

A HISTORY OF THE NSWSPC PREFERRED FUTURES PROJECT 1995-2005

Brian Ralph
NSWSPC Futures Principal 2003

Origins of the Preferred Futures Project

Although the New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council (NSWSPC) was playing an important role in advising and influencing the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) in the early 1990s, the origins of the Preferred Futures Project essentially lie in two significant events that occurred in 1995¹.

The first was the 1995 Third World Convention of the International Confederation of Principals (the 1995 ICP Conference), held at Darling Harbour, Sydney in September of that year. This conference was organised by the NSWSPC for the Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA).

The ICP Conference had as its major sponsor the Dusseldorp Foundation. The Foundation, however, had only agreed to this sponsorship provided that ASPA and the NSWSPC use the conference both as a springboard for the ongoing development of principals and as a means of developing a proactive policy stance on major issues in secondary education.

The second significant event was the 1995 restructure of the Department of Education and Training which also occurred that September. The ten existing school administrative regions and their Regional Directors were abolished and replaced by forty school districts across the state managed by District Superintendents.

The result of this restructure was that it was no longer possible for Council to operate on the basis of a small State Executive and a Management Committee that comprised the Executive plus one representative from each of the old regions. As a result, the Council was forced to develop a new structure for itself in 1996 comprising 40 District Councils, a State Assembly of District Representatives, an expanded State Executive and a comprehensive system of Reference Groups to represent Council in its consultations with DET. These new arrangements were formally agreed to through the signing of an historic *Memorandum of Understanding* between the NSWSPC and DET in October 1996².

These two events, in combination, provided a strong incentive for the NSWSPC to take significant steps in the direction of proactive policy formulation. It strongly supported the Dussledorp Foundation's vision and its challenge to the Council, and it also definitely wanted to strengthen its own position as an important educational stakeholder and increase its impact on policy making. In addition, the Council's new organisational structure of districts and reference groups was operating within a context where it frequently had no major policy statements on major educational issues. It was essential that the Council have formulated policies if it was to speak with one strong united voice.

In late 1996 the State Executive held a weekend planning workshop to discuss these important issues. The result was general agreement by the State Executive that Council should commit itself to a major project looking at secondary education from a proactive point of view, beyond the short-term goals set by

¹ President of the NSWSPC from June 1992 to September 1995 was Ron Hurley, who increasingly promoted and demonstrated the idea that the NSWSPC, as an autonomous professional organisation, could play a very significant and influential role in providing advice to DET on a range of key issues of interest to Principals and schools.

² President of the NSWSPC from September 1995 to June 1998 was Jim Harkin. Jim led the Council through its 1996 reorganisation into district councils and reference groups, the signing of the *Memorandum of Understanding*, the development of the first set of executive stimulus papers, the early strategic planning for the Futures Project and negotiations with the Director-General about the Futures Project.

government. Each member of the executive volunteered to write a stimulus paper on a major issue or topic. The four or five papers that finally emerged from this process became the fore runners of the Preferred Futures Project.

By late 1997, however, it had become obvious that the development of a limited range of stimulus papers alone was not going to offer a long-term solution to Council's desire for increased influence over future directions in education. The need for a comprehensive, forward-thinking strategic plan or policy statement to revitalise secondary education was required.³

At the Executive meeting in February 1998 the Preferred Futures Project was adopted as the major Council priority for 1998-2000, with a recognition that Council would need to commit significant funds to support the project's implementation.

Development of the Preferred Futures Policy Statement

Work on the project during early 1998 focused on the establishment of a broad project plan and project framework, discussions with the Director-General⁴ about funding and proposed action, and the identification of secondary principals across the state who had a special interest in a range of important topic areas. The result of this work was that in mid-1998 DET agreed to jointly fund the project with the NSWSPC (initially providing \$50,000 over three years) and a secondary principal was appointed as the NSWSPC 'Futures Project Director'⁵.

In June 1998 a special meeting was held at the NSWSPC Annual Conference to commence the project in earnest⁶. At this meeting a number of principals were invited to form and lead special project teams to develop material around the underlying beliefs, goals and strategies for each of the key sections of the Futures document⁷.

During late 1998 and early 1999 a large number of workshops, conferences and state-wide consultations occurred⁸. In August a two-day Futures Conference was organised to explore the whole issue of 'education

³ This point of view was further reinforced during a visit to the New York Education Department by a group of NSW principals in 1997, who found that the head of the Department and the Educational Board had adopted a strategy of actively leading the educational debate in that state, rather than passively accepting successive government policies. The success of this strategy provided the NSW principals with even greater resolve to go ahead with actively influencing policy development in NSW.

⁴ The Director-General at that time was Dr Ken Boston, who was very keen about the potential of the project to initiate change in NSW public education. Dr Boston remained a very strong supporter of the Futures project for his whole term as D-G, as did Jan McClelland, who replaced him as D-G during 2002.

⁵ Maurice Brunning was appointed as Futures Project Director and served in that role until January 2000 when he took up the role of the first 'Futures Principal' – a deployed principal position in state office with responsibility for leading the project's implementation.

⁶ Annual Conference in June 1998 saw a change in the senior executive of Council. Jim Harkin stepped down and Larissa Treskin became President, with Chris Bonnor as Deputy President. Larissa was President until August 2001, after which Chris became Acting President until June 2002, and then President from 2002-2006. Both of these principals were heavily involved in the Futures Project right from the start. They played critical roles in maintaining the momentum and direction of the Futures Project.

⁷ The principals who worked as project team leaders during the development of the Futures document included Christine Cawsey (Political/educational interface), Ros Davis (Teachers and teaching), Edward Gavin (Planning for the 21st century), Deanna Hoermann (Managing change), Ann King and Rae Mitchell (Schools as learning environments), Ann Newman and Robyn Hunt (Students as learners), Fiona Prentice (Schools in the 90s), Brian Ralph (Principles and ethics), Bernie Shepherd (Curriculum and credentialing), Bruce Stavert and Lyn Wendtman (Technology in learning) and Suzette Young (Leadership).

⁸ Much of the work of organising these workshops and meetings, developing workshop materials, collating responses and supporting the team leaders in a wide range of issues during this very busy time fell on the experienced shoulders

futures', based on a futures methodology called 'Futurescan' that used matrices of ideas to narrow down possible and preferred educational futures⁹. The State meeting in October involved a Futures keynote speaker and discussion groups led by the project team leaders. A meeting of all the project teams in November evaluated a range of educational futures scenarios which were then used to develop a realistic framework within which the material being developed by each of the project teams could be evaluated. Discussions at State Assembly in November resulted in a number of additional recommendations being made about the project.

The start of 1999 saw a continuation of the many Futures meetings and consultations. By mid February a draft Green Paper had been developed and released for discussion at district meetings¹⁰. In early March the project teams met again to report on progress and further refine their material. In late April there was a major two-day conference where much of the project team material was finalised and a range of strategic options for action were explored.

There was extensive practitioner input during this time, with almost half the secondary principals in the state eventually involved. The project was also enhanced by input from a number of outside speakers at the various workshops and conferences¹¹. Many of the project teams also included DET state office personnel and some also had academics in their team. The project also involved the participation of the Minister's Office, DET senior officers¹², the NSW Teachers' Federation and the NSW Federation of P&C Associations.

A draft White Paper was eventually issued to all principals just prior to the NSWSPC Annual Conference in June, with extensive discussion sessions and workshop sessions being held during the conference. This draft paper was subsequently refined and then underwent critical appraisal and further significant rewriting after Annual Conference¹³.

The final White Paper was eventually adopted unanimously as Council policy at the NSWSPC State Assembly in August 1999. It was subsequently published and distributed to all members of the NSWSPC and all relevant stakeholder groups during early 2000 under its present title, *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*.¹⁴

Establishment of structures to support Futures implementation

The public release of the White Paper in August 1999 led to significant discussions between the Council and Director-General about the recommendations contained in the document and how they might be achieved. There was particular support from the Director-General, with additional immediate funding of \$50,000 to Council plus the twelve-month deployment of a secondary principal (a 'Futures Principal') to State Office in 2000 that would be paid for by DET. The role of this Futures Principal was to work with secondary principals and DET officers to achieve many of the recommendations identified in the document. This Futures Principal position officially continued for four years until the end of 2003, providing Council with a deployed

of Col Cooksey (Professional Officer) and Ron Simpson (Executive Support), with Bill Kennedy (Executive Officer) in support.

⁹ The 'Futurescan' methodology was provided by Dr Rick Slaughter. He was crucial in providing a theoretical framework for action.

¹⁰ The Green Paper and draft White Paper that followed it were the result of extensive collating and editing by the editorial team of Col Cooksey, Ron Simpson, Robyn Furness and Lyn Wendtman, with Maurice Brunning and Chris Bonnor in support.

¹¹ Key 'Futures' speakers included Dr Rick Slaughter, Dr Richard Neville, Eva Cox, Dr Marc Bowles and John Findlay.

¹² With particular support from Assistant Director-General Steve Buckley.

¹³ The main writer and editor of the White Paper after Annual Conference was Col Cooksey, greatly assisted by Robyn Furness and Lyn Wendtman. The critical appraisal was performed by Dr Marc Bowles, Dr Christine Deer and Professor Geoff Scott.

¹⁴ *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* is available on the NSWSPC website (www.nswspc.org.au).

principal each year working full-time on Futures initiatives. These principals played critical roles in the implementation of the project.¹⁵

In November 1999 the NSWSPC also established a 'Futures Keyteam' from the core of enthusiastic, expert principals who had worked on the project to date. Its role was to drive the implementation of the Preferred Futures Project within Council and DET and support the work of the Futures Principal, who acted as its team leader. Renamed the 'Futures Project Team' in July 2002, it played a critical role between 1999 and 2004 in setting broad directions for the implementation of the project, identifying priorities, developing strategies, making recommendations to the Executive and coordinating, supporting and monitoring project implementation.¹⁶

At the same time, in support of the newly established Futures Keyteam and Futures Principal, NSWSPC reference groups began developing action plans and timelines specifically targeting those recommendations of direct relevance to their group¹⁷. This ensured not only a unified approach across the Council but also total coverage of all the areas of action required. These action plans were then combined into one plan for the Council as a whole. Each reference group then took up their own particular Futures issues with their respective DET Director, consistently returning to them and raising them at every opportunity over the next few years.

The impact of the Preferred Futures Policy Statement, 2000-2001

The Preferred Futures document approved for release in August 1999 identified a number of important areas for action, with each having various recommendations attached to it. The seven areas for action were:

- Needs-based solutions for educational provision at the local level
- A culture of new ideas and innovative approaches for effective change
- Leadership training for effective management
- Action research projects to encourage the development of more flexible learning
- Flexible curriculum frameworks providing individual learning programs to meet outcomes standards
- Provision of resources to schools to meet the outcomes standards required by government and the community
- A proactive, consolidated and sustained commitment by the NSWSPC to lead and foster the changes needed for the future.

In addition, each of the sections within the Futures document – the political/education interface, leading change, preferred futures within schools – contained not only a statement of the beliefs that principals held in relation to each of these, but also a list of strategic options that needed to be pursued.

¹⁵ The four 'Futures Principals' deployed into state office and funded by DET to work on the project's implementation were Maurice Brunning (2000), Chris Bonnor (2001), Bruce Stavert (2002) and Brian Ralph (2003).

¹⁶ Between Nov 1999 and June 2002 the members of the Futures Keyteam included Chris Bonnor, Maurice Brunning, Christine Cawsey, John Craig, Ros Davis, Greg Dickinson, Bob Healy, Deanna Hoermann, Pamela Hunt, Rae Mitchell, Ann Newman, Sharon Parkes, Bruce Stavert, Larissa Treskin and Lyn Wendtman, with Bill Kennedy and then Ron Simpson in an executive support role. From July 2002 to mid 2004, the renamed 'Futures Project Team' comprised Chris Bonnor, Christine Cawsey, Ros Davis, Greg Dickinson, Anne-Marie Furney, Phil Halpin, Rae Mitchell, Ann Newman, Brian Ralph, Bernie Shepherd, Bruce Stavert and Suzette Young, with Bill Kennedy and then June Richards in the executive support role.

¹⁷ This process was begun through a special Futures conference for reference groups in November 1999.

During Term 1 2000 these areas for action, recommendations and strategic options were further refined by District meetings, reference groups and the Executive into five priority strategic options to which specific projects and actions could be attached and implemented over the next two years or so. The five priorities were:

- Pilot projects focused on innovative teaching/learning research and practice
- Pilot projects to redevelop schools as learning environments reflecting contemporary pedagogical and technological change
- Redefining of teachers' and students' roles in the learning process, resulting in changes in pedagogy and student participation in learning
- Exploration of alternative school organisational structures for the future
- Projects to investigate the use of technology in curriculum delivery, including tracking and reporting of student progress.

During 2000 and 2001 the Futures Keyteam and its two deployed Futures Principals working in State Office during this period focused their efforts on the following projects and activities¹⁸:

- Provision of advice to DET and to the NSWSPC – The existence and availability of a senior NSWSPC secondary principal in State Office provided many opportunities for the establishment of NSWSPC consultations and the provision of extensive NSWSPC advice and information on secondary school issues to many DET officers and working groups. In particular, the Futures Keyteam and Futures Principal worked closely with the NSWSPC Executive and a number of Council reference groups to enhance consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- Secondary Education Taskforce – This was established by the D-G in early 2000 as a direct result of the Council's Futures work, with terms of reference to develop and oversight the implementation of a comprehensive strategy to revitalise public secondary education and boost public confidence in secondary schools. It comprised the D-G, DD-Gs AD-Gs and various DET Directors, plus the SPC President, Deputy President and three members of the Futures Keyteam. The taskforce lasted for about 18 months before other priorities overtook it. It led to the establishment of the Schools Frontline Project and a DET inquiry into online learning and related technology issues.
- School's Frontline Project – A total of 16 schools were provided with up to \$15,000 each by DET in early 2001 to work with DET and several external partners on a variety of school image projects such as school promotion and marketing, improved school-community relationships, school-community links through technology and various improvements in the visual/aesthetic appearance of schools. The principals involved in this project subsequently provided significant input into the NSWSPC response to the Grimshaw review of non-government schools.
- Showcasing Schools Project – A number of schools presented workshops at Annual Conference in 2001 that showcased innovative learning and teaching practices and the systems in schools that supported these.
- The *Virtual Boss* CD-ROM – This was a CD-ROM developed by the Council that had hot-links to many websites on pedagogy and technology change at the school level, plus other technical information including the operation of e-boards, online learning and NSWSPC Futures work. It was issued to all secondary principals at Annual Conference in June 2000.¹⁹
- NSWSPC 'HOT' Conferences – During 2000, 2001, 2002 and 2003 the NSWSPC conducted a two day 'Hands On Technology' Conference in November of each year at the Australian Technology Park, Eveleigh. These conferences were devised with a view to providing principals with the latest information about technology innovations in teaching and learning, and included keynote

¹⁸ Futures Principals Maurice Brunning (2000) and Chris Bonnor (2001) played significant roles in the implementation of these projects.

¹⁹ Particular thanks go to Greg Dickinson and Bruce Stavert for their work on the *Virtual Boss* CD ROM. The Project was also supported by DET which provided about \$5000 in funds for production and distribution.

speakers, technical talks and hands-on workshops with the latest computers and learning programs. Approximately 100 principals attended each of the four conferences, initially with deliberate targeting of two principals from every district per year to spread technology knowledge across the state. The first three conferences were significantly supported by DET funding. The conferences were consistently highly evaluated by all principals who attended.²⁰

- SPC/UTS Online Learning Project – Teachers in seven schools across NSW used the online learning platform *Blackboard* to develop and deliver online units of study in economics, business studies and legal studies which were then trialled by students. The online modules were based on very successful online student learning guides developed by the University of Technology Sydney. The trial also involved the students communicating with their peers and with UTS academics. One result of the Online Learning Project was that it particularly contributed to the priorities in technology and online learning identified within the DET's own ICT Strategic Plan published in late 2001. Another result of the trial was that the obvious immediate need for significant increased bandwidth in schools for effective teaching and learning became a major focus in Council's dealings with the Minister and DET. Bandwidth for schools was subsequently significantly expanded during 2003-2004.
- SPC/UOW Online Learning Project – This project involved five schools, with support from the University of Wollongong and funding from DET. Three of the schools participated in the development of a number of online learning modules to support the PD/H/PE 25 hour *CrossRoads* course, one school focused on gifted and talented student modules and one school on more general mainstream online student support and pedagogical change. This initiative was taken over by DET, in partnership with the University of Wollongong, which then resulted in much of the *CrossRoads* course being put online.
- Terasys/Macquarie Bank Partnership – This involved technology training of school staff and students, delivered by Terasys and funded by the Macquarie Bank. Its purpose was to demonstrate that there were a variety of ways to deliver technology training for schools.
- NSWSPC technology visit to Victoria – A visit by the Technology Reference Group to schools in Victoria at the forefront of technology in learning and teaching, to support the Council's developing ideas on learning technology innovation.
- Alignment of NSWSPC training and development priorities – The extensive work undertaken on Futures priorities during these two years saw the emergence of a policy to specifically align all NSWSPC training and development activities, including annual conference, to the Futures priorities for that year. This alignment became standard operational procedure for all professional learning activities conducted by the Council from 2002 onwards.
- NSWSPC responses to major reviews – Coordination by the Keyteam, in association with the State Executive, of a number of Council submissions and responses to major education reviews, including the Grimshaw Review of non-government schools, the Ramsay Review of teacher education, the Vinson Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW and the Board of Studies Review of junior secondary curriculum.
- SPC website upgrade – Significant changes were made to the SPC website during 2001 to make it more interactive and easy to update, so that it could be used by principals each day to find information, communicate with others and make their work more effective.

The Futures Project Evaluation, 2001-2002

By mid-2001 it had become obvious that two important priorities identified in the original Preferred Futures document had not yet been significantly addressed. These were:

²⁰ Particular thanks go to Greg Dickinson who led his small core of enthusiastic supporters drawn from within the Futures Keyteam/Project Team each year in the organisation and conduct of these HOT conferences.

- developing and supporting students to become self-directed life-long learners, including an emphasis on the approaches, structures and processes that best support learning.
- developing, empowering and supporting school leaders, including an emphasis on leadership development and increased flexibility at the school level.

There was also an increasing awareness of the need to obtain a consensus for future directions in the work of Council and to ensure ownership of the Futures document by the rapidly growing number of new principals who had been appointed since the release of the original document and therefore did not have any ownership stake in it.

With this in mind, it was decided that there should be an evaluation of the implementation of the Preferred Futures Project to date, plus a comprehensive program of district meetings, state meetings, state training days and annual conference presentations targeting pedagogy and learning as the priority for 2002.

The Futures Evaluation was conducted between September and December 2001 using an online survey tool developed in conjunction with the University of Technology, Sydney²¹. The focus of the evaluation centred on the key purposes of the original project, the key projects undertaken to date and the change management strategies used to support the implementation of the project so far.

Approximately 35% of secondary principals responded to the survey. The results were subsequently collated, analysed and a series of recommendations were developed during Term 1 2002²², followed by detailed discussion of the recommendations and proposed actions at Annual Conference in June 2002.

The results of the evaluation, where every item in the survey scored between 4.14 and 4.66 on an 'importance scale' of 1-5, indicated that there was continuing strong support among secondary principals for all aspects of the project. However, there was also a general implication that some of the more critical strategic purposes, action areas and change strategies had not been as effectively achieved as some of the others.

In summary, the evaluation provided the following recommendations for future action:

- Keep the central focus of the project primarily on teaching, learning and the support that is required for these to be most effective
- Work on a smaller number of evidence-based, high leverage priorities that are desirable, feasible and relevant
- Put in place a more targeted communication and involvement strategy for all NSWSPC members
- Adopt an approach to professional development that provides a sustained focus on a small number of critical areas or issues for school and system change
- Insist that all school change is supported by appropriate change in administrative and support systems, infrastructure and resources
- Apply best practice action research in the implementation of projects
- Systematically gather and publish quantitative and qualitative data on projects to track progress and prove their value and effectiveness
- Look both within and beyond DET for relevant ideas, solutions and partnerships for action
- Determine how to best work with such a large, frequently politically driven but fragmented bureaucracy to attain our goals, when some NSWSPC members regard contact and networking with DET as "joining the dark side"

²¹ With special thanks to Professor Geoff Scott, UTS.

²² Critical in this process was a small editorial team comprising Christine Cawsey, Deanna Hoermann, John Craig and Bruce Stavert.

- Develop collaborative, reciprocal networks with key partners and stakeholder groups to enhance and gain support for Council priorities for action
- Institute professional development for principals on effective networking, change management and action research
- Review the leadership and organisational structures, roles and relationships within the NSWSPC to ensure coordinated, focused and cohesive action across the organisation
- Develop a media and publicity/promotion strategy to both ensure support for Futures projects and influence government opinion.

The three top-ranking areas for further action related to:

- increasing the strategic effectiveness of the NSWSPC in its advocacy and policy influence role (a priority subsequently taken forward by the NSWSPC Executive)
- maintaining a strong, practical-oriented focus on improved teaching and learning (the agreed Futures focus for 2002, already in the full implementation phase by the time the evaluation was published)
- improving Council communication and organisational structures (subsequently taken forward by the Executive).²³

Futures achievements, 2002

In the first half of 2002 the main focus of the Futures Keyteam and the new Futures Principal²⁴ was on classroom pedagogy and learning. This was supported, however, by a growing need in the second half of the year for increased action in the area of leadership as the DET's own leadership development strategy began to take shape.

Among the projects and activities conducted during 2002 were:

- Provision of advice to DET and the NSWSPC, and the maintenance of close consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- Completion of the Futures evaluation document – Collation and analysis of the results of the online survey conducted in December 2001, development of the recommendations, writing up of the published document, dissemination of results.
- Preferred Futures Workshops – These was held at Annual Conference in June and at the Central Schools Conference in August. One deliberate aim was to involve all of the new principals who had been appointed since the original Futures document in 1999 in the establishment of the Council's priorities for the next 12-18 months. The workshops provided Council with a clear mandate to continue its Futures' focus on pedagogy and technology into 2003, but with leadership development also now added as a key priority. The workshops also identified key issues that needed to be taken up by reference groups with DET.
- NSWSPC Learning Forum – This activity dominated Futures' efforts during the first half of 2002. It involved an extensive, ongoing professional learning program that provided principals with a sustained focus on the critical area of classroom pedagogy and learning, including an overview of the recently-released Queensland research on 'Productive Pedagogies'. It included pedagogy and learning workshops during Term 1 District meetings, the State Meeting on 22 March, the State Training Day on 23 March, Term 2 District meetings, keynote addresses and workshops on

²³ For more detailed information on all the results and recommendations, please refer to *Evaluation of the implementation of the NSW Secondary Principals' Council "Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW" Project*, NSWSPC, May 2002. This is available on the NSWSPC website (www.nswspc.org.au).

²⁴ The Futures Principal for 2002 was Bruce Stavert, for the first time now with a role statement negotiated between the NSWSPC and DET, as DET sought to increasingly utilise the Futures Principal in more of its own project work.

pedagogy and learning at Annual Conference in June, Term 3 District meetings and finally, the State Meeting on 13 September.

- NSWSPC *Effective Pedagogy* Paper – The NSWSPC Learning Forum in early 2002 presented an ideal opportunity for the Council to develop a position paper on classroom pedagogy for NSW secondary schools. Information from Term 1 workshops at District meetings, the State Meeting and the State Training Day were combined to produce a draft position paper for consideration by Term 2 District meetings, which was then refined at Term 3 District meetings and finally presented for endorsement at the Term 4 State Assembly.²⁵ At the same time, however, there was increasing pressure also being put on DET by the NSWSPC to come out with a system-wide policy statement on pedagogy. In May 2002 DET announced the formation of a DET reference group with significant representation from the NSWSPC to oversee not only the implementation of the new 7-10 curriculum changes in 2003-2004, but also the development of a DET pedagogy paper to support the new curriculum. At the time of this announcement, DET openly acknowledged that the NSWSPC focus on pedagogy for 2002, plus the NSWSPC Learning Forum activities conducted on 22-23 March, had triggered this action. The DET discussion paper *Quality Teaching in NSW Public Schools* was developed over the second half of 2002 and eventually released to all schools in June 2003. With the development and promised release of the Quality Teaching discussion paper at system level, the NSWSPC State Assembly in Term 4 2002 opted to endorse the principles underpinning the NSWSPC *Effective Pedagogy* paper, rather than adopt it as official Council policy, for two reasons – firstly to avoid confusion between the two papers that had many similarities²⁶, and secondly because the Council had engaged in its own pedagogy paper essentially because of the lack of direction and leadership being provided by DET. Now that DET had produced a system-wide paper that was to be supported by a Quality Teaching Unit, 10 regional consultants and extensive professional support materials and training, we had essentially done our job!
- NSWSPC Leadership Forum – Results of the Futures workshops at Annual Conference and the Central Schools Conference clearly established the need for leadership as a major item on the Futures agenda for 2003. This priority was also considerably reinforced by two external events – the establishment of a DET review of its current leadership development strategy in April, and negotiations between national principals' associations and the Federal Government for a proposed national leadership centre for principals²⁷. As a result of these three factors, the State Training Day in Term 3 was devoted to leadership and coaching, and planning commenced in earnest for a 'Leadership Forum' that would provide a sustained professional development program on leadership development for 2003, just like the Learning Forum was doing for pedagogy and learning in 2002. State Assembly in Term 4 subsequently endorsed the Leadership Forum as the major Futures activity for 2003.
- DET Leadership Development Strategy – In March 2002 the DET established a School Leadership Development Reference Group (SLDRG) to review existing DET school leadership development programs and provide input into a proposed new strategy for 2003. The NSWSPC reps on this committee subsequently worked very closely with the School Leadership Development Unit (SLDU) and NSWPPA during Terms 3 and 4 as the various elements of the new strategy were planned in detail.²⁸

²⁵ Much of this work was undertaken by the Learning and Teaching Reference Group led by Ann Newman.

²⁶ The reason for the similarity in papers was, of course, because the NSWSPC principals working on the Council's own pedagogy paper had already engaged extensively with the Productive Pedagogies material coming out of Queensland and in particular with one of its authors, Jim Ladwig from the University of Newcastle, who also ended up as one of the two authors of the DET Quality Teaching discussion paper.

²⁷ This came to fruition in July 2003 when the Federal Government announced the establishment of the National Institute for Quality Teaching and School Leadership (NIQTSL), now called Teaching Australia.

²⁸ The role of the NSWSPC and NSWPPA on the SLDRG during 2002-2003 was particularly important to the development of the current School Leadership Development Strategy. This was because only the NSWSPC and NSWPPA reps remain unchanged during this period when all the other members of the SLDRG constantly changed, with the result that it was the NSWSPC and NSWPPA that drove the direction of the strategy's implementation.

- DET ISP/Web Services Project – The DET decision in 2002 to develop and implement a package of online services and products in schools by early 2004 resulted in significant input from the NSWSPC into the project specifications relating to technology for learning, plus advice on implementing the trials in schools, based on our extensive online learning experience gained during the 2000-2001 Futures’ technology projects.
- Hot Conference 3 – A third very successful HOT Conference was conducted in November.

Futures achievements, 2003

With the Futures’ focus in early 2003 squarely on leadership for enhanced learning and teaching, the Futures Project Team and the Futures Principal²⁹ commenced the year with a number of key projects and activities in mind. However, as the year progressed there began to occur a change in the role of the Futures Principal to incorporate more DET priorities and projects.³⁰ In addition a new, quite urgent priority emerged as a result of the increasing emphasis and focus by DET senior officers during the second half of 2003 on principals as managers rather than educational leaders. This led to the development of the NSWSPC Role of the Principal Project (ROPP), which subsequently dominated Futures’ work in Term 4 2003, through all of 2004, and then on into 2005.³¹

The work of the Futures Project Team and Futures Principal during 2003 included the following projects and activities:

- Provision of advice to DET and the NSWSPC, and the maintenance of close consultation and communication between DET and the NSWSPC.
- NSWSPC Leadership Forum – The focus on leadership as a Futures’ priority for 2003 began with a two day ‘Leadership for Learning Forum’ on 26-27 March. This was followed up by leadership presentations and workshops at the State Training Day on 14 June.³²
- NSWSPC leadership position papers – The Leadership for Learning Forum in March provided the perfect opportunity for the development of Council policy in this area. A wide range of comments on various leadership issues were collated from the forum by the Leadership Reference Group and these led to a leadership survey that was discussed at Term 2 district meetings. The responses to this survey were then used to develop two draft NSWSPC position papers – one on leadership development and one on the establishment of a Leadership Centre in NSW. These drafts were

²⁹ In July 2002 the Keyteam had been renamed the ‘Futures Project Team’, while the Futures Principal for 2003 was Brian Ralph.

³⁰ Unknown to the NSWSPC, 2003 was to be the last year that DET was to fund the deployed Futures Principal position in State Office. This was probably a result of the removal in January 2004 of D-G Jan McClelland who had strongly supported the Futures Project just like her predecessor Ken Boston, plus the significant cost cutting occurring right across DET at the end of that year as it sought to fund the State Government’s promises made during the March 2003 state election. In addition, the role of the deployed principal became increasingly linked to DET projects from May 2003 onwards as a result of the DET’s need to implement these election promises. From mid-2003 the Futures Principal’s role became split between Futures work on one side for the NSWSPC, and government election commitments on the other for DET.

³¹ Despite the cancellation of the Futures Principal position in state office at the end of 2003, the thrust of Futures continued strongly during 2004 and then into 2005. There were three key reasons for this - firstly, the fact that Futures had become so integrated into NSWSPC thinking, planning and structures that the process naturally continued even without a full-time deployed principal in support, secondly the energy of the small team of principals brought together to manage the Role of the Principal Project during 2003 drove this key flagship project strongly through 2004 and into 2005, and thirdly, the deployment of the 2003 Futures Principal into the Secondary Education Directorate in 2004-2005 to work on DET priorities, but then being given great flexibility by Trevor Wootten, Director of Secondary Education, to work on priorities and projects way beyond the scope of the official role statement.

³² With particular thanks to Ros Davis as leader of the Leadership Reference Group, for her work as the coordinator of these three professional learning days, ably supported by members of the Leadership Reference Group and Futures Project Team.

refined at Term 3 district meetings and the two final papers became official policy at the Term 3 State Assembly in August.

- DET School Leadership Development Strategy – Apart from the provision of continuing extensive advice into the development of the strategy itself prior to its approval for implementation in early 2003, NSWSPC reps also provided direct input and support for many of its leadership development initiatives, e.g. a major contribution in shaping of the Scott capability research findings to create the School Leadership Capability Framework that is now being used as a basis for all leadership development programs and planning in DET, significant input into the design of the Targeted Principal Preparation Program including training of the principal mentors in the program, direct assistance in developing the structure and content of the school leadership development website, direct help with the revised principal induction program.
- NSWSPC Role of the Principal Project – See separate section below.
- DET Quality Teaching discussion paper – June saw the release of the DET discussion paper on quality teaching. This was supported by continuing NSWSPC representation on the DET 7-10 Curriculum Implementation Reference Group, plus a number of quality teaching presentations to principals and schools around the state during the year.
- DET Professional Learning Policy – Following on from the State Government’s election announcement in March of significant funding over the next four years for professional development in schools, the NSWSPC Training and Development Reference Group and members of the Futures Project Team joined together to develop a revised NSWSPC position paper on Professional Learning and Development that was eventually approved as Council policy at Term 3 State Assembly. This position paper had a significant influence on the DET’s own Professional Learning Policy subsequently released in November, with Council helping to write the DET policy document and providing extensive input into the support documents.
- NSW Institute of Teachers – In April the NSWSPC organised a consultation forum involving district representatives, the State Executive and Futures Project Team. This forum subsequently led to a series of focus questions being developed for Term 2 district meetings, as a basis for an official NSWSPC response in June to many of the issues relating to the proposed establishment of the Institute.
- HOT Conference – A fourth (and final) Hands On Technology Conference was very successfully conducted over two days in November at the Australian Technology Park.
- DET ISP/Web Services Project – The establishment by DET of an advisory group for this initiative at the start of 2003 allowed the NSWSPC to provide extensive advice on many issues associated with this project through both 2003 and 2004.³³
- NSWSPC website redesign – By early 2003 it had become obvious that the NSWSPC website needed a complete redesign and rewrite of all the materials to make it more relevant and user-friendly for principals. This occurred during 2003-2004 with an official launch of the new site at the NSWSPC Annual Conference in June 2004.³⁴

Role of the Principal Project 2003-2005

Although there had been considerable discussion within the NSWSPC over many years about the DET-prescribed mandatory roles that secondary principals were expected to perform, this situation was brought into stark focus at the NSWSPC Annual General Meeting in June 2003 when, in his report and address to members, the President³⁵ challenged those present to not only consider their current roles but debate new roles they would need in order to meet the changing needs of schools and school communities both now

³³ The DET ISP/Web Services Implementation Reference Group continued meeting until October 2004.

³⁴ Particular thanks go to Bill Kennedy for his ongoing management of the website through until 2008.

³⁵ Chris Bonnor

and in the future. There was a significant emphasis on the need to rethink how principals want to see public education managed in NSW, and what role they want to play in any new model.

The result was the establishment in July 2003 of the Role of the Principal Project (ROPP) and the appointment of a project coordinator³⁶, with the brief of exploring the current roles of secondary principals, considering future roles and designing and specifying the management framework within which these roles could be best performed.³⁷

In July an initial discussion paper was developed and in August a two day 'Think Tank' of 30 principals from across the state, including the Futures Project Team, considered in some detail the current roles of secondary principals not only in NSW but elsewhere in Australia and overseas. A series of principles and propositions about the role of the principal in NSW public secondary education were developed which were then discussed in detail at Term 4 district meetings. A second 'Think Tank' meeting in December clarified these ideas and a small team called the 'ROPP Management Team'³⁸ was then formed to move the project forward, supported by contact persons in every district.

During Term 1 2004 teams of principals visited other Australian states and New Zealand and developed detailed reports based upon their observations³⁹. One of these reports was presented at the Term 1 State Meeting. In Term 1 an academic partner also joined the project⁴⁰ and additional interviews were conducted with 19 NSW principals, as well as a number of overseas principals⁴¹.

Annual Conference in Term 2 saw the presentation of a Green Paper providing a draft statement on the preferred role of the secondary principal, keynote presentations on the findings of the various interstate and overseas visits and several workshops that targeted principals' perceptions of their role. The Green Paper was subsequently discussed in detail at District meetings early in Term 3 and District contacts then met in Sydney to share their responses. The final 'White Paper' was presented and approved as official Council policy at the State Assembly in August 2004.

The White Paper identified five key dimensions of the role of the principal as an educational leader.⁴² It also indicated the responsibilities within those five areas and, more importantly, the responsibilities that DET State Office, Regions and the NSWSPC also would need to address in order for a secondary principal to effectively perform that role.

At the State Meeting in September 2004 principals examined draft recommendations and some of the major issues that had emerged from the project. These recommendations were subsequently refined and

³⁶ Christine Cawsey

³⁷ The establishment of the project was in fact quite timely – there had been a DET restructure announced in late June which eventually took until November to complete, Director General Jan McClelland was subsequently removed in January 2004, and a new attitude of principals as managers, not educational leaders, began to pervade the thinking and conversations of senior DET officers in the second half of 2003 and early 2004.

³⁸ The ROPP Management Team comprised Christine Cawsey (team leader), Stephen Brewer, Lila Mularczyk, Ted Noon, Geoff Pellizzer, Chris Presland, Brian Ralph and Bernie Shepherd, with June Richards as executive support.

³⁹ Four of these visits were funded through DET Leadership Fellowships. The 12 principals involved in the fellowships received a total of \$20,000 to conduct the team visits to New Zealand, Western Australia, South Australia and Queensland.

⁴⁰ Dr Debra Hayes, from the University of Technology Sydney, acted as both an academic partner and critical friend to the project.

⁴¹ The 19 NSW principals interviewed by Christine Cawsey provided a wealth of information about current issues in the principalship. These later became significant influences in the NSWSPC's final ROPP paper and were also the basis for several key recommendations put forward by the NSWSPC in its submission to the *Excellence and Innovation* Futures Project conducted by DET in 2004-2005. The 19 principals were also invited to a consultation within the *Excellence and Innovation* project, where they helped establish some of the parameters for the secondary education section of the consultation document.

⁴² Please refer to *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools – Interim Position Paper*, NSWSPC, August 2004. This is available on the NSWSPC website (www.nswspc.org.au).

ratified by the Term 4 State Assembly. In mid-November reference group leaders came together to develop action plans based on the ROPP recommendations, for implementation during 2005.

During 2005, reference groups implemented their plans through communication with DET senior officers and directorates and work within their own reference groups, including the development and refinement of position papers in a number of important policy areas.

At the state level, the Council developed a detailed response to the DET *Excellence and Innovation* consultation document which encompassed the recommendations from ROPP and provided a clear statement of the preferred future direction of public secondary education in NSW. This response was extremely powerful in influencing the development of the DET's own Futures' recommendations⁴³, subsequently released in December 2005.

Futures implementation 2004-2005

Even though the Role of the Principal Project dominated Futures work during late 2003 and all of 2004, a number of other initiatives were also implemented during 2004-2005 as part of the Future's agenda. These included:

- NSWSPC 2004 Pedagogy Conference – This was a two-day conference held during March 2004 where keynote speakers and individual schools presented sessions based around the DET Quality Teaching discussion paper.⁴⁴
- NSWSPC 2005 Leadership for Learning Conference – This two-day conference was held in March 2005 to continue the Council's focus on pedagogy and leadership. It again involved workshop presentations from a large number of schools across the state involved in action research funded by the Australian Government Quality Teaching Program.⁴⁵
- DET Leadership Centre – The concept of a Leadership Centre being established in NSW to drive school leadership development had been talked about since late 2001, coinciding with early moves in the establishment of the NSW Institute of Teachers and the emergence of moves at a national level to establish a national leadership centre.⁴⁶ This resulted in the development of a NSWSPC position paper on this topic in mid-2003 and subsequently became the focus of much discussion driven by the NSWSPC during 2004 in the DET School Leadership Development Reference Group (SLDRG). In late 2004 a paper proposing the establishment of a DET Leadership Centre was developed by the SLDRG for submission to the Director-General, but this was subsequently side-tracked by DET decisions to pursue leadership development through a partnership with Michael Fullan.
- SPC coaching and mentoring trials – Three important trials occurred during 2004 as a result of the Leadership Reference Group continuing to pursue the concept of mentoring and coaching as valuable strategies for principals, despite these not being significantly incorporated into the DET School Leadership Development Strategy announced in early 2003. In May 2004 12 principals participated in a peer coaching workshop, from August to October six principals were involved in

⁴³ NSW Department of Education and Training (2005) *One size doesn't fit all- Report of the consultation on future directions for public education and training*

⁴⁴ With particular thanks to Suzette Young for her work as the executive member for Learning and Teaching and coordinator of this conference, ably supported by members of the Learning and Teaching Reference Group and June Richards in support.

⁴⁵ With particular thanks to Andrew Newman and Murray Paterson for their organisation of this conference, ably supported by Bill Kennedy and Warwick Chipman.

⁴⁶ A key figure in the ongoing promotion of the concept of a Leadership Centre for NSW was Bernie Shepherd who, as a member of the NSWSPC Executive, also represented the Council at national level on the Australian Secondary Principals' Association (ASPA) Executive, including holding the position of Deputy President of ASPA from mid-2000 to late 2004. ASPA was a key player in the development of NIQTSL ('Teaching Australia').

one-on-one coaching and in December 20 principals completed a mentoring workshop. Each of these trials has allowed the NSWSPC to propose the implementation of mentoring and coaching workshops across the state during 2005-2006.⁴⁷

NSWSPC Futures Review 2004-2005

By the start of 2004, the original Preferred Futures document developed during 1998-1999 had obviously triggered off a significant range of proactive initiatives and policies both within the NSWSPC and DET. However, as the years progressed it became increasingly evident that this original document needed to be revisited to take account of the Futures achievements since 1999, plus the significant changes in the educational and political landscape that had occurred since that time.

Discussion during late 2003 and early 2004 within the Futures Project Team led to the establishment of a small team to review the 1999 document and update it in light of ROPP and Futures' achievements⁴⁸. During Term 2 and Term 3 2004 the review team sought input from district meetings which, when combined with input from the Executive and reference groups, enabled the development of a draft revised document that was put to district meetings in Term 3 and Term 4 2005.

In November 2005 the draft document was ratified by the NSWSPC State Assembly as Council policy, replacing the original Preferred Futures document. This revised document, *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*, provides a clear statement about the Council's essential beliefs and priorities and reflects the Council's determination to continue to push for significant innovation in education for the benefit of our students, our schools and for public education in NSW.⁴⁹

Brian Ralph, December 2005

About the author

Brian was appointed Principal, Auburn Girls High School in 1992 and co-opted to the NSWSPC Executive in December 1994. In 2003 he was the fourth of four 'Futures Principals' to be deployed to State Office to work on NSWSPC Futures Project priorities. Although the Department stopped funding the Futures Principal position at the end of 2003, in 2004 Brian moved across to a two-year deployment in the Secondary Education Directorate. It was in this role that, in addition to his other duties and with the full approval of Trevor Wootten, Director of Secondary Education, he was able to continue his Futures role during 2004-2005.

This paper was originally published as the Appendix to the Council's major policy document *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Education in NSW*, NSWSPC November 2005.

⁴⁷ With particular thanks to Greg Dickinson for his work in the coaching and mentoring area.

⁴⁸ This writing team comprised Ann Newman (team leader), Doug Blake, Rae Mitchell, Chris Bonnor and Brian Ralph.

⁴⁹ *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW* is available on the NSWSPC website (www.nswspc.org.au).