

STATE ASSEMBLY TALK – TERM 1 2010  
**THE NSWSPC FUTURES PROJECT 1995-2005**

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## Introduction

When I first took up my position on the NSWSPC Executive in February 1995 things were very different to today:

- The Executive consisted of the president (Ron Hurley), three vice presidents, a secretary, a treasurer, an information manager and two co-opted principals, i.e. nine people. There was no executive support.
- Council was managed at the state level by a State Management Committee who met once per term. This group comprised the 10 regional presidents (or their delegates), a central schools representative plus the State Executive. All power resided in the regional presidents at the regional level, although the State Executive was extensively involved in direct consultation and advice to the Director-General and state office directorates.
- Council policy, if not formulated at State Management Committee meetings, was decided by an open vote at state plenary meetings, held three times per year in the St. George area and totally dominated by city principals.
- There were two reference groups in operation – a Curriculum Reference Group and a Training and Development Reference Group, both of which had only been established two years before.
- The first official Council newsletter ever to be published came out in March that year. It was eight pages long, professionally printed and published once per term – a very different situation to the very lengthy bulletins now published every fortnight.
- In 1995 urgent DET and NSWSPC information was sent to principals by those new-fangled fax machines! There were no emails like there are today.

Today, while I could have talked about many things that happened during my 15 years on the Executive, I have chosen to talk about the NSWSPC Preferred Futures Project between 1995 and 2005. The reason for this is that the Futures Project demonstrates:

- how powerful and influential we have been in the past, and how we earned that power and influence
- how powerful and influential we are right now because of what has happened in the past, and how we choose to operate today
- how powerful and influential we can be in the future, depending on the path that we take and how we walk that path.

I believe that the secret to all this revolves around the idea of us remaining highly respected and extensively consulted by DET because of:

- what advice we give
- how we give that advice, and
- why we give it.

To put this another way:

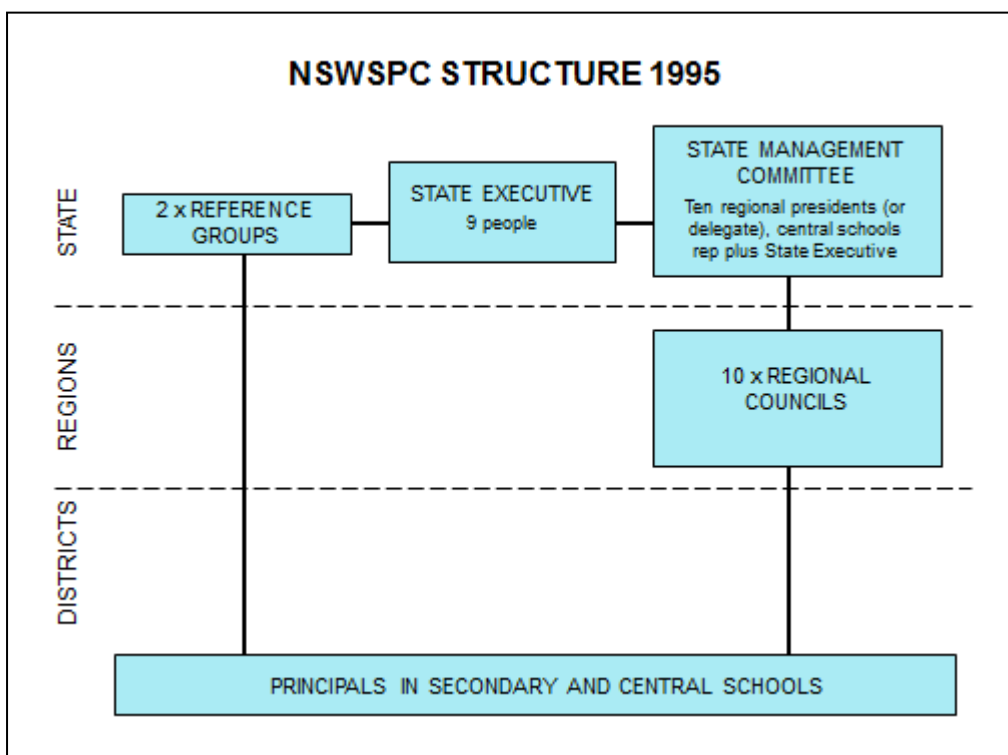
- It's about working *with DET* (i.e. inside the tent) while still maintaining our independence, our ability to push for significant improvement and innovation and our right to freedom of action as a highly effective, high profile professional association.

- It's about providing *genuine, quality advice* with the best interests of public education in mind, i.e. the common good.
- It's about us exerting our power and influence to achieve our goals, while still maintaining the *high moral ground* and the *highest of professional standards* in everything we do and say.

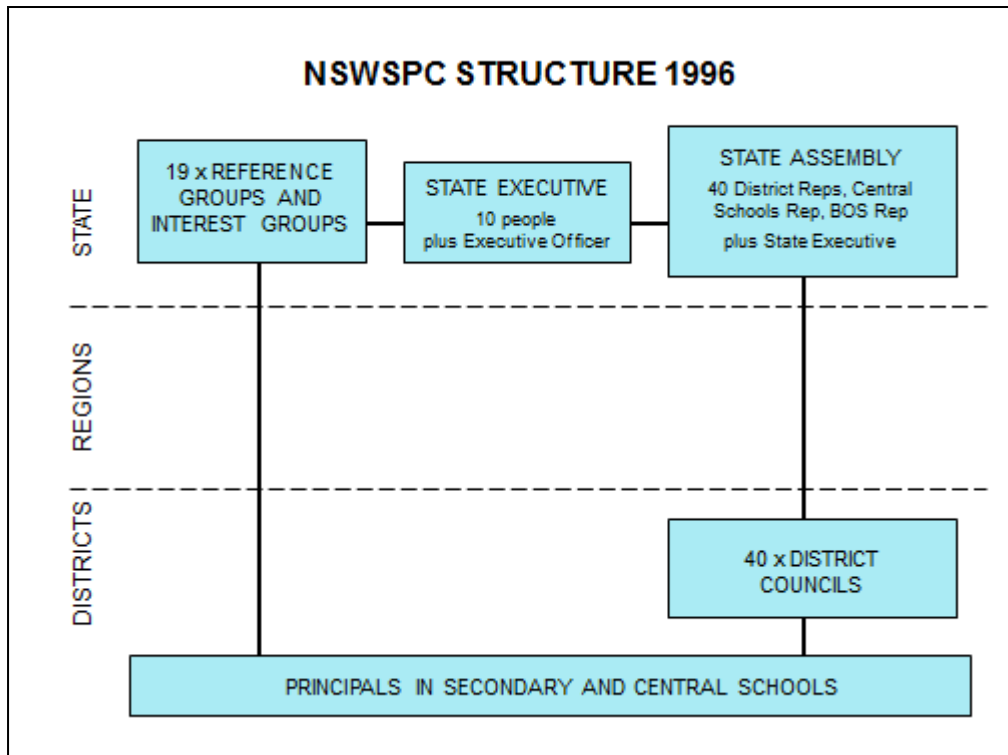
### Origins of the Futures Project

The origins of the Futures Project essentially lie in two significant events in September 1995, just as Jim Harkin took over from Ron Hurley as President:

- **1995 ICP Conference, Sydney** – organised by the SPC on behalf of ASPA. The Dusseldorp Foundation was a major sponsor of the conference and it insisted that sponsorship funds would be made available ONLY if the SPC used the conference as a springboard for developing a proactive policy stance on major issues in secondary education.
- **1995 restructure of DET** – This led to the abandonment of regions and regional directors and their replacement with 40 districts with district superintendents. Council's response was to develop a new Council structure to better represent members and provide a better way of developing policy. The problem, up until then, was that Council was frequently operating without major policy statements on major educational issues. The new structure needed to place Council in a more significant role as a highly respected and highly influential adviser to DET on policy and procedures.



**SLIDE 2:** NSWSPC Structure at the start of 1995 – illustrating the significance of the 10 Regional Councils and the State Management Committee as decision makers.



**SLIDE 3:** NSWSPC Structure developed for 1996 – Regional Councils replaced by 40 district councils, the State Management Committee replaced by the State Assembly, a large number of reference groups and interest groups formed and in operation, plus the State Executive expanded.

### Development of the Futures Project

In late 1996 the NSWSPC Executive held a two-day planning workshop and agreed that Council should commit itself to a major futures-oriented project. There was also agreement within the Executive that the first step would be for each member of the Executive to write a stimulus paper on one of our major policy issues.

By late 1997 it was obvious that the small number of stimulus papers written so far would not be sufficient to meet the need for wide-ranging policy responses in a large number of areas.

Early 1998:

- The 'Preferred Futures Project' was adopted as the major Council priority for 1998-2000
- Establishment of a broad Futures project plan and project framework
- Discussions with Director-General Ken Boston (a strong supporter all the way through) about funding and proposed action.

Mid 1998:

- DET agreed to jointly fund the project with SPC (initially providing \$50,000 over three years)
- Maurice Brunning (secondary principal) appointed as NSWSPC 'Futures Project Director' for 6 months
- Annual Conference was the venue for the first major 'Futures' meeting. A targeted group of principals were invited to form and lead project teams to write sections of the 'Futures Paper'
- Larissa Treskin took over from Jim Harkin as President.

In late 1998 and early 1999 there were two planning conferences, plus a large number of project team workshops and state-wide consultations.

By February 1999 a draft 'Green Paper' had been developed for discussion at district meetings.

In June 1999 a draft 'White Paper' was presented for discussion at annual conference.

In August 1999 the final White Paper was adopted as Council policy, renamed *Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*.

It is important to note that there was extensive practitioner input during this whole time, including:

- almost half of the secondary principals in the state eventually involved
- many project teams included DET state office personnel
- some also had academics in their project team
- The Minister's Office, NSW Teachers' Federation and NSW Federation of P&C Associations all participated in discussions and project teams.

### Financial and personnel support for Futures implementation

**Futures implementation support**

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1. DET funding (\$100,000+)
2. SPC funding
3. Four 'Futures Principals' (2000-2003) funded by DET
4. Futures Keyteam and Futures Project Team
5. Action by State Executive and reference groups

**SLIDE 4:** *Futures implementation support provided by DET and the NSWSPC*

#### (a) **DET support**

Public release of the White Paper in August 1999 led to significant discussions between the Council and the Director-General about the recommendations and how they might be achieved. This led to:

- additional funding of \$50,000 to Council (now a total of \$100,000!)
- a 12-month deployment of a secondary principal to State Office for 2000 – a 'Futures Principal' paid for by DET
- the role of the Futures Principal was to work with secondary principals and DET officers on the recommendations identified in the document.
- the Futures Principal position was eventually funded for four years by DET.

#### (b) **NSWSPC action**

- A 'Futures Keyteam' was formed (later renamed the 'Futures Project Team') – 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

- The SPC Executive raised key issues at every possible DET meeting/consultation
- Reference Groups developed action plans specifically targeting those recommendations of direct relevance to their group, and these issues and recommendations were taken up directly with DET directors etc. (This action ensured a unified approach right across the Council, plus total coverage of all the areas of action required.)

## Major players

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Jim Harkin  
 Larissa Treskin  
 Chris Bonnor  
 Maurice Brunning  
 Col Cooksey  
 Ken Boston

Futures support team:  
 Ron Simpson, Robyn Furness,  
 Lyn Wendtman, Bill Kennedy

**SLIDE 5:** Major players in the early stages of the Futures Project

## Futures Project team leaders

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Christine Cawsey	Robyn Hunt
Ros Davis	Fiona Prentice
Edward Gavin	Brian Ralph
Deanna Hoermann	Bernie Shepherd
Ann King	Bruce Stavert
Rae Mitchell	Lyn Wendtman
Ann Newman	Suzette Young

**SLIDE 6:** Futures Project team leaders during the development of the Futures White Paper, 1998-1999

## **Keyteam & Futures Project Team\***

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Chris Bonnor	Ann Newman
Maurice Brunning	Sharon Parkes
Christine Cawsey	Brian Ralph
John Craig	Bernie Shepherd
Ros Davis	Bruce Stavert
Greg Dickinson	Larissa Treskin
Anne-marie Furney	Lyn Wendtman
Phil Halpin	Suzette Young
Bob Healy	Ron Simpson
Deanna Hoermann	Bill Kennedy
Pamela Hunt	June Richards
Rae Mitchell	

**SLIDE 7:** *Futures Keyteam and Futures Project Team members, 1999-2005*

## **Futures Principals**

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- Maurice Brunning (2000)
- Chris Bonnor (2001)
- Bruce Stavert (2002)
- Brian Ralph (2003)

**SLIDE 8:** *NSWSPC Futures Principals, 2000-2003*

### **Futures achievements 2000 – 2001**

*The major focus during 2000 and 2001 was on the use of technology in teaching/learning and enhancements for public secondary education.*

## Achievements 2000-2001

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1. *Virtual Boss* CD-ROM
2. Two 'Hands On Technology' (HOT) Conferences – 2000, 2001
3. SPC/UTS Online Learning Project – DET ICT Strategic Plan, bandwidth
4. SPC/UOW Online Learning Project – DET online learning projects
5. Terasys/Macquarie Bank Partnership
6. Secondary Education Task Force
7. Schools Frontline Project
8. Showcasing Schools Project
9. Futures Project Evaluation

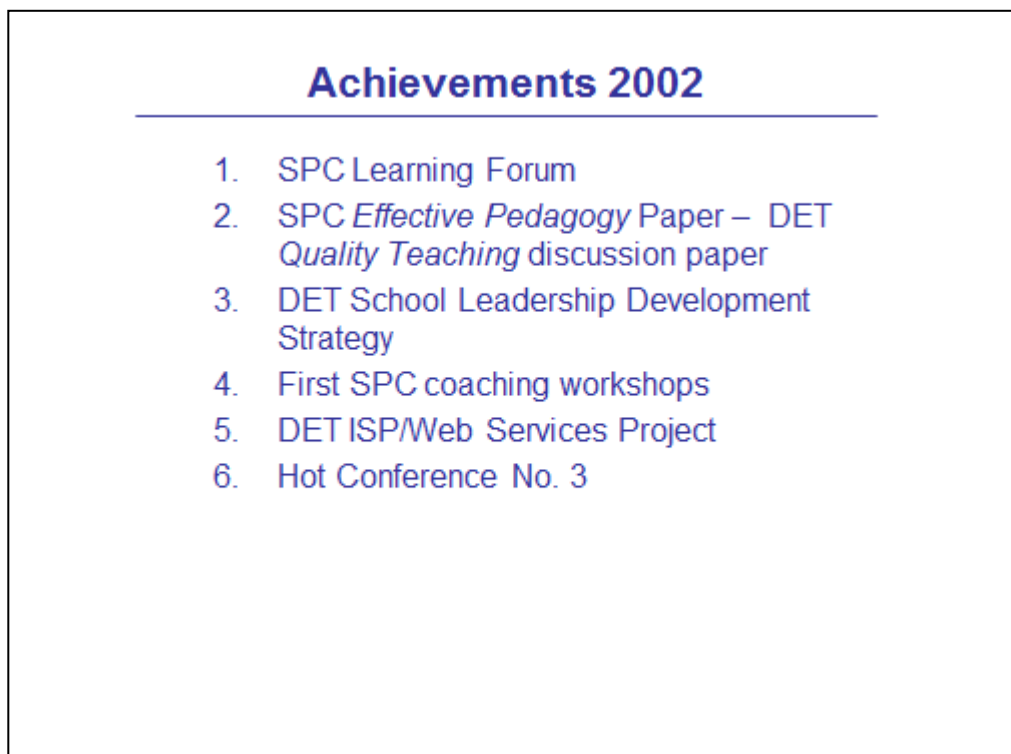
### **SLIDE 9: Futures achievements 2000 – 2001**

1. Improving Principals' technology skills and the use of technology in schools for teaching and learning:
  - *Virtual Boss* CD-ROM – focused on pedagogy and technology changes at the school level – issued to all secondary principals at Annual Conference June 2000
  - First two 'Hands On Technology' (HOT) Conferences (2000, 2001) – 200 principals updated on technology innovations in teaching/learning plus hands-on workshops with the latest computers and learning programs
  - SPC/UTS Online Learning Project – seven schools used the online learning platform *Blackboard* to develop and deliver online units of study in economics, business studies and legal studies – this had a direct influence on DET's own 2001 ICT Strategic Plan, plus bandwidth subsequently expanded significantly during 2003-2004
  - SPC/UOW Online Learning Project – five schools developed online learning units with support from the University of Wollongong and funding from DET – this project was taken over by DET and the *CrossRoads* course was put online
  - Terasys/Macquarie Bank Partnership – training of staff/students by Terasys demonstrated that there were a variety of ways to deliver technology training for schools.
2. Enhancements for public secondary education:
  - Secondary Education Taskforce – established by the D-G in early 2000 as a direct result of the Council's Futures work – 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 – lasted for 18 months before other priorities overtook it.
  - School's Frontline Project – 16 schools provided with up to \$15,000 each by DET to work on a variety of school image projects (the focus on school promotion subsequently re-emerged in the SQS Project from 2006-2009)
  - Showcasing Schools Project – Annual Conference workshops on teaching and learning and school-based systems to support quality teaching/learning.
3. Futures Project Evaluation:
  - Conducted in late 2001 → report and recommendations in Term 1 2002

- Recommendations included:
  - (a) Keep the central focus of the project primarily on teaching, learning and the support that is required for these to be most effective
  - (b) Work on a smaller number of evidence-based, high leverage priorities
  - (c) Implement professional development that provides a sustained focus on a small number of critical areas or issues

## Futures achievements 2002

*The major focus throughout 2002 was on pedagogy and learning, with leadership development emerging as a second priority later in the year.*



**SLIDE 10:** *Futures achievements 2002*

1. NSWSPC Learning Forum:
  - An extensive, ongoing professional learning program that provided principals with a sustained focus on the critical area of classroom pedagogy and learning
  - The program included workshops during Term 1 District meetings, the State Meeting in March, the State Training Day in March, Term 2 District meetings, Annual Conference in June, Term 3 District meetings and finally, the State Meeting in September.
2. NSWSPC *Effective Pedagogy* Paper:
  - The Learning Forum presented an ideal opportunity for Council to develop a position paper on classroom pedagogy in NSW secondary schools
  - Learning Forum activities led to the development of an *Effective Pedagogy* paper for endorsement at the Term 4 State Assembly in 2002
  - The SPC was also putting great pressure on DET 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 oversight 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. DET openly acknowledged the influence of the SPC on their decision

- 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 of the *Quality Teaching* discussion paper at system level, the NSWSPC State Assembly in Term 4 2002 opted to endorse the principles underpinning the SPC *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 similarities, 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!

### 3. Leadership Development initiatives:

- In March 2002 DET established a review of existing DET school leadership development programs to develop a new strategy for 2003. SPC reps worked very closely with the School Leadership Development Unit (SLDU) and NSWPPA to significantly influence the new strategy
- State Training Day in Term 3 devoted to leadership development and coaching.

### 4. Technology:

- DET ISP/Web Services Project – significant input by SPC into project specifications etc, based on our extensive online learning experience gained during 2000-2001.
- Hot Conference No. 3 conducted.

### 5. Other important changes:

- Ken Boston moves to the UK and Jan McClelland takes over as Director-General in June 2002
- Chris Bonnor takes over from Larissa Treskin as President in August 2002.

## Futures achievements 2003

*The major focus throughout 2003 was on leadership development, with the Role of the Principal Project (ROPP) emerging in the second half of the year. ROPP ended up dominating the Futures agenda through all of 2004, and then on into 2005.*

### 1. NSWSPC Leadership Forum:

- Two-day forum in March plus district meetings in Term 2, State Training Day in June and district meetings in Term 3 led to the development of SPC leadership position papers on leadership development and the establishment of a Leadership Centre in NSW.

### 2. DET School Leadership Development Strategy:

- SPC reps significantly influenced and helped develop many aspects of the strategy, e.g.
  - School Leadership Capability Framework
  - Targeted Principal Preparation Program
  - school leadership development website
  - Principal Induction Program.

### 3. Professional Learning:

- SPC highly influential in gaining significant funding for professional development in schools over the next four years, as one of the incoming Government's election promises

- Development of a revised NSWSPC position paper on Professional Learning and Development led to significant influence and input by SPC into the writing of the DET Professional Learning Policy released in November.



**SLIDE 11:** Futures achievements 2003

4. Role of the Principal Project established:
  - Triggered off by President Chris Bonnor's address at the 2003 Annual Conference – a direct response to the increasing emphasis and focus by DET senior officers during the second half of 2003 on principals as managers rather than educational leaders.
5. Technology:
  - HOT Conference No.4 conducted.
6. Other important developments:
  - Jan McClelland removed as Director-General in November, to be replaced by Andrew Cappie-Wood in early 2004.

### **Futures achievements 2004 – 2005**

*2004 saw the ending of the official deployment of a secondary principal into State Office as the Futures Principal. However, work continued on the SPC's Futures' priorities unabated all that year and the following year as a result of extensive voluntary work by many people.*

1. SPC Pedagogy Conference, March 2004:
  - This conference focused on the Quality Teaching discussion paper.
2. Role of the Principal Project:
  - This led to the development and publication by the NSWSPC in August 2004 of the discussion paper *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools*
  - This paper subsequently re-emerged within the Principal Accountability Project in 2007.

## Achievements 2004-2005

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1. SPC Pedagogy Conference
2. Role of the Principal Project → *The Leadership of Secondary Education in NSW Public Schools*
3. SPC coaching and mentoring trials
4. DET Leadership Centre
5. SPC Leadership for Learning Conference
6. SPC response to DET Futures consultation → *One Size Doesn't Fit All*
7. Futures Project review → *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Education in NSW*
8. Sustaining Quality Schools (SQS) Project begins

### **SLIDE 12:** Futures achievements 2004 – 2005

3. SPC coaching and mentoring trials:
  - These were developed during 2004 and implemented across the state in 2005-2006.
4. DET Leadership Centre
  - The SPC was nearly successful in getting the establishment of a NSW DET Leadership Centre. This initiative was subsequently overtaken by developments with the NSW Institute of Teachers, plus DDG Trevor Fletcher's decision to go with Michael Fullan as the focus of professional learning about school leadership in 2005.
5. SPC Leadership for Learning Conference, March 2005:
  - This conference focused on pedagogy, learning and leadership.
6. SPC response to the DET's *Excellence and Innovation* report:
  - DET consultation on their futures-orientated report *Excellence and Innovation* led to an immediate SPC response based on all the Futures work so far and all the work of Council over the previous years
  - The SPC's detailed, wide-ranging response was extremely powerful in influencing the development of the DET's own Futures' Report recommendations *One Size Doesn't Fit All*, released in December 2005.
7. SPC Futures Project Review and Futures document re-write:
  - A detailed review of the original Futures document (*Preferred Futures for Public Secondary Education in NSW*) led to a complete re-write of the document during 2005 so as to take account of all those things we had achieved so far. New goals, commitments and recommendations were developed to carry the Council forward into 2006 and onwards. The revised Futures document, *A Restatement of Preferred Futures for Public Education in NSW*, was published in November 2005.
8. Commencement of the Sustaining Quality Schools Project:
  - This was triggered off by President Chris Bonnor's address at the 2005 annual conference, which resulted in the establishment of a new Futures project in the second half of 2005 to address the

inequities in the current educational landscape of public and private schools. I believe we are seeing the fruits of this project right now...

### **In conclusion**

Having outlined what impact the first ten years of the Futures Project has had on public education and what significant respect, power and influence it established for the NSWSPC, here is one final question that everyone really needs to consider today:

***How will we maintain our significant influence over DET policy and directions into the future?***

A final question

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***How will we maintain our significant influence over DET policy and directions into the future?***

***Slide 13:*** *One final question... and a critical question for the good of public secondary education*

**Brian Ralph, March 2010**