

1978 – A Year of Consolidation

SPC President – Reg Clarke; **Secretary** – Al Kemp; **Research Officer** – Bill Myles.

Major Papers presented to Council

- ‘The Format of Council Meetings’: Riverina Region
- ‘Executive Staffing’: J Hale, Western Region
- ‘School Sport’: South Coast Region
- ‘Children with Behaviour Problems’: Metropolitan West Region
- ‘Student Choice of Schools’: B Myles, Research Officer
- ‘Senior High Schools’: B Bensley, Hunter Region

Council Matters

- State Plenary Meetings still followed the same format as Metropolitan Principals’ Council meetings.
- Detailed reports should be distributed and discussed at Regional meetings first.
- State Meetings would be at a higher level with presentations by group leaders focusing on the key issues identified by Regions.
- Voting on controversial issues, e.g. the current executive restructuring paper, should be restricted to the three representatives per Region and not be a process open to all those in attendance.

Relationships with the Department

- Council asked for a consultative committee of say four executive and four departmental officers to meet after State Meetings. It was felt this could lead to better industrial relations and reduce concerns that the devolution of responsibility to principals was one-way only.
- Director-General of Education (DG) Doug Swan approval for this was initially not given because he said that he didn’t know how the establishment of an Education Commission in NSW would impact on Departmental operations.
- Council then agreed that the SPC Secretary would give advance notice to the DG of meeting agendas. He would then attempt to get responses or have the relevant officer available.
- After concerns were raised that changes to the Saturday School of Community Languages and the reduction of class sizes were made without consultation, the DG advised that political decisions may not be effectively communicated to principals and that the Department had little control over the implementation of these matters.
- Principals were concerned they were being asked to conduct List 2 inspections in their subject areas due to restructuring of the Inspectorate and the loss of the Secondary Inspectors Panel.
- In October the Department released a discussion paper ‘The Executive Structure in NSW High Schools’.

The Study Boards

- Minister Eric Bedford declined to allow Council to nominate representatives to the Study Boards, as the Federation was not prepared to relinquish their right to choose representatives.
- Concern was expressed about the 50% exam component for the School Certificate and the application of the attendance requirements.
- While eligibility for an HSC re-mark was determined by computer, the Board of Senior School Studies (BSSS) agreed this was taking too long and would seek to improve the process.
- BSSS Secondary Principal Representatives Reg Clarke and Brother Michael visited most regions to better explain the HSC structure and scaling and answer principals’ questions.

The Teachers Federation

- Released a paper, 'Democracy in Schools' from The Victorian Secondary Teachers Association, introducing the concept of elected staff committees and a reduction in the principal's authority.
- Replaced subject sector associations with local groupings, effectively reducing the impact that principals and secondary teachers could have on Federation Policy.
- A dissident group, the NSW Principals' Association, was created to influence the Federation and protect the interest of principals.

Secondary School Sport

- The Combined High Schools Sports Association (CHS) was created to manage sport across the State.
- The Council strongly supported competition being held initially at Regional level with regional representatives competing at State level. There was concern at the cost for students in regional teams and the short notice for travel to competitions.

Tertiary Entrance

- Sydney University requirements for the inclusion of 3 Unit courses were not able to be met in those schools with small senior enrolments.
- Problems existed with how Colleges of Advanced Education handled their application procedures. Many excluded students who did not nominate their college in their first four preferences.
- Support was given by the Council for a single body to manage tertiary entry.
- There were mixed views in Council about the number of bodies asking schools for documentation to support student application for early or specialist entry, e.g. Medicine at Newcastle University, Sydney College of the Arts, and most courses at the University of New England etc.

Other Matters

- Continued pressure for an increase in the textbook subsidy, supported by the Federation of P&Cs. The Minister and Premier acknowledged this need but budgetary pressure prevented action.
- Late in 1978 the Public Service Board approved immediate replacement for absent kitchen assistants. Despite principals' concerns re coverage for ancillary staff carrying out banking, the Government ruled against compensation for them or teachers involved in accidents whilst out of school.
- A new directive was issued re the non-payment of school fees, restricting school action on declining student references and/or withholding the School Certificate.
- The perennial issue of covering the cost of school-related phone calls led to the Department agreeing to further analyse school-generated costs as a part of their total phone bill.
- The cancelling of the appointment of three women as principals in girls' high schools was discussed and the Council view was that the Department should have sought exemption under anti-discrimination regulations.

Items of Interest

- As a precursor to the creation of an Education Commission in NSW, the Government conducted seminars on key issues – time for an educational audit, education and work, and the level of basic skills.
- Annual Conference at Hawkesbury Agricultural College attracted 148 principals. Major topics included the literacy/numeracy debate, use of computers in recording school information and the NSWTF 'Democracy in Schools' paper.