtual *professional community* of 15-20 members that meets regularly. Some of the fruits of the school's commitment to TQM will be mentioned in following sections. The quest for quality has been seen as an open-ended pursuit of continuous improvement.

The unitised vertical curriculum introduced by Castle Hill High School in 1994 divides the school's curriculum into self-contained units or modules. All units are one term in length. Students study seven units each term, each unit occupying 215 minutes per week. The structure allows students to have a say in the sequencing of their units of study, an opportunity which, in discussion with the Inquiry, they confirmed that they greatly appreciate. Long term planning is negotiated with a curriculum coordinator who assists students and parents to devise an appropriate plan. The vertical timetable enables subjects to be offered in classes incorporating a range of age and year groups. Students progress along an educational continuum and are not classified according to academic year. They benefit by having greater personal responsibility for their learning, greater ownership of their plan, and stronger and more focused motivation.

Like Castle Hill, Seven Hills High School has implemented a unitised vertical curriculum. It has also undergone a transformation. Not so long ago, Seven Hills had a bad name, considered by those in the know to be a 'rough' school. Graffiti covered the desks and most of the walls inside and out; many students dressed - and did - as they pleased. Local businesses called the school to complain about truants; the police were often involved; enrolments were falling; value-added data on the school's contribution to student success was not good. Those parents committed to a good education for their children avoided sending them to Seven Hills. But slowly, all this is changing.

The Seven Hills High School of today is a bright and inviting place. A fresh coat of paint (and no sign of graffiti), and displays of student artwork contribute to a positive feel to the school. According to parents met by the Inquiry, the school is now seen as a safe place. But the changes are more than cosmetic. They range from a restructuring of the school into a junior high school, to innovations in relation to curriculum, pedagogy, welfare and discipline, and the professional development of teachers. Seven Hills, under the leadership of an energetic principal, is in the process of transformation, and its focus is on improved teaching and learning.

The unitised curriculum gives students the responsibility for choosing and taking responsibility for what they will learn. Students speak positively about this. Importantly, teachers say that the students are more engaged because of the unitised curriculum, talking to one another about unit choices, outcomes and learning. The existence of a wide range of units not only increases choice but enables smaller classes, and the creation of 'special' classes, such as those for gifted and talented students and for students with remedial needs.

Seven Hills is using its unitised vertical curriculum as an opportunity to track student progress in fine detail. Seven Hills' tracking program is intensive, focusing carefully on each student's performance, and making significant demands on teachers. Halfway through each term, students receive a letter of 'commendation' or 'concern', depending on their academic progress. This provides students with tangible information on how they are doing in each of their units, and builds on research findings suggesting that students are not necessarily good at judging teachers' evaluations of their performance.

In addition to the flexibility allowed for in the unitised vertical curriculum Seven Hills High School also tries to cater to individual learning styles. This is achieved through ISLAND**,** standing for "Independent Successful Learning Addressing Non-Standard Directions". ISLAND is an independent learning centre offering individualised resource-based learning courses for students whose interests and needs cannot be catered for in standard units of study. Underpinning a range of initiatives has been

the focus at Seven Hills on teacher professional development. Teachers are aware that they are part of an innovative experiment, but are supported along the way. Said one teacher: "It's exciting - it actually feels like you belong to a profession, rather than just being a body who comes in and works from nine to three." The focus on professional development has had unexpected benefits. One head teacher indicated that there is less staff absenteeism than there used to be, as well as significantly less student absenteeism.

Although Bourke Primary School has had a less formal commitment to *quality* principles, the measures that it has adopted warrant its inclusions in the present category of innovative schools. The school's principal at the time the Inquiry visited Bourke late in 2001 had been in his position since 1992. In the early stage of his leadership, he concentrated on strengthening relationships between the school and the community, on establishing staff credibility, and on making students feel welcome. Then the school's attention was directed to the question of what it did well, and what local policies were needed to achieve further improvements. The principal's strategy initially was to engage staff members sympathetic to the goal of school improvement. One young colleague was enthusiastic about improving the literacy of students and staff members were invited to think of ways of supporting her endeavours. Staff considered the learning styles of students, the curriculum, all of the factors that impinge on the improvement of students' learning.

Another key element of the change effort was to initiate a consistent set of overall school rules to be observed by students, teachers and parents. There were to be certain rather than severe consequences when the rules were broken. At the outset, the imposition of penalties was accompanied by increased teacher/student conflict. Mediation and conflict resolution principles and practices were introduced. For example, mediation and 'Stop-Think-Do' programs were introduced for students, with older pupils playing a leadership role. Each year the incoming Year 6 students were trained in mediation, and injunctions like 'Stop, think about what you're doing, and what's best for you,' were publicised throughout the school. A general feature of the school is the use of symbols, visual images and compressed statements to, in the words of the principal, "Give kids things that work for them."

One of the visual themes of the Bourke Public School is De Bono's *Six Thinking Hats,* each representing a role the mind plays in the critical thinking process. By literally changing hats of different colours, students have been encouraged to examine a topic from a variety of perspectives. This method was introduced in 2001 but the planning for its introduction began a year earlier. The proposal arose out of collegial discussion. The young staff members were confident and skilled enough to generate ideas and plans and the principal's role was to facilitate the translation of ideas into sustainable programs by finding the necessary funds and providing guidance and support. An in-service program was organised to prepare staff and a trainer selected.

The foregoing collaboration of a facilitative leader and strong professional community is characteristic of the more innovative schools encountered during the Inquiry. However, acquiring two railway carriages for the school was the principal's idea. The "Technology train" was purchased because there was nowhere else to locate this important part of the school's program. There was some initial scepticism about the idea but it later drew praise. The unit now supports teaching in the KLAs and students' gaining of information skills. These gains have occurred with the support of staff and the expert contribution of a young staff member. The principal believes the growth of this side of the school's program illustrates some general principles of school development. First, a plan must carefully be devised, making sure that the

necessary in-servicing occurs, and that discipline leadership is present. "People don't mind doing anything as long as they are not scared. Throw them in at the deep end and say *sink or swim* and it doesn't work. You have to carefully plan the implementation of a scheme so that colleagues who want to travel quickly will help those who want to go more slowly." It has done no harm to morale and staff commitment that the progress described has been acknowledged by a Director-General's Award for Outstanding Teaching and Learning Programs, a Human Rights Award for Community Partnerships, and an Australian Principals' Professional Development Council Award for School and Community Partnerships.

A concern with quality outcomes has characterised educational and structural reform at Kadina High School in Northern New South Wales. By the time the Board of Studies adopted an outcomes framework in redesigning the Higher School Certificate syllabi the teachers at Kadina High School had already spent some years aligning their curriculum and reporting to an outcomes-based model. The groundwork for change was begun in 1997 when the principal took up her appointment at the school and established three working groups to sharpen the focus and direction of the curriculum. The first working party, made up of volunteers from the teaching staff, defined the core values and beliefs that informed teaching and learning at Kadina High School. Throughout the year, the working group took their ideas back to the staff for further discussion and suggestions. The end product was a widely endorsed statement of core values and beliefs and a set of guiding principles as a basis for further change. The process, as the principal has pointed out, was as important as the product:

> I know, the 'learning community' is a buzz phrase, but it actually did mean something. There was a lot of staff discussion about what a learning community meant for us. How are we going to support our students and challenge them at the same time? What are the things we want to keep, and what are the things that we need to do better? We needed to have that foundation.

The second working party made up of the school executive, worked with the principal in developing a model of transparent decision-making to assist the change process within the school. Within the model, decisions go through a number of stages. Once a problem or issue is identified by the school community (staff, faculty, parents, or students), and clarified by the principal and executive, it is referred to one of four groups to work out practical proposals. Whatever the level of decision-making, and whatever the group involved, all decisions must be consistent with the school's core values and beliefs and supported by consultation and research.

The third working party, which consists of teachers from all the Key Learning Areas, has been given the task of translating the core values and beliefs into learning outcomes for students. School resources have been used to release staff from classroom duties so that they can concentrate on developing a cross-curriculum framework for Years 7 and 8 called *Towards Personal Success*. The framework sets out the outcomes to be achieved in the various units studied by the students, and includes skills, such as problem solving and technological literacy, as well as common forms of pedagogy such as learning journals and cooperative learning techniques.

With the curriculum change in the junior school under way, the teachers focussed attention on the task of developing a set of learning pathways for students in the senior school. The first pathway is for students pursuing general academic subjects to obtain a UAI as a preparation for tertiary studies. The second pathway is for

students who are focused on obtaining a UAI as an entry to tertiary study, but who want to include one or two vocational courses such as hospitality or retail alongside their general academic subjects. A third vocational pathway has been constructed for students who are not aiming at further tertiary study. On one day a week they combine their school based VET courses and their TAFE based vocational units. The school packages their curriculum over the next three days so that they are grouped together for subjects such as English, Mathematics, and Sport. Friday is set aside for the students to complete the work placement component of their vocational subjects or to study independently. A fourth pathway is currently proposed for students who are not ready to leave school but who cannot cope with the Higher School Certificate syllabi. The solution, as the principal described, is not easy:

> There are students here who simply cannot cope with some HSC subjects and who don't want a UAI. They are not ready to leave school, they need our security, and they want to get something from high school. They need to develop really good skills that they can take into the workplace. A pathway for these students is a challenge but I don't want to make decisions until I can get some really good programs where the students can gain a credential...

The *Towards Personal Success* framework sets out a common set of outcomes covering personal skills and abilities. The assessed outcomes cover life time learning attributes such as cooperative classroom behaviour, independent work skills, participation in small groups, completion of classroom tasks, preparation and organisation for class-work, and completion of homework and assignments.

Curriculum change and professional development at Kadina High School have gone hand in hand. Focused educational leadership, broad based consultation, shared decision making, and in-school support for professional development have fostered professional confidence within the staff. Within a relatively short time, the principal has noted a change in the professional culture within the school:

> I have teachers that are now saying, 'Look, we have this expertise. Maybe we could get someone in to help us, but we can develop this together'. It's all become self-fulfilling. Because we are buzzing along, and their own skills have increased, they become more confident, and they are happy to give the next bit.

MANAGING CURRICULUM REFORM

While it is encouraging to see individual schools using innovative methods to engage students and enhance their learning, such schools are by no means common. The Inquiry has formed the view that such attempts at school improvement are sporadic and not well secured into the future. Furthermore, they generally have occurred without a great deal of direct support from either District Offices or Directorates within the DET.

This sober assessment of the situation on the ground might seem somewhat puzzling to those within the DET and the Board of Studies who, for over a decade, have been overseeing an ambitious, system-wide program of curriculum reform. As with many reform movements in Australian education, the shape and direction of that change was influenced by international developments. In this instance, the change involved a shift in policy focus from a concern with inputs to the education system to a preoccupation with outputs and standards. Within New South Wales, the current of

change manifested in the recommendations of the Committee of Review of New South Wales Schools[83] (Carrick Report) and the Report of the Management Review[84] (Scott Report). Both reports argued that the model of school-based curriculum development was flawed and should be replaced by a professional, centralised approach to curriculum development and implementation.

The reassertion of central control over the curriculum was formalised in the Education Act of 1990[85]. The key changes were as follows:

1. *Knowledge*: The Act specified the key learning areas (KLAs) to be studied by primary and secondary school students. The Board of Studies was required to develop courses of study within each KLA and, since its inception in 1990, it has set out to write new syllabi for all subjects, from Kindergarten to Year 12. The Board is currently working on the revision of syllabi within the Years 7-10 curriculum;

2. *Accountability:* The Act gave the Minister power to conduct Basic Skill Tests and to develop regulations covering the publication of the results to prevent any inappropriate public disclosure of the results. The Minister now has available a battery of external accountability measures: Basic Skills Tests in literacy, numeracy and computer skills in Years 3 and 5, English Language and Literacy Assessment (ELLA) and Secondary Numeracy Assessment Program (SNAP) in Year 7, the School Certificate in Year 10 and the Higher School Certificate in Year 12;

3. *Outcomes:* In line with the developments referred to earlier, the Act empowered the Board of Studies to specify the 'aims, objectives and desired outcomes' to be attained by young people in the course of their school study[86]. The Board of Studies has adopted a 'standards framework' as the basis for curriculum development, teaching practice, the monitoring of student achievement and reporting to parents. Through an analysis of students' performance, examiners' judgements, marking guidelines and work samples, the Board has constructed a set of outcome descriptors (standards) that describe the level of achievement of students within particular subjects.

Taken together, the changes in knowledge, accountability and outcomes have reshaped the architecture of the curriculum in New South Wales schools and influenced the work of both students and teachers. The reception afforded the top-down reforms in the public schools has already been alluded to in Chapter 1 in relation to teacher professionalism, but in the course of the Inquiry principals, teachers and parents have expressed a range of concerns about the changing curriculum. One of the recurring concerns has been whether there is an inherent structural weakness in the existing arrangements. In particular, there is considered to be a lack of coordination between the Board of Studies and the Department of Education (DET). The split responsibility between the two bodies - the Board develops the curriculum and the DET implements it in the schools - is thought by some to be akin to policy making in an unreal atmosphere detached from knowledge

[83] Committee of Review of NSW Schools (1989) *Report of the Committee of Review of NSW Schools*, (Chair: John Carrick), Sydney, NSW Government
[84] Management Review: NSW Education Portfolio (1990) *School-Centred Education: building a more responsive state school system*, Management Review: NSW Education Portfolio, Sydney, Southwood Press
[85] NSW Government (1991) *Education Act, 1990,* No.8, Sydney. NSW Government Information Service
[86] NSW Government (1991) *Education Act, 1990*, No.8, p.11, Sydney, NSW Government Information Service

of, or responsibility for, the allocation of resources needed to implement programs successfully. The perception exists among some teachers that the two authorities, the Board and the Department, 'pass the buck'. Syllabi are seen as being 'dumped' onto the schools, without adequate consultation with little or no staff development, and with insufficient time or additional resources for successful implementation. Syllabi are thought to be developed remote from the realities of schools and classrooms and the actual conditions for learning and teaching. The following are typical comments received by the Inquiry:

> The Board of Studies needs more teacher input to ensure the possibility of meeting the desired outcomes. Curriculum in the KLAs needs to be linked to reduce the incidence of repetition. Achievable outcomes need to be developed in the light of student diversity… (Primary teaching staff)

> The Board is issuing 'mandatory' documents in response to the Ministry but is not in a position to negotiate support for the documents with the profession or provide the necessary support to assist implementation. (Primary teaching staff)

A second set of concerns centres on the 'overcrowded curriculum'. In response to broader social and welfare concerns, primary teachers in particular have been required to cover more and more policy areas mandated by the Department, such as drug education, child protection, road safety and social skills. In addition, they need constantly to rewrite their programs as new documents (new HSC units, revised K-6 syllabi) arrive on their desks from the Board of Studies. With an increase in 'curriculum density', teachers find it difficult to cover in any depth the Key Learning Areas and other mandatory policies and students have less time to reflect upon their learning. The following extracts from the submissions convey these concerns:

> The school suffers from an over-crowded curriculum. A more coordinated approach between the DET and the Board of Studies is needed with a two-year time frame for the introduction of a new syllabus. (Primary teaching staff)

> It seems there is no overall plan looking at the whole picture when each curriculum group puts together what is required in its particular area of expertise. The Board of Studies and the DET instead of dealing sensibly with this problem, continue to inundate K-6 schools with all their KLA curriculum support documents and across-the-board policy documents. (Primary teacher)

> There is no time in a crowded timetable for children to reflect on and consolidate their own learning. They must move from lesson to lesson and subject to subject with great haste. (Primary teaching staff)

> The year does not pass without a change to a curriculum in addition to a teaching subject, a new approach to a course, or a whole new strand to squeeze into the already crowded school day. (Primary school)

The current preoccupation with outcomes has been criticised by a number of teachers and parents. Some are concerned that while the outcome measures serve external accountability purposes, they distort the teaching and learning process. The emphasis upon the measurable, and upon areas such as literacy, numeracy, science and technology means, according to some teachers, that non-quantifiable

learning is downgraded. Others argue that the strict adherence to standards-based outcomes restrict the teacher's autonomy and the exercise of professional judgment, as reported in the previous chapter. From a workload point of view, teachers complain about the time it takes to cover and report on the multiplicity of mandated outcomes. These concerns are illustrated in the following extracts from submissions to the Inquiry:

> If an outcome cannot stand-alone and be simply understood and implemented then surely it is not worth the paper it is written on. Better to have fewer, more sensible outcomes that can be covered in the teaching year than the tangled web we are presented with at the moment. (Primary school teacher)
>
> …While making explicit the core knowledge that students need to acquire is important, an uncontrolled expansion of what needs to be covered undermines the intention of the outcomes-based approach. Making time for in-depth learning and reflection and problem solving under such a regime is difficult. What you end up with is a more superficial approach that is the antithesis of outcomes based education. (Teachers Association)
>
> Outcomes-based education has seen the definition of an overwhelming number of outcomes, mushrooming the range of content and assessment procedures to a nonsensical, unmanageable level. (Primary school)
>
> Schools and teachers are driven by the curriculum. They seem to consider themselves accountable to the curriculum rather than to their pupils and the parents... (Parent submission)

Finally, a number of teachers, particularly in the junior years of high school, criticise the curriculum for not being meaningful, relevant and engaging for students. The lack of relevant and appropriate courses of study diminishes some students' self esteem and leads to behaviour problems. Teachers urge greater autonomy and control for principals and their staff to introduce flexible, innovative changes that engage learners. They argue that the 'one-size-fits-all' curriculum might need to be abandoned to allow schools freedom to develop a diversity of curricula innovations to engage young people in learning:

> The DET should provide a range of subjects to cater for all students' abilities and interests. Why were Mathematics in Practice and Contemporary English taken off the curriculum in the new HSC shuffle when they were vital in providing an opportunity to learn for *the majority of students? (High school staff)*

As we have previously seen (Chapter 1), a submission from the Secondary Principals Council also makes the point that the current extent of overcrowding in the curriculum, combined with increasing mandatory requirements and excessive testing does not encourage the levels of flexibility and innovation that brings engagement, achievement and a love of learning:

> What is created is a situation in which schools and principals are forced to demonstrate increased performance, while exercising diminishing control over the curriculum against which much of the performance is measured … the imposed change agenda usually conflicts with the changes which principals and teachers believe are needed to engage their students in a love of learning and meaningful pedagogy. They see recurrent and

mandatory testing as doing nothing for engagement. They see curriculum crowded by political impositions and narrow workplace training.

To a large degree, these curriculum concerns mirror the criticisms that were discussed in the Eltis Review in 1995. The following were some of the key issues raised in that Review:

- Schools were overwhelmed by multiple changes within a short space of time;
- The multiplicity of outcomes stifled teacher thinking and capacity for exciting approaches to teaching and learning;
- The release of new syllabi was poorly coordinated with the provision of support and training for implementation within the schools;
- Greater consultation and participation with the teaching profession was necessary if teachers were to 'own' the mandated curriculum reforms and become committed to their implementation; and
- Assessment and reporting demands had taken valuable time away from the core business of teaching and learning.

It is disturbing that, despite the Board's attempt to address the recommendations of the Eltis Review and to alleviate these problems, little seems to have changed. The following general comment by Fullan[87] about educational change seems particularly apt in regard to recent curriculum reform in New South Wales: 'Neither top-down nor bottom-up strategies by themselves can achieve coherence - the top is too distant and the bottom overwhelmed'.

Curriculum reform in New South Wales has sought to achieve a higher standard of rigour in subject matter through detailed specification of content, and a standards-referenced assessment regime that describes what students know and can do at particular stages of their schooling. The evidence to the Inquiry would suggest that these two strands do not sit easily together.

The detailed specification of content, which is aimed at achieving consistency across the system, is to a large extent a traditional subject-centred approach to the curriculum. While teachers acknowledge that the revised documents contain some excellent ideas and support material, their efforts at implementation are severely undermined by the sheer overload of what they perceive as prescriptive content. In particular subjects, such as Mathematics and English in the revised HSC curriculum, the effort to attain rigour has produced syllabi that are beyond the capacity and interest of a significant number of students.

The shift from norm-referenced to standards-referenced assessment is a much more fundamental change, and in the Inquiry's view the pedagogical implications have not been widely understood. It is important to distinguish between assessment for accountability and assessment for learning. The assumption behind external accountability measures like the Basic Skills Tests, is that once a teacher knows the levels at which their students perform, they will have the information to decide on the next step in teaching and learning. As many teachers have told us during the Inquiry, this is a false assumption; while the test results exert a pervasive

[87] Fullan, M., (1999) *Change Forces: the sequel*, London, Falmer Press

pressure on teachers to 'lift' their students' achievements into higher bands, they provide little if any detailed and useful information about particular students' learning styles, the inconsistencies in their learning, and their strengths and weaknesses. These insights can only be made available to teachers and their students through assessment for learning. We are referring here to the complex range of professional judgements made on a day to day basis by teachers as they communicate outcome criteria to students in language they can understand, discuss the quality of their work, provide written and oral feed-back, and develop strategies of peer and self-assessment. This kind of assessment for learning is at the heart of improved learning outcomes and further on in this chapter we describe forms of authentic assessment that are needed in New South Wales to counter the over-reliance upon useful but educationally limited forms of assessment for accountability.

REFORM STRATEGIES IN OTHER STATES

New Basics and Essential Learnings

Within Australia, there have been calls to make the school curriculum require students to be active and to think creatively and solve problems[88]. The latter is an approach well founded in educational theory and in recent decades it has been adopted in some Australian tertiary institutions. It is frequently linked at the university level with the use of group-based, cooperative learning[89]. Some authorities believe the same broad approach may be of benefit to students at many stages of schooling, especially those in early adolescence. This is the view that has been taken by a state authority, Education Queensland, in its *New Basics* project.

It is important for the purposes of this Inquiry to stress that the *New Basics* forms only part of a coherent strategy to revitalise Queensland's system of public education. It is not the entire strategy, which is based on a comprehensive review of current and anticipated social and economic trends[90]. Queensland's strategic educational planning sets a standard against which to assess counterpart planning for New South Wales, an exercise to which the Inquiry returns later in this chapter. As a pragmatic educational response to the challenges provided by the new global economy and associated information technologies, the *New Basics* project stresses the economic imperative to prepare students to participate in a flexible, knowledge based economy, and a social imperative to prepare a culturally diverse cohort of students to productively engage with rapid social and cultural change. Such imperatives demand an extension of students' learning needs beyond the '3Rs' to what are termed the *New Basics.* The new work order involves not only skills in high-tech and print literacy, but also skills in verbal face-to-face social relations and public self-presentation, problem identification and solution, and collaboration with

[88] Hill, P. W., Russell, V. J., (1999) 'Systemic, whole school reform of the middle years of schooling', in *Enhancing Educational Excellence, Equity and Efficiency*, eds Cremers, R.J. & Stringfield, B.P.M., Dordrecht, Kluwer Academic Publishing.

[89] A number of Australian centres of learning have re-discovered Dewey's insight and embodied it within *problem solving* courses as varied as medicine, social work, optometry, architecture, nursing and law, and all retaining strong elements of educational design and teacher leadership. (refer to Boud, D., Feletti,G. (1997) *The Challenge of Problem-Based Learning*, London, Kogan Page; Vinson,T. *et al*. (1986) 'A Problem Solving Approach to Social Work Education', *Australian Social Work,* vol. 39, No.3, pp.3-8

[90] Education Queensland (1999) *2010: Queensland State Education, a future strategy*, Brisbane, Office of Strategic Planning and Portfolio Services

others. Modes of instruction, as well as diversification in curriculum content, must change in the schools to meet these objectives[91].

The *New Basics* are described as groups of core, essential practices and their associated skills and knowledge, needed by young people if they are to survive in new economic, social and cultural conditions. Each of four such clusters describes a range of key student activities for new and future conditions and draws upon both traditional and modern knowledge categories:

- *Life Pathways and Social Futures* - refers to the cluster of practices students need to master in order to survive and flourish in a changing world. Key issues include living in and preparing for diverse family relationships; communicating and collaborating with peers and others; maintaining health and care of the self; learning about and preparing for new worlds of work (including survival in times of unemployment, and life-long learning); and developing initiative and enterprise;

- *Multi-literacies and communications media* - refers to the acquisition of new media knowledge and skills, and the preservation of more traditional literacy and numeracy skills. Key issues include making creative judgements, communicating and using language and intercultural understandings, and mastering literacy and numeracy;

- *Active citizenship* – refers to the active engagement of students in social, political and economic issues in communities, as well as in their school life and studies. Key issues include acquiring knowledge of how people in other cultures undertake their social and economic business, the nature of inclusion and exclusion, and understanding the historical foundation of social movements and civic institutions;

- *Environments and technologies* – based on the premise that the environment, and the technologies used to manipulate it, can be studied and understood through active participation in real world contexts. The educational treatment of environmental challenges requires that attention be paid to social, scientific, cultural, economic and ethical issues.

New Basics has adopted the insight gained from studying school innovations that work: the more crowded a curriculum is, the more superficial the learning experience becomes[92]. The relevant research indicates that students who learn fewer things in greater depth achieve greater levels of understanding and more appropriate learning outcomes. "The attempt to over specify the curriculum actually backfires, with particularly disastrous effects on the most at-risk learners."

The recent South Australian *Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework*[93] (SACSA) describes a set of dispositions, skills and understanding considered crucial for all learners in a rapidly changing and diverse global society. In many respects, the *Essential Learnings* are very similar to the Queensland's *New Basics*:

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[91] Comber, B., Green. B., (1998) *Information Technology, literacy, and educational disadvantage*, Adelaide, South Australia Dept of Education, Training and Employment; Lankshear, C. *et al*. (1997) *Digital Rhetorics, Literacies, and technologies in education: current practices and future directions*, Canberra, Dept. Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs

[92] Sizer, T.R. (1994) *Horace's Hope: What Works for the American High School*, Boston, oughton Miffin, p.34

[93] South Australian Department of Education and Training (2000) *South Australian Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework,* Adelaide, Curriculum Policy Directorate

Futures	Learners develop the flexibility to respond to change, connections with the past and conceive solutions for preferred futures
Identity	Learners develop a positive sense of self and group, accept individual and group responsibilities and respect individual group differences
Interdependence	Learners develop the ability to work in harmony with others and for common purposes, within and across culture
Thinking	Learners become independent and critical thinkers, with the ability to appraise information, make decisions, be innovative and devise creative solutions.
Communication	Learners develop their abilities to communicate powerfully using literacy, numeracy and information and communication technologies.

Unlike the New Basics, however, which are restricted to a relatively small number of schools within a trial, the *Essential Learnings* are interwoven into all of the Learning Areas within the curriculum, in all stages of development and education, from Birth to Year 12.

Rich Tasks

An important pedagogic tool for achieving the knowledge and skills encompassed by the New Basics is work on *Rich Tasks.* These are specific activities that students 'do' that have 'real-world' value and use. The New Basics are beginning categories from which each rich task draws on the cognitive and cultural, linguistic and social skills, and fields of knowledge that have to be brought into play to complete the task. To this point, the approach has elements of similarity to other publicised methods of learning that emphasise problem identification and student-developed ways of initiating inquiries. However, an approach like *New Basics* is distinctive in the educational resources it provides to launch and support developing students on the path to flexible, self-reliant learning. The conceptual development of the *New Basics* has been influenced by a number of educational theorists, particularly John Dewey's[94] theory that people optimally learn, and human development and growth occur, when they are confronted with substantive, real problems to solve. An Australian commentator[95] sees emergent pedagogies influenced by Dewey's insight as involving an integration of the 'head' (abstract) and 'hand' (practical) division of traditional curriculum. The aim is not to underplay the importance of content but to give access to diversified knowledge resources, including practical activities and varied media products, and sharpen the capacity to critique them[96]. Nor is the importance diminished of the role of teacher as coordinator of learning activities, developer of strategies to drive the learning process, and a source of knowledge in her or his own right.

[94] Dewey, J. (1963) *Experience and Education*, New York, Collier
[95] Seddon, T. (2001) 'From closed systems to a structured double flow: a social investment strategy for structural and curriculum renewal in education', Sydney. Paper presented at ACOSS Roundtable on Social Investment in Education, 3 August.
[96] Latham, M., (2001) *What did you learn today*? Crows Nest ,Allen and Unwin

So far, rich tasks have been developed for students in Years 1-3, 4-6, and 7-9. They are now being trialled in 58 schools and an extensive evaluation of the *New Basics* approach is due to be completed within the next two years depending on when the schools concerned voluntarily joined the project. The following schema is intended by means of just one illustration to make the practices described a little more concrete and show characteristic design features of a rich task. It needs to be understood, however, that involvement in preparing for rich tasks is estimated to occupy between 40% and 60% of class time [97]. Other forms of learning are used to acquire disciplinary and other knowledge and skills that are educationally important and can be employed in work on rich tasks. The varied focus of rich tasks can be seen from the following examples that are intended for students in the previously mentioned three stages:

Years 1-3:

- *Multimedia presentation on an endangered plant or animal;*
- *Historical and social aspects of a craft;*
- *Read and talk about stories* (including analysis of characters and settings, comparisons of different stories and different media, incorporating their own experiences);

Years 4-6:

- *Oral histories and diverse and changing lifestyles;*
- *Personal health plan;*
- *Travel itineraries* (including costings and reasons for choices);

Years 7-9:

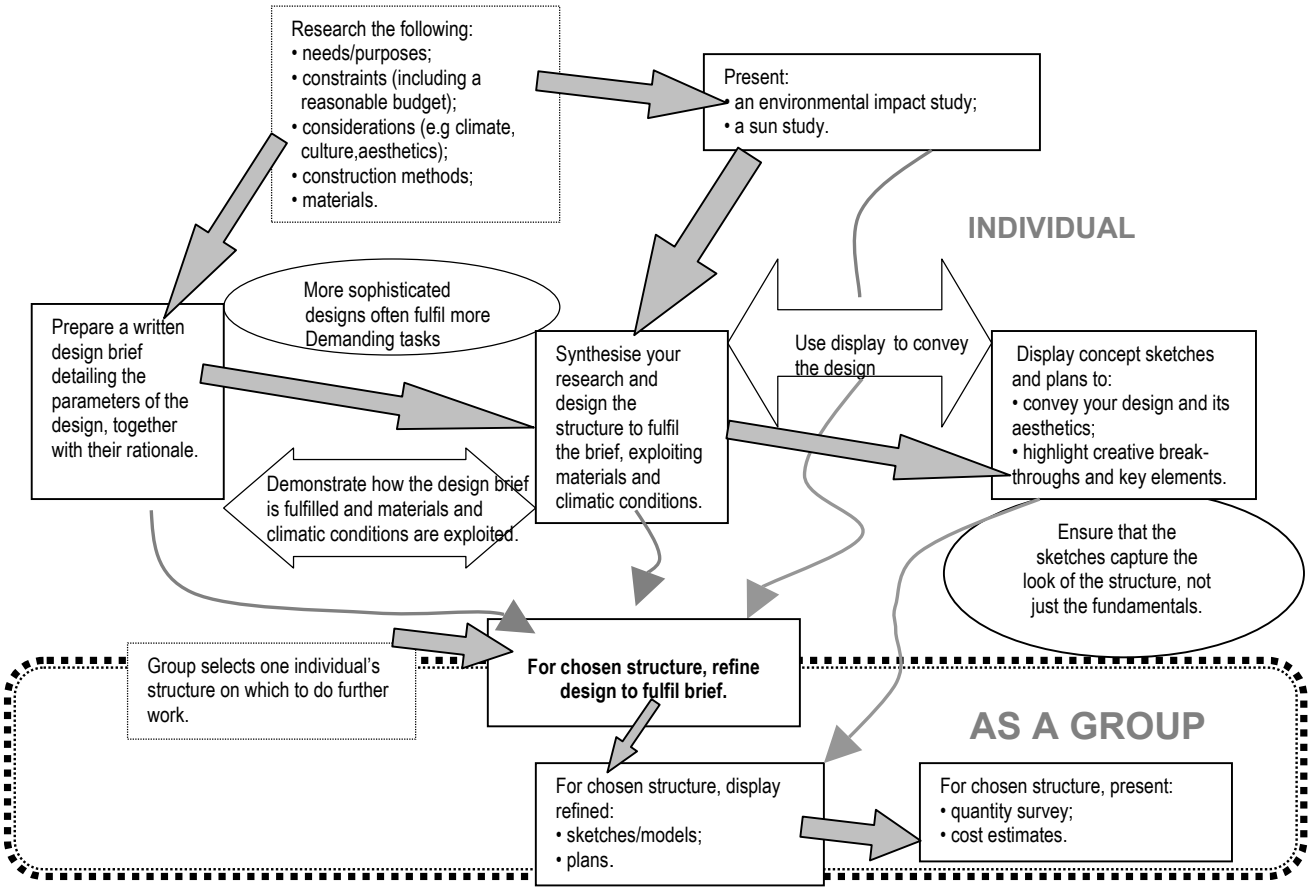
- *Science and ethics confer* (explore and make judgments on a biotechnological process);
- *Pi in the sky* (mathematical approaches used to frame and answer questions about astronomy asked by cultures from three different historical ages);
- *International trade* (students identify and provide a detailed analysis of an export opportunity);
- *Improving wellbeing in the community* (students work with a local community to develop a plan for improving an aspect of its wellbeing, and enact and evaluate the plan).

In summary, the Education Queensland approach has the benefits of addressing the present and impending further expansion in the knowledge economy, within a clearly articulated, research and practice informed pedagogy, that draws upon traditional and modern sources of knowledge and skill (illustrated by Figure 1 on the next page, reproduced with the kind permission of Education Queensland). There still remains, however, the question of the classroom practices that can most effectively support the general approach represented by the *New Basics.* That issue is taken up in the next section.

[97] The State of Queensland (Dept of Education) (2001) *New Basics: Theory into Practice, Developmental* Draft, Brisbane, Access Ed, Education Queensland, p.8

Figure 2.1: Year 9 Rich Task #3 - Built Environment: Designing a Structure

Students will identify a client's needs and take these and other factors into account to prepare a design brief for a structure. They will design an environmentally sensitive and aesthetic structure to fulfil this brief, and communicate the design through sketches, plans and models. They will give due consideration to structure and materials, quantities and costs.



New Basics referents

Life pathways and social futures
- Collaborating with peers and others

Multiliteracies and communications media

How do I make sense of and communicate with the world?
- Mastering literacy and numeracy

Active citizenship
- Interacting within local … communities
- Operating within shifting cultural identities

Environments and technologies
- Working with design and engineering technologies
- Building and sustaining environments

Targeted repertoires of practice
- Understanding and utilising a design process
- Knowing and using conventions and techniques of graphical communication of a building
- Applying mathematical techniques and procedures related to measurement, estimation, scale drawing, costing
- Understanding the Earth's rotation on its axis and revolution around the Sun
- Collecting and presenting data on clients' needs
- Using the language of architectural form and style
- Report writing

Ideas, hints and comments
- The term *structure* is used in a wide sense and could include the following
  - a community facility, such as a recreation hall, amenities block for a swimming centre;
  - **private dwellings with a specific need (e.g. retirement unit block, residence and rooms for a local doctor);**
  - other structures (e.g. shade structures and seating for a street mall, a park kiosk).
- The structure must have sufficient complexity to allow the various demonstrations
- In arriving at a design, students might consider form, function and cultural significance
- Students might find it easier to first work on the 'big picture' and then on the detail.
- The demonstration of how the design brief is fulfilled might best be done as annotations on the brief or the display.
- Similarly, you might use annotations to show 'creative break-throughs' and key elements of the design.
- The selection of the design on which to do further work could be made by someone not in the group.
- There is no need for students to compare the advantages of their design over others they might have considered along the way. Stick to what the final design accomplishes!

Task parameters
- Intensity: high
- As per the task specs, some aspects of the task must be done individually, some in groups.
- An actual site must be identified, described and considered in the design of the structure.
- Available grades: 5 (subject to outcomes of the paneling process)

Productive Classroom Practices

A recently published major report on teaching practices in Queensland (the Queensland School Reform Longitudinal Study - hereafter referred to as QSRLS, 2000)[98] sets out, on the basis of empirical studies in Queensland and elsewhere, some important insights concerning productive classroom practices (called *productive pedagogies).* The evaluative framework was based on a broad educational movement that emphasises the importance of connecting learning to students' experiences. The present Inquiry has found that the advantages of such an approach are known to many New South Wales teachers and, in a small number of instances, elements of the approach are beginning to influence practices in some New South Wales classrooms (see earlier section, *Teaching and Learning Practices that engage young adolescents*).

The concept of *productive pedagogies* derives from a number of sources concerned with explaining student outcomes[99]. The particular view taken of productive performance throws the assessment spotlight on students' capacity to construct new knowledge(s) by the use of complex reasoning skills. Students in disadvantaged schools are often further disadvantaged by the absence of such learning opportunities. The QSRLS team, consistent with findings in other international research centres, contends that in order for all students to demonstrate high levels of productive performance, classroom practices need to be intellectually challenging, demonstrate a connectedness with problems and situations beyond the classroom, be conducted in a socially supportive manner, and recognise *difference* (demonstrated by three types of social outcomes described in the following paragraph). These attributes constitute a model of productive pedagogies and productive assessments.

The QSRLS study did not adopt standardised test results as a measure of effectiveness but instead focused on what has been termed *authentic achievement.* This concept refers to the quality of student outcomes that can be characterised by sustained and disciplined inquiry, focused upon powerful and important ideas and concepts which are connected to students' experiences and the world in which they live. The key features are summarised as:

- *depth of inquiry* (depth of understanding reflected in students' use of disciplinary concepts),

- *high level analysis or higher order thinking* (occurs when students manipulate information and ideas in ways that transform their meanings and implications), and

- *elaborated written communication* (present in a student's performance when the response to the assessment item demonstrates a coherent communication of ideas, concepts, arguments and/or explanations.

[98] Lingard, B., Ladwig, J., (2001) *School Reform Longitudinal study: Final report*, vol.1, Report prepared for Education Queensland by the School of Education, The University of Queensland.
[99] Newmann, F.M., & Associates, (1996) *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass

The study recognises that intellectual outcomes are also characterised by social factors that render some knowledge problematic. Three primary components of social outcomes are recognised:

i. connectedness to the world beyond the classroom

ii. responsible citizenship and transformative citizenship, and

iii. cultural knowledge(s).

Each of these components has been recognised in the Adelaide Declaration of National Goals for Schooling in the 21st Century (MCEETYA, 1999)[100]. Responsible citizenship is basically about political literacy and the rights and responsibilities of citizenship, and transformational citizenship is about developing a sense of efficacy in changing society for the better. Cultural knowledge(s) refer to a national commitment to reconciliation and recognising the multiple cultural heritages extant in Australian society and across the globe.

A core finding of the QSRLS research that accords with overseas findings[101], is that students' favourable academic and social outcomes are associated with higher levels of productive pedagogies and productive assessment. However, the actual observation of Queensland classroom practices revealed a generally low emphasis on productive pedagogies and productive assessment, in favour of providing a supportive environment that contributes to personal growth (as evidenced by the low level of intellectual demand of tasks, lack of connectedness, and the superficiality of some assessment tasks). Contrary to the feelings of some teachers that the two qualities of high intellectual demand and social support must be traded off against each other, the research evidence is that they are mutually productive of improved student outcomes.

Another finding of the QSRLS study resonates with arguments presented in the previous chapter supporting collegial forms of staff development. The QSRLS results show that the development of professional learning communities within schools is associated with improved pedagogies. The focus of the teacher professional community concept is the degree to which teachers experience the school as a professional community, as opposed to other professional networks, and as opposed to simple collegiality. A strong link was found between the degree of teachers' collective responsibility for student learning, the strength of pedagogically focused leadership (as illustrated in several of the schools profiled earlier in this chapter), and the presence of more productive pedagogies.

The findings of the research also suggest a connection between productive classroom practice and the alleviation of one of the major day-to-day problems observed in New South Wales schools, namely, student indiscipline. The findings indicate that behaviour management is inherent in productive classroom practice. Degrees of intellectual quality, connectedness and recognition of difference, are directly and positively associated with the extent of students' engagement and self-regulation.

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[100] Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (1999) *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, (http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya/nationalgoals/).

[101] Particularly the findings of: Newmann, FM., & Associates, (1996) *Authentic Achievement: Restructuring Schools for Intellectual Quality,* San Francisco, Jossey-Bass; and Louis, K.S., Marks, H.M., & Kruse, S.D. (1996) 'Teachers professional community in restructurings', *American Educational Research Journal*, vol.33, no.4, pp.757-798.

System Planning and the Development of Pedagogy

The foregoing account of the *New Basics* and the concept of productive pedagogies has implications for a renewed focus on approaches to teaching across the New South Wales public education system. Before teasing out some of those implications, it needs to be acknowledged that the Queensland initiatives referred to are embedded within a wider strategy for the renewal of public education. That strategy is based on a systematic appraisal of current and projected economic and social trends (*2010 – A Future Strategy*[102]) that has highlighted changes in the structure and character of the family, the diversity of experience of different cultures that students can expect to face, the increasing use of knowledge in the creation, production and the distribution of goods and services and the global integration of economic processes, the explosive growth in communication and information technologies, the changing role of government, and other anticipated trends.

This scan of the political, economic and social landscape has led to the identification of four key challenges for the Queensland education system:

- Increase intellectual engagement and relevance across Years 1-10;
- Improve curriculum integration and focus in the middle-school years;
- Conceptualise and develop clear pathways from secondary school into changing workforces and tertiary studies, and
- Engage with relevant futures scenarios and technologies.

The same assessment has informed a strategic management plan incorporating a Balanced Score Card. The latter requires Education Queensland to report annually on key targets, achievement plans and performance measures. At the same time, the inner workings of the administration have been transformed to free up the innovatory potential of staff and increase the system's capacity to learn and change. To deliver on the 2010 agenda, the organisational structure emphasises the integration of key functions through an Office of Workforce Development, Learning and Performance. The overall structure provides clarity for the strategic and operational aspects of the Department with a very clear focus upon productive pedagogy, curriculum, assessment and performance in collaboration with school staff.

One aspect of the emphasis on learning has been the direct involvement for periods of service of academic experts and practitioners in roles that have practice consequences. Another has been an unusually high level of attention to monitoring the validity of the presumptions and methods being employed. This operational philosophy applies not only to top management but also school principals. It is characteristic of the approach that an innovation like the *New Basics* has been introduced in approximately 10% of schools on a trial basis and that the current evaluations of it will be subjected to a further independent evaluation. This cautious negotiation of change combines an appropriate regard for the stakeholders' wish to hasten slowly but resolutely in a field as important as public education, and management's desire to be guided by empirical evidence wherever possible. An associated feature of the development of new policies is the tabling of proposals for substantial periods of public consultation.

[102] Queensland State Education, (1999) *2010 - A Future Strategy,* Brisbane, Education Queensland

The development of the South Australian *Curriculum, Standards and Accountability Framework* also provides an interesting contrast with curriculum reform in New South Wales. A major difficulty within New South Wales has been the profound sense of disconnection between the Board that conceives and develops curriculum reforms, the Department that monitors and supports the change, and local school sites that convert the framework into programs of teaching and learning. The South Australian model has a number of features that minimise the dangers of disconnection. First, the professional teacher community was centrally involved in the development of the Framework. It was developed over an eighteen-month period by a Consortium of the University of South Australia and the Council of Educational Associations of South Australia, assisted by a number of Expert and Reference Groups on which practicing teachers were well represented. Second, the constructivist philosophy of teaching and learning underlying the Framework recognises the vital importance of pedagogy as the means by which curriculum is constructed around the experiences, expertise, interests and needs of all learners. Third, the Implementation Plan was premised upon the movement of significant resources from the central Curriculum Policy Unit to districts and local school sites to support teacher networks and local area groups to develop curriculum materials and programs. Finally, teacher professional associations are recognised and funded by the Department as a major provider of professional development around the Framework. Despite the speed of change and its top-down initiation, system planning has used such measures as these to increase the sense of ownership of the change among teachers and the possibility that curriculum reform becomes a lever for pedagogical change.

CURRICULUM AND PEDAGOGY IN PUBLIC EDUCATION: WHAT PLANNING AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHANGES ARE NEEDED IN NEW SOUTH WALES?

The recommendations presented in this concluding section of the Inquiry's review of curriculum and pedagogy are tendered in full consciousness of the progressive educational measures being adopted in some schools and the steps taken in recent years to introduce greater rigour into the curriculum. The opportunities afforded to the Inquiry to critically and independently assess strengths and weaknesses in the areas of curriculum and pedagogy have led it to the following broad conclusions:

- There is a need to radically increase the system's emphasis upon productive teaching practices over the next decade;

- That development will require system-wide promotion but its success will depend upon the strengthening of teacher professional communities in schools *via* the professional development measures recommended in Chapter 1 and, ultimately, teachers' ownership of improvements to teaching practices;

- It is desirable that some systematic conceptions of productive pedagogy be developed or adapted by DET for possible voluntary adoption by schools. The work of developing these approaches must be undertaken collaboratively with classroom practitioners and education academics without implying that there is one correct approach to be adopted. The DET should develop an expanded 'Pedagogy Clearinghouse' capacity, with a focus on information concerning teaching practice and its evaluation, as well as the staging of workshops and acting as a referral point for teachers who wish to contact others within and outside of Australia working on similar issues. It is essential that teachers be represented on the management of the Clearinghouse and that the organisation

deal primarily in electronic and easily accessed forms of communication rather than the voluminous and seldom used printed monographs of the past;

- For the urgently needed shift in emphasis to take place, a major contraction must occur in the quantum and prescriptiveness of centrally generated curricula;

- Curricula should not be determined independent of a careful assessment of the system's ability to provide the learning materials and other resources needed for practical implementation.

The foregoing views about necessary changes will now be expressed in the form of explicit recommendations. Before doing so, the Inquiry acknowledges that the achievement of the ambitions for public educators, given expression in the recommendations, will depend on the DET's ability to summon system-wide and resolute support for them. As has been illustrated by reference to Queensland and South Australia, that capacity depends on more than goodwill. Apart from appropriate resourcing, it depends on a clear strategic plan and the alignment of organisational structures to drive the education system in the desired direction. At present, the formal elements of strategic planning exist within the New South Wales system. Current and anticipated social, economic and demographic trends have been scanned and strategic directions formulated. As a consequence, a planning framework exists that is becoming noticeably more specific with the passage of time. This trend is commendable but as things stand at present, the framework needs to be sharpened in at least four respects if it is to play an active, unifying role in the next stage of development of public education in New South Wales:

- A more precise reading of the social and economic needs and opportunities facing public education in the coming decade needs to be undertaken as a basis for planning;

- Strategic directions need to be expressed in less abstract, reverential terms so that all participants in the system know what is really intended;

- Focus on specific intentions with respect to pedagogic development rather than more general formulations such as "support and encourage greater flexibility and creativity in teaching to meet the demands of a rapidly changing learning environment"[103]; and

- Disseminate the intended strategic directions by varied channels including reports on the implementation and evaluation of the Department's objectives.

Some specific means of remedying what has earlier been described as a 'policy vacuum' with respect to pedagogy within the New South Wales public education system are covered by recommendations that follow. First, however, there is a need to send an explicit, institution-wide message to staff of the DET that the refining of teaching practice is now a strategic goal deserving of priority attention in the various professional and service areas, from forms of discretionary funding to building modifications supportive of pedagogic improvements. The aim should never extend to reducing such decision-making to a single criterion but rather to give pedagogy a weighting appropriate to one of the highest system priorities.

[103] NSW Dept of Education and Training (2002) *NSW Public Schools: Strategic Directions 2002-2004*, Sydney, NSW Dept of Education and Training

Recommendation 2.1: That a DET Strategic Plan that meets the requirements specified in the text of this report, and which is based on an extensive review of relevant economic and social trends, be prepared for the coming decade. Improvements to pedagogy should formally be afforded the status of being a major strategic priority of the New South Wales public education system during the coming decade and that commitment should be publicised within and beyond the DET. The plan should indicate the organisational changes needed to achieve the Department's major strategic priorities and should specify objectives against which progress can be measured. The plan should involve all areas of the Department aligning their priorities to achieve the common goal of enhancing productive pedagogy.

Role of the DET in Promoting Productive Pedagogy

The intention of the previous recommendation is to spread the responsibility for supporting pedagogic development across the entire public education system. Nevertheless, the Inquiry has noted the recent merging of the Curriculum Support and Training and Development Units within the DET with the commendable intention of linking these two support functions. Initially it is intended that the newly amalgamated unit will focus on the needs of teachers who will be responsible for implementing curriculum changes in Years 7-10.

The Inquiry acknowledges several positive features of the early planning occurring within the new unit, especially the intention to disseminate and encourage the adoption of principles of sound pedagogy, including what has previously been described as the external *connectedness* of learning. The problem is that after such a sustained period of the system being dominated by top-down curriculum prescriptions, it will require strong organisational machinery to create the considerable counter-thrust needed for constructive pedagogy to gain its due share of attention. Working in a spirit of building strong professional communities in and between schools, the new unit will need to facilitate the exchange of information about productive pedagogy, and teachers' experience of developing and evaluating pedagogic innovations – a more detailed and sustained version of the illustrative material presented earlier in this chapter. The core functions to be served by the unit require that it operate as a *Pedagogy Clearinghouse* with services similar in nature to those of clearinghouses instituted to strengthen particular capacities in other fields. Two basic services should be the dissemination of more general information about relevant current developments in New South Wales and elsewhere *via* a quarterly *Newsletter,* supported by occasional in-depth analyses of particular issues *via* an *Issues Papers* series. These documents should be relatively brief and practice-oriented, and refer readers to additional sources of information, particularly schools with relevant information and/or experience. In addition, two pedagogy databases should be constructed, one containing up-to-date information on the general literature in the field, a second detailing initiatives and projects, with an emphasis on New South Wales public education but also including projects of interest from other public and private systems. From time to time, the Clearinghouse should provide workshops and seminars based on its work, especially in connection with topics dealt within the *Issues Papers* series.

The recent experience of constructing successful clearinghouses in fields like domestic violence (University of NSW) and child abuse (Australian Institute of Family Studies) could guide and help to expedite the establishment of the recommended *Pedagogy Clearinghouse*. The staffing of the *Clearinghouse* should comprise a Manager, supported by an Information Officer (with expertise in establishing and maintaining databases), the equivalent of two Research Officers to collate and enter data, and a Clerical Officer. A Consultative Committee including representatives of early, primary and secondary education and three of the university Schools of Education, should meet at least three times a year to advise on the coverage of topics and general operations of the *Clearinghouse.* The membership of the Consultative Committee should include representatives of non-metropolitan schools and universities.

Recommendation 2.2: That a Pedagogy Clearinghouse to perform the information dissemination functions described in the text of the report, be established within the Curriculum Support and Training and Development Unit of the DET. The Clearinghouse should be staffed and managed in the ways outlined in the text. Estimated cost of staffing and equipment in first year - $350,000; thereafter $300,000 per annum. (Recommendation 2.5 indicates a potential offset saving to cover this expenditure.)

Recommendation 2.3: That the Pedagogy Clearinghouse be formally reviewed by a panel chaired by the Director of the Curriculum Support and Training and Development Unit, at the completion of its first two years of operation. The panel should include representatives of the central administration of the DET, public education teachers (from non-metropolitan as well as metropolitan schools), and representatives of at least three university Schools of Education. With the assistance of invited submissions from teachers, the panel should assess the contribution being made by the Clearinghouse to the development of productive pedagogies and identify possible areas for improvement. The membership of the Review Panel should not overlap with the Consultative Committee.

At the completion of four years of operation, the Pedagogy Clearinghouse should be subject to a further formal Review, to be conducted, if possible, by the same panel. Assisted by invited submissions from teachers, the main task of the Review would be to assess the continuing usefulness of the Clearinghouse and to make recommendations to the Director General of the DET accordingly.

Practical Implementation of Curricula

The foregoing discussion of curriculum issues has contained constant references to curricula being developed with insufficient regard to the practical realities associated with its implementation. The levels of expressed concern about this issue have been numerous. They have included: the inappropriateness of basic course content in some subjects for average ability students; the unavailability of learning resources, from textbooks and industrial arts and science equipment, to accessible web sites; the questionable value of train-the-trainer courses to prepare teachers for new syllabi; and the lack of authoritative answers to teachers' questions about curricula.

The Inquiry sees considerable merit in those opinions that have been put to it sheeting many of these difficulties home to an underlying structural problem. That problem has its roots in the fact that a statutory authority (The Board of Studies) acts separately in generating curricula, leaving the relevant Department of State (The DET) responsible for finding the wherewithal - including the human resources - needed to implement the Board's decisions. These arrangements so obviously violate the requirements of good government and effective administration as to invite the straightforward 'solution' of re-integrating the Board of Studies and its administrative arm, the Office of the Board of Studies, into the DET. That decision would bring the benefits of more effectively synchronising policy and resource allocation, professional development and training, and other practical considerations. It would, however, create another problem, namely, the loss of that degree of independence that most educational authorities correctly believe should underpin sensitive decision-making about school curricula.

The Inquiry believes there is a solution to the present structural problem. The Board of Studies should retain that degree of independence protected by its status as a statutory authority while the body that administers the operations of the Board - called the Office of the Board of Studies - should be integrated within the DET. This re-alignment of organisational structures would mean that the Department in the first instance, and ultimately the Minister of Education, would be able to question the practical feasibility and timing of proposed changes and act to raise or divert the resources needed for successful implementation, before 'signing off' on curriculum proposals that presently by-pass these processes. The independence of the professional authority of the Board of Studies would be preserved while restoring the formal authority – and accountability – of Government.

Recommendation 2.4: That the *Office* of the Board of Studies be removed from the Board of Studies Corporation established under section 99 of the Education Act, 1990, and integrated into the Department of Education and Training. The functions of the Board of Studies as described in section 102 of the Education Act, 1990, should continue to be performed by the Board but the status of its staff should change from statutory officers to public servants employed at levels warranted by their present remuneration and responsibilities This arrangement would match that which occurs in relation to some other boards within the Department of Education and Training's administration and accord with the provisions of section 104(2) of the relevant legislation.

Recommendation 2.5: That as a consequence of the proposed altered status of the Office of the Board of Studies, the ownership of, and rights of disposal over, curriculum and other documents generated by the Board of Studies should be vested in the DET, with any savings resulting there from being used to cover the costs of the Pedagogy Clearinghouse and other pedagogy promoting activities of the Curriculum Support and Training and Development Unit.

Recommendation 2.6: That prior to new curricula being introduced into public schools they should be trialled in at least a sample of schools in order to identify problems, resource needs and any uncertainties surrounding teaching and learning requirements so that these matters can be resolved before curricula are officially launched. Disruption to schools and students can be kept to a minimum by wherever practicable, testing different components of a curriculum in different schools. The trials should be administered jointly by the Office of the Board of Studies and the Curriculum Support and Training and Development Unit in such a way as to promote concurrently the professional development of staff. The level of support needed to ensure that students involved in the trials benefit educationally, must be provided and the schools must volunteer to take part in the projects.

Recommendation 2.7: That the number of public school teachers appointed to the Board of Studies under clauses (g) and (h) of the Constitution of the Board be increased from 4 to 8, and the membership of the Board increased by four. This recommendation increases the minimum proportion of public school teachers from four out of nineteen to eight out of twenty-three. This better reflects the distribution of students across the education sectors and provides a more adequate opportunity for the Board to benefit from the experience of the practitioners who must ultimately make the Board's policies work.

CHAPTER 3
LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE LEARNING

Is this Inquiry going to attend to the requirements of successful early education, or is it going to repeat the error of most such exercises and overlook the vital foundation years? The successes and failures of the more advanced years depend on how things are handled at the earliest stages.
(A comment made by a teacher at one of the early public meetings of the Inquiry).

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The pupil who crosses the threshold of a pre-school or kindergarten to begin a long engagement with schooling is still at a delicate stage of personal formation. Current perspectives on the make-up of the infant learner have shaped the Inquiry's consideration of this foundational stage of education. Because of the speed and interrelated nature of development during early childhood, the Inquiry sees it as vital to address children's social and emotional needs as well as their physical and cognitive ones. Education practice needs to be tailored to fit the developmental level of the children being served[104]. The introduction of academic content needs to be synchronised with children's acquisition of the requisite developmental skills and abilities to allow comprehension of that content. Misjudgements on this level can lead to unhelpful levels of stress and in all likelihood have a negative impact on children's dispositions towards learning and the self-concept they develop of their abilities as learners.

The Inquiry's convictions concerning the need to promote children's social-emotional functioning during the earliest stages of schooling are sustained by the fact that internationally, both researchers and seasoned front-line teachers subscribe to this view[105]. In addition, there is a body of research evidence indicating that developmentally appropriate early education programs are more effective in promoting positive social-emotional, motivational and cognitive outcomes than are programs with a more traditional focus. A longitudinal analysis of linkages between children's social and academic comprehension[106] has found a strong *reciprocal* relationship between social and academic competence in the first three years of schooling. School adjustment is also linked to the quality of teacher-child relationships and children's self-directedness and academic performance[107]. After reviewing the relevant research, Uniting Care–Burnside has summarised the findings in a submission to the Inquiry:

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[104]Kowalski, K., Pretti-Frontczak, K., Johnson, L., (2001) "Pre-school teachers' beliefs concerning the importance of various developmental skills and abilities," *Journal of Research in Childhood Education, vol* 16, no.1, Fall-Winter

[105]Ibid, p.10

[106]Welsh, M., Parke, Widaman, K., O'Neil, R., (2000) "Linkages Between Children's Social and Academic Competence; A Longitudinal Analysis," *Journal of School Psychology,* vol 39, No.6, 2001, 463-482

[107]Birch.S., Ladd, G., (1997) "The Teacher-Child Relationship and Children's Early School Adjustment" *Journal of School Psychology*, vol 35, No1.61-79

> Programs that focus on the pre-school years have produced very positive results. These include sizeable and persistent effects in reading and maths; better social adjustment; reduced grade retention and special education; improved high school graduation and a reduction in delinquency. Importantly, several programs have resulted in parents being more likely to be involved with activities at their child's school. This involvement includes taking part in teacher-parent interviews, attending classroom activities and initiating contact with classroom teachers. This is significant as it is indicative of the parents' increased commitment to, and expectation of their children's education. Such expectation and commitment appears to be an important underlying factor associated with school achievement.

Cross-national studies indicate that despite cultural differences, there is a core of basic elements common among Western countries that are recognised as being necessary for children's positive development and learning[108]. The common elements that are considered important are safety, nurturing care, developmentally appropriate stimulation, positive interactions with adults and peers, encouragement of individual emotional growth, and positive relations with other children. These elements resemble Australian parents' perceptions of what their children gain from attending pre-school and kindergarten[109] and of the most important issues for their children as they start school[110].

An addition to the long-standing recognition that the early years of life are of crucial importance is the current realisation that much more rapid brain development occurs in this early period than had previously been supposed. The insight that there are important interactions between this early physical development and the child's environment positions the pre-school and kindergarten as vital players in helping children to reach their full potential[111]. This is especially so where the child's environment is stressful and lacking in stimulation. A related perspective on children and young people's failure to reach their potential is provided by a body of research focusing on 'risk factors'. When the identified risks accumulate they have a disproportionate effect on a child's progress[112]. Typical risk factors of relevance to early schooling identified by a major Australian study include poor social skills, low self esteem, lack of empathy, family violence and disharmony, poor supervision of a child at home, harsh or inconsistent discipline of a child within the family, poor attachment to school, inadequate behaviour management, socio-economic disadvantage, lack of support services and social or cultural discrimination[113].

The afore-going research findings constitute a powerful argument for attending to the social-emotional needs of students at the outset of their school careers, especially if they live within socioeconomically disadvantaged communities where stress levels may be high (and mental stimulation levels comparatively low). A review of studies

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[108] Sheridan, S., Schuster, K-M., (2001) "Evaluation of pedagogical quality in early childhood education: A cross-national perspective," *Journal of Research in Childhood Education,* vol 16, No.1, Fall-Winter

[109] Page, J., Nienhuys, T., Kapsalakis, A., Morda, R., (2001) "Parents' perceptions of kindergarten programs in Victoria," *Australian Journal of Early Childhood,* vol 26, No.3

[110] Dockett, S., Perry, B., Starting School: Effective Transitions, Early Childhood Research and Practice, vol 3, No.2, *University of Western Sydney* Fall 2001

[111] United Nations Children's Fund, (2001) *The State of the World's Children,* New York, UNICEF

[112] Stevens, G., (2002) "Welfare reform and the well-being of America's children," *Challenge,* vol 45, No.1, Jan-Feb, p.41

[113] Cashmore, J., Gilmore, L., Goodnow, J., Hayes, A., Homel, R., Lawrence, J., Leech, M., Najman, J., O'Connor, I., Vinson, T., Western, J., (2001) *Pathways to Prevention - Developmental and early intervention approaches to crime in Australia,* Canberra, Commonwealth Attorney General's Department

from 13 nations has found that well-established pre-school services have positive effects, especially for disadvantaged children[114]. The benefits include an increase in school readiness and improvements in cognitive development and academic performance. However, there is also a question (which will be pursued in a later chapter on teacher preparation) of whether teachers actually possess the skills needed to support children's acquisition of social-emotional competencies during the early school years.

In Chapter 2 brief descriptions were provided of two pre-schools at Brewarrina and South-Western Sydney to illustrate quality transition programs that provide infant pupils with a safe, stimulating and group-strengthening launch to their school years. The Inquiry had the opportunity to observe directly the intermingling, play and gentle introduction to numbers and words of a future kindergarten class during pre-schoolers attendance at Brewarrina Central School. Not only do such centres build children's familiarity with, and attachment to school but the schools concerned often operate an active out-reach program that secures and holds pupils' participation. The legendary principal of an inner-Sydney primary school who each day from the front step of a school bus would not take no for an answer - *"Get on the bus. We'll find you a pair of shoes!"*- was only a more extreme version of that persistence which is maintained by many teachers to help connect students and their parents to pre-schools.

These considerations about the needs of all children for a low stress, mentally stimulating environment have led the Inquiry to question which groups of children in the community are in particular need of assistance in securing these conditions.

The administrative situation is that responsibility for pre-school services is divided between the Department of Community Services, which is responsible for the majority of pre-schools, and the DET with 79 centres attached to primary schools. Children may enter DET pre-schools one year prior to school entry, where the common pattern is for a 2 ½ to 3 hour session four days a week, parents paying approximately $2.00 an hour. All DET pre-schools are staffed by teachers with early childhood qualifications.

Attendance at pre-school is clearly one general but important means of gaining access to a supportive and educative environment. Although reliable participation data is difficult to obtain Press and Hayes estimate that in New South Wales in 1998-99 over 80% of four year olds were using pre-school services, including children in government funded or provided child care services[115]. The previously mentioned submission to the Inquiry from Uniting Care-Burnside, argued that one thing that is clear from the studies that have been conducted[116] is that there exists a persistent relationship between child care usage and family income. Burnside points out that Australian research has established that

- the affordability of child care has deteriorated during the last decade,
- child care assistance (fee relief) has not kept pace with fee increases over the same period, and

[114]Boocock, S., (1995) "Early Childhood Programs in Other Nations: Goals and Outcomes," *The Future of Children,* vol 5, No.3, 94-114.

[115]Press, F., Hayes, A., *OECD Thematic Review of Early Childhood Education and Care Policy,* Department of Education and Training and Youth Affairs, Macquarie University and Department of Family and Community Services,

[116]Jamrozik, A., Sweeney, T., (1996) *Children and Society: The Family, State and Social Parenthood,* Melbourne, MacMillan Education Australia

- there has been dramatic underspending in the budget for child care subsidies suggesting a strong decline in use by low income families. Uniting Care-Burnside also refers to the Australian report to the OECD *Review of Early Childhood Education and Care* noting a decline in overall attendance and a loss of low income families at long day care centres between 1995 and 1999, with affordability being one suggested reason for the trend. Burnside acknowledges that the Federal Government's new Child Care Benefit may reduce costs to some extent but the issue of affordability remains an impediment to greater access to care especially for low income families.

The Inquiry finds itself confronted by the following facts:

- There is strong evidence that early childhood services, including pre-school, can have a major beneficial impact on young people's lives and give real meaning to the long espoused social aim of children attaining their full potential in life;

- Pre-school has particular benefits to offer children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds whose cognitive and all-round development can be stunted by an unfavourable environment in their earliest years;

- The very children whose need of added mental stimulation and a secure, nurturing environment is greatest, are most likely to be impeded from participating in pre-school by financial and related forms of social disadvantage, and

- Financial and other barriers to the consistent participation of socially disadvantaged pre-school and kindergarten pupils can be substantially overcome when pre-schools are attached to state primary schools with an 'outreach' program.

In the light of these four considerations, there would be great merit in formally aligning the growth of state pre-schools to another emergent area of state policy, namely, the recognition of some neighbourhoods and local areas as being in need of intensive and well coordinated community strengthening. The intuitive recognition that the residents of some localities are burdened by cumulative disadvantages has gradually been enhanced by their more systematic identification using social indicators. More importantly, the areas so identified have attracted comprehensive support via state run programs like *Families First* and *Place Management* (under the current auspice of the NSW Premiers Department). In some instances there is a conjunction of relevant state initiatives and services, including attached pre-schools, within socially disadvantaged areas, for example Redfern/Waterloo, Wyong, Mount Druitt and Port Kembla, but this is not always the case. It is the Inquiry's contention that the major criterion governing the location of attached pre-schools should be the degree of social disadvantage of the population to be served. The more than 25 locations on the 'Place Management' and community renewal lists represent an obvious starting point but other justifications that deal explicitly with the factor of social disadvantage could be valid if the aim is to make the public investment in this field maximally useful in terms of children's wellbeing and the attainment of their full potential.

Recommendation 3.1: That DET-run pre-schools, attached wherever practicable to primary schools, be located in demonstrably socially disadvantaged areas, especially areas that state authorities have determined require community strengthening and place management.

There would be substantial social benefits from the Government aligning pre-school and more general social policies aimed at strengthening socially disadvantaged areas. However, coverage of this topic would be incomplete without the Inquiry asking what number of DET run pre-schools attached to primary schools might a modern, relatively prosperous society like New South Wales expect to be provided? Two factors need to be kept in mind, namely, the financial and other associated impediments blocking the access of disadvantaged children to non-government services and the particular need of these children for the mental stimulation and support available through pre-schools. The present level of provision - 79 'attached' government pre-schools within a system that has approximately 1,648 primary schools (4.8%), needs to be increased substantially if our society's aspiration for all children - including those from socially disadvantaged backgrounds - to reach their potential is to be realised. The Minister's commitment[117] to increase the number of attached pre-schools by 21 to a total of 100 over the next three years deserves praise but the present proportion of attached pre-schools needs to almost double to 140 in the next six years if a serious impact is to be made on the present shortfall in provision. The rate of proposed development of the recommended additional pre-schools over six years is higher, but not unreasonably so, than that envisaged by the Minister's three year plan. The target of 140 would lift the proportion of primary schools with a pre-school to just one in twelve. Another perspective on the modesty of the proposed increase is that if the 140 programs were spread reasonably evenly across the most disadvantaged postcode areas of New South Wales[118], the pre-schools would still not reach communities arguably in need of them - like, Auburn, Guyra, Coonamble, Bonnyrigg and Coonabarabran. Moreover, while three-quarters of DET pre schools are in geographically isolated or decidedly not well off areas, little more than half are attached to schools currently classified under the Priority Schools Funding Program (previously Disadvantaged Schools Program).

Recommendation 3.2: That the number of state run pre-schools attached to primary schools, increase from the existing level of 79 to 140 within the next six years, that goal to include the Minister's present undertaking of 21 new pre-schools within the next three years.

MANAGEABLE CLASS SIZES

The topic of class sizes played a prominent part in the submissions received by the Inquiry. Some submissions, like one received from a Hunter Valley Teachers Association, stressed the higher expectations held of schools today and the need to make the teachers' task more manageable across all stages of public schooling:

[117] Minister Watkins, Media Release, February 18, 2002
[118] Vinson, T., (1999) *Unequal in Life,* Richmond, Jesuit Social Services

> It is undoubtedly an almost impossible task to properly provide for 30 (plus) students in a classroom, given the programming, lesson preparation, marking, assessing, reporting and student welfare requirements that are a part of a teacher's daily working life. This is particularly true in infants and primary classes, where teachers are responsible for the provision of the six Key Learning Areas for students.
>
> While the class sizes and number of classes may have been appropriate to the mid-20th Century, the explosion of knowledge and information technology has made these conditions unworkable. There should be a reduction of class sizes in all areas…(Staff of a Northern NSW High School)
>
> In every classroom there are students who experience learning difficulties, require extension work, or exhibit behavioural problems…Individual learning styles and abilities need to be catered for and small group work is encouraged…Significantly smaller classes in the early years of education have been shown to provide a major improvement in later student learning outcomes (Infants/primary teacher)

Another sub-theme of the submissions received by the Inquiry has been the need for smaller class sizes because of the special needs of some students. The staff of one country high school argued the need for smaller class sizes on the grounds that "Public schools cater for the vast majority of students with academic and social problems". A teacher at an inner-western Sydney primary school said that average class sizes take no account of the special needs of some students, including integration students and those with behavioural problems. "These students should be given greater weight in determining 'actual' class sizes". At many of the schools visited staff invited observation of the impact of integration students on the teachers' management of their classes. A range of issues was raised, the majority of which are dealt with in some detail in a later chapter of the report. However, one of those issues was teachers' insistence that the presence of integration students with particular needs should be one factor in evaluating what constitutes a manageable class size. Other teachers made much the same point in relation to students from disadvantaged areas. The P&C at a small country school indicated the special difficulties facing a teacher at their school:

> Smaller class sizes need to be implemented, especially in small schools with multi-stage, composite classes. Teachers in these classes need to cope with gifted and talented children, special needs children, and children with behavioural problems as well as the 'average' child. It is a difficult job.

Notwithstanding the range of issues canvassed and the desirability of reducing class sizes generally, there appeared to be a strong conviction that the first priority is to reduce class sizes in the early years of schooling. The Northern New South Wales High School staff quoted above added to their recommendation that there should be a reduction of class sizes in all areas, the rider "…especially K-3 where language, literacy and numeracy skills can be emphasised". A parent and high school teacher in Sydney's north commented:

> Up to 40% of students are disengaged from learning, often because they have not experienced success and have low self-esteem. Early intervention is needed to prevent students from progressing without the skills or confidence to succeed…Teachers need the chance

> to make every student feel successful and treasured. The social costs of failing to do so exceed the investment to achieve satisfactory class size.

These sentiments were certainly shared by parents of Arabic background who attended a public hearing in Western Sydney. It was their experience that if their children had not mastered the basics of their education, especially literacy, by their mid-primary years then there was little likelihood of their academic progress in the secondary years. Another Western Sydney primary school is so resolute about the need to sort out basic educational difficulties, whatever their basis, by Year 3, that staff doggedly try all appropriate measures to remedy pupils' problems so as not to have them carried forward to the detriment of later learning. The use of smaller than average class sizes is believed by the school concerned to be important to the success of this concentrated remedial program.

In a detailed submission to the Inquiry, the NSW Teachers Federation states that parents and teachers have long held, on commonsense grounds, that a favourable connection exists between small classes and effective student learning. However, the basis of the formal argument that the Federation has presented to the Inquiry is the outcome of studies conducted in the UK and USA appearing to demonstrate the benefits of small class sizes in early education. The relevant research has been assessed by the Inquiry and its findings are summarised below. It is noted, however, that the Federation refers to some possible explanations for the apparent success of the smaller classes. These include the possibility of teachers personalising their instruction more, using a wider variety of methods and materials, having more student participation and fewer discipline problems.

Class size and its relationship to student achievement is one of the most extensively researched issues in education. More than 800 studies on class size have been conducted since the 1970s. The largest and most scientifically rigorous experiment of those, Tennessee's Project STAR, provides compelling evidence that smaller classes improve student achievement, at least in the primary grades, and that the benefits persist. However, the Inquiry accepts that it is rare in any field of social research for complete uniformity to exist among research findings so that the light and shade of the situation will be presented in this brief summary of the literature. In particular, a synthesis of earlier studies less methodologically sound than Project STAR, has produced results that are at odds with the STAR findings. The task for policy makers is not to await an unlikely total consensus among researchers but to base policy on the best available information, after considering the strengths and limitations of the research on which the findings are based. To await unanimity of outcomes in research into the effects of class size may be to condemn oneself to an endless wait for the 'jury's verdict'. Moreover, as the Commonwealth Schools Commission acknowledged in 1984[119], while research findings should be influential with respect to decisions about class sizes, those decisions should not be based solely on research evidence. Personal and professional experiences of the kind presented to the present Inquiry should also play a part.

Overall, the literature on class size can be divided into three broad categories:

i. trial programs and large field experiments,
ii. national data analyses,
iii. reviews.

[119] Commonwealth Schools Commission, (1984) *Commonwealth Standards for Australian Schools,* Canberra, p.83

Virtually all the major studies on this issue are derived from the United States. There have been few significant field trials or surveys on class size carried out in Australia. The few literature reviews by Australian authors tend to focus on the findings of American research.

Trial programs and large field experiments

1. Tennessee's Project STAR (Student Teacher Achievement Ratio) has been described as arguably the largest and best designed field experiment ever undertaken in education. STAR was a four-year longitudinal study of Kindergarten to Year 3 classrooms in Tennessee which began in 1985. STAR compared classes of 13-17 students with classes of 22-26 students (some of which were assigned an untrained teacher's aide as well as a teacher). In its first phase, the project included 79 schools, more than 300 classes and 6,500 students. (Different accounts of the project refer to varying sample sizes depending on the phase of the project under consideration.) An important methodological feature was the random assignment of teachers and students to the different types of classes. All other things being equal, this approach encourages confidence in the research findings. Project STAR found that:
   - Students in the smaller classes outperformed those in the larger classes on both standardised and curriculum-based tests;
   - Students in the smaller classes were 0.5 months ahead of the other students by the end of kindergarten, 1.9 months ahead at the end of grade one, 5.6 months ahead in grade two and 7.1 months ahead at the end of grade three;
   - The advantages were smaller, though still impressive, for students who were only exposed to one, two or three years of smaller classes;
   - The gains were similar for boys and girls, but greater for impoverished students, African American students and those from inner-city schools;
   - A smaller proportion of the students in the smaller classes were retained in-grade, and there was more early identification of students' special educational needs;
   - The presence of the teacher's aide in some of the larger classes did *not* contribute to improving student achievement.

   In an independent review published in 1996, the statistician Mosteller[120] reported: "The Tennessee Class Size Study demonstrates convincingly that student achievement is better in small K-3 classes and the effect continues later in regular-sized classes." A follow-up study by Nye, Hedges and Konstantopoulos (1999)[121] found that the students who had been in smaller classes continued to retain a statistically significant advantage over those from regular classes throughout high school. They had higher grades, took more challenging courses, had better graduation rates and were more likely to attend university.

   Despite its admirable scope and design, the STAR project has received some criticism for the following reasons: limited sampling of certain cultural groups, and the schools which took part did so on a voluntary basis, suggesting that the teachers and principals in those schools may have had strong interests in innovative teaching ideas, which could, in turn, have affected the outcomes.

[120]Mosteller, F, *et al,* (1996), Sustained inquiry in education: Lessons from skill grouping and class size. *Harvard Educational Review, 66*, 797-842.

[121]Nye, B., Hedges, L.V., and Konstanopoulos, S., (1999). The long-term effects of small classes: A five-year follow-up the Tennessee Class Size experiment. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 21*, 127-142.

2. Another program, Wisconsin's Student Achievement Guarantee in Education (SAGE), began as a five-year pilot program for K-3 classes in school districts where at least 50 per cent of the students were living below the poverty level. The average k-3 class size was reduced to 15 students for each teacher. In their 1999 evaluation, Molnar, Smith and Zahorik reported that Year 1 students in the SAGE program achieved better test results than students from comparison schools in language, arts and maths. Results for grades two and three generally followed the same pattern.

3. Prime Time project, Indiana - This began as a two year study in 24 schools but initial results were so promising extra funds were allocated to reduce class sizes in the first grade for all Indiana schools in 1984-85 and for K-3 by 1987-88, with an average of 18 students per teacher. McGivern, Gilman and Tillitski (1989)[122] compared samples of second grade achievement levels from six districts that had reduced class size with three that had not. They found substantially larger gains in reading and mathematics achievement for students in small classes. Critics though, have pointed to several flaws in the design of the Indiana project: students were not assigned to experimental and control groups on a random basis; changes in state school policy were adopted during the project; and teachers were motivated to ensure the small classes achieved better results because they knew how the trial's program results were supposed to come out.

National data analyses

Wenglinksy (1997)[123] analysed data on fourth-grade students in 203 districts and eighth-grade students in 182 districts throughout the United States. He found that class size served as an important link between school education spending and student mathematics achievement at both grades, though in different ways. At the fourth grade level lower student/ teacher ratios were positively related to higher mathematics achievement. At the eighth grade level, lower student/teacher ratios improved the school social environment which, in turn, led to higher achievement. The largest effects for mathematics achievement gains occurred in districts where there were students from below average socio-economic backgrounds. In contrast, a more recent data analysis by Rees and Johnson (2000)[124] concluded there was no evidence that smaller classes alone led to greater student achievement.

Reviews

The frequently referenced Glass and Smith (1979) study[125] analysed the results of 77 empirical studies about the relationship between class size and student achievement. This was followed by a second meta-analysis that looked at the relationship between class size and other outcomes. Overall, the researchers concluded the small classes were associated with higher achievement at all grade levels, especially if the students were in the small classes for more than 100 hours.

[122]McGivern, J., Gilman, D., & Tillitski, C.,(1989) A meta-analysis of the relation between class size and achievement. *The Elementary School Journal, 90*, 47-56.
[123]Wenglinsky, H., (1997). How money matters: The effect of school district spending in academic achievement. *Sociology of Education, 70*, 221-237.
[124]Rees, N.S. & Johnson, K., (2000). A lesson in smaller class sizes. *Heritage Views 2000* (www.heritage.org/views/2000).
[125]Glass, G.V., & Smith, M.L., (1979). Meta-analysis of research on class size and achievement. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 1*, 2-16.

They found the major benefits of reducing class size occurred where the number of students was less than 20. In their second study, they concluded that small classes were superior in terms of students' reactions, teacher morale and the quality of the teaching environment.

In 1986, Robinson and Wittebols[126] published a review of more than 100 relevant studies whereby similar types of studies were grouped together. They concluded that the clearest evidence of positive effects was in the primary grades, particularly K-3. However, they cautioned that positive effects were less likely if teachers did not change their methods and procedures in the smaller classes. Slavin[127] considered empirical studies which met three criteria: class size had been reduced for at least a year, classes of less than 20 students were compared to substantially larger classes, and students in the smaller and larger classes were comparable. He found that reduced class size had a small positive effect on students that did not persist after they were moved from the smaller class.

One of the major dissenting voices in the class size debate has been the economist Eric Hanushek[128]. He has published several reviews of class size research since the 1980s. He has consistently maintained that there is no relationship between class size and student performance. In a 1998 paper he concluded: "The evidence about improvements in student achievement that can be attributed to smaller classes turns out to be meagre and unconvincing". In their recent research syntheses, Biddle and Berliner[129] note that Hanushek's reviews include many studies that used small and/or inappropriate samples (contributing to the "meagre" results) or did not employ controls for other school characteristics. In addition, most of the studies examined student-teacher ratios, not class size.

The guidance that the Inquiry has been able to obtain from its review of the most significant research in the area of class size has depended not only on the consistency of the findings but also the quality of the research yielding particular results. Our position is well summarised by the authoritative conclusions reached by Biddle and Berliner:

> What should we conclude about class sizes? Although the results of individual studies are always questionable, a host of different studies suggest several conclusions:
> - When planned thoughtfully and funded adequately, small classes in the early grades generate substantial gains for students, and those extra gains are greater the longer students are exposed to those classes;
> - Extra gains from small classes in the early grades are larger when the class has fewer than 20 students;
> - Extra gains from small classes in the early grades occur in a variety of academic disciplines and for both traditional measures of student achievement and other indicators of student success;
> - Students whose classes are small in the early grades retain their gains in standard size classrooms and in the upper grades, middle school and high school;

[126]Robinson, G.E., and Wittebols, J.H., (1986) Class size research: A related cluster analysis for decision making. Educational Research Service Brief, Arlington, Educational Research Services Inc
[127]Slavin, R., (1990) Class size and student achievement: Is smaller better? *Contemporary Education, 62*, 6-12.
[128]Hanushek, E, (1998) The Evidence on Class Size. Rochester University (Allen Wallis Institute of Political Economy) Occasional Paper, p2.
[129]Biddle, B., & Berliner, D., (2002). Small Class Size and its Effects. *Educational Leadership, 59*, 12-23

- All types of students gain from small classes in the early grades but gains are greater for students who have traditionally been disadvantaged in education;
- Initial results indicate that students who have traditionally been disadvantaged in education carry greater small-class, early-grade gains forward into the upper grades and beyond;
- The extra gains associated with small classes in the early grades seem to apply equally to boys and girls;
- Evidence for the possible advantages of smaller classes in the upper grades and high school is inconclusive.

Because we share the foregoing conclusions, the Inquiry recommends that in two phases, class sizes in K-2 be reduced to no more than 20. The first phase would focus on schools serving disadvantaged communities (*Priority Schools Funding Program*) in the range K-2. There are many reasons for this priority not the least important being that it reflects the views of those experienced in the field of early education and those who have to deal professionally with the aftermath of school careers badly started. In addition, a number of studies indicate the potential individual and social 'pay-offs' of successfully launching children on a sustainable education career[130]. They include, so far as the young are concerned, avoiding smoking, improved nutritional intake, favourable cognitive development, and good health generally. In the realm of parenting, education is associated with the avoidance of early family formation and child abuse and neglect, and is positively associated with favourable child rearing practices and the number and spacing of births. Sustained involvement in education also is associated with better mental health. So pervasive are the social benefits of education that it looms as one of, if not the most important, means of breaking the transmission of disadvantage from generation to generation.

For much the same reasons, Phase 2 of the class size reduction program should cover the remaining K-2 classes (that is, K-2 classes in schools serving non-disadvantaged communities).

The additional cost incurred in both phases would include accommodation and related expenses as well as the basic cost of additional staffing. The Corporate and Management Accounting Branch of the DET has kindly assisted with estimates of the staffing costs likely to be incurred on the understanding that while averages can be calculated, the actual requirements of individual schools are unable to be predicted with any precision. Using the data provided in Table 3.1 below, and working on the basis of 2003 costs, the additional staffing costs to decrease class sizes to 20 in all K-2 disadvantaged schools would be of the order of $47 million (recommended for the first year of implementation). To achieve the same goal for Years K-2 in all remaining schools would cost approximately an additional $178 million.

Recommendation 3.3: That there be a two-phase reduction in K-2 class sizes in public schools throughout the State. Beginning in 2003, K-2 classes in schools officially designated as 'PSFP' (that is, disadvantaged) should be reduced to 20 or less. In Phase 2 (2004-2006) the remaining K-2 classes should be reduced to 20 or less.

[130]Stacey, N, (1998) "Social Benefits of Education", *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* vol 559, September, 54-64

Table 3.1

Additional Teachers Needed to Reduce Class Sizes in K-2 in New South Wales Government Schools

	NUMBER OF PUPILS (ABS 2000)	TEACHERS FOR MEAN CLASS SIZE	TEACHERS NEEDED FOR AV CLASS SIZE 20	ADDITIONAL TEACHERS NEEDED	ADDITIONAL COST CALENDAR YEAR 2002	ADDITIONAL COST CALENDAR YEAR 2003
			PART A – PSFP			
K in PSFP schools	13,735	549	728	179	12,436,156	13,313,920
Y1 PSFP	13,593	503	723	220	15,233,424	16,308,624
Y2 PSFP	13,260	479	712	233	16,152,437	17,292,503
TOTAL	40,588	1,531	2,163	632	43,822,017	46,915,048
			PART B – ALL SCHOOLS			
K in all Schools	65,405	2,608	3,467	859	59,552,055	63,755,338
Y1 all Schools	65,342	2,411	3,439	1,028	71,286,293	76,317,797
Y2 all Schools	65,159	2,352	3,499	1,147	79,553,943	85,168,993
TOTAL	195,906	7,371	10,404	3,033	210,392,291	225,242,128

Average Primary Classroom Teachers Salary and Oncosts

	3% 1 JULY 01	4% 1 JULY 02	5% 1 JAN 03
average annual salary	50,852	52,886	55,530
on costs (33.7205%)	17,148	17,833	18,725
TOTAL	68,000	70,719	74,255