

1986 – Growing Expectations of Schooling

President – Nancye Harris; **Vice President** – John Hale; **Secretary** – Mary Armstrong; **Research Officer** – Bruce Bensley.

Major Papers/Reports

- Commonwealth Schools Commission – The Council was invited by the Chair of the Commonwealth Schools Commission to provide input on the issues being considered in a number of important papers released by the Commission:
 - ‘Making the Future: The Role of Secondary Education in Australia’ (M. Middleton)
 - ‘The National Policy on the Education of Girls’
 - ‘The Secondary Education and Youth Policy’.
- Annual Conference (‘The Secondary School in a Rapidly Changing Society’) –

This was the first one held over two school days since DG Doug Swan in 1976 allowed all principals to meet for two days over a Friday and Saturday. A feature of the Conference, held at Hawkesbury Agricultural College, was the quality of the papers prepared by Regional Councils for the workshop sessions. The conference theme was addressed by the keynote speakers.

 - Director-General of Education (DG) Bob Winder spoke about ‘The Role of the Principal in a Changing Society’ by referring to the rapidly changing society in which growth and specialisation of knowledge and technology was without parallel, pointing out that education clearly had a central role in how well we cope with change. “As a source of innovation and conservation, education must enable people to accommodate change and it must also provide some constants. Schools are anchor points, with a dual responsibility – to help students feel secure and to be prepared for and face change with a sense of confidence.” He pointed out that:
 - “Values are inherent in education, because they are essential to human life and endeavour”, and identified respect for the individual, for others, for truth, for freedom, for equality and a love of life and of learning as being fundamental to the educational enterprise and for society as a whole.
 - While schools should be constant in their pursuit of these values and somewhat pragmatic in their adaptation to changed circumstances, if they don’t regularly adapt to change they leave themselves open to massive and perhaps imbalanced pressures.
 - Teachers are bound to reflect and communicate a range of the values in society although they also act as an influencing and moderating force. They bring the policy orientations of the government, expressed not only through curriculum documents but through resource allocations, structured and planned training experiences, supervisory and promotional mechanisms, in all of which there are rewards and sanctions. Pupils are by no means value-free themselves, requiring schools to guard against (a) failure to respond adequately to the new (conservative) morality, or (b) over-reaction so that we negate the substantial achievements of recent years.
 - Structural changes without changes in attitudes, values and teaching methodology are not enough. Maintaining and improving the standard of teaching is the responsibility of all principals and educational administrators. The ‘effective school’ is one in which good leadership and enthusiastic competent staff ensure all students gain a good education from teachers who care about them and work in a corporate mode.
 - Professor Laughlin Chipman (Professor of Philosophy, Wollongong University) in his address emphasised that increasing immigration would not exacerbate the problems of unemployment, providing the program is skilfully managed. Predictions from the 1970s of vastly increased leisure time with less work shared around so that each person would have a shorter working week and a shorter working life had proved to be economically unstable. In relation to education he said:

- The secondary school gets more than its fair share of blame for the inadequacies of much of its output from those in the next line (employers or academics), yet many of the most serious concerns should have been repaired in primary schools. “Perhaps it’s time to bar children whose schooling is inadequate from the secondary school. The secondary school should become defensive or protective, not adaptive over entry levels.”
- One area where secondary schools should be defensive is in terms of the qualifications needed to be a secondary teacher. The crash courses to upgrade primary teachers and the creation of colleges offering generalised graduate courses in education means “teachers no longer have higher formal qualifications than many others in the community”. Today with higher retention rates, the expectation of six years of secondary schooling will be the norm and “we should expect our teachers to at least have an honours degree in their specific field and as the Carnegie Report in the USA called for, a two-year postgraduate Master of Teaching Degree concentrating on classroom management and teaching crafts, with a substantial period in an internship.”
- Dr Ken McKinnon (Vice Chancellor, Wollongong University and co-author of ‘Future Directions of Secondary Education’) spoke of the widespread debate about schooling and its content, which he said was also about the nature of society and the type of society people wanted. He said “Schools have an important role to play in shaping the values and attitudes of future citizens as well as imparting knowledge and developing skills. Principals have a responsibility to review the content, structure and processes of your schools to determine whether they meet the needs of students and, in particular, the challenges of unknown futures.” (see summary on page 7)

Major Impacts on DoE, Schools and Principals

- Equal Employment Opportunity (EEO) – Bob Winder (DG), Brian Gillette (ADG) and senior officers met with the SPC Management Committee to look at ways to implement the recently released EEO Management Plan. Action was required under the legislation as under-representation of women at all levels would only get worse, not better, unless action was taken. The DoE had to either negotiate acceptable processes or be forced to implement strategies that may not be acceptable in the school situation. The DG proposed that:
 - The undertaking that teachers be required to serve anywhere in the State would be removed to better allow women with family commitments to take up positions.
 - Secondary principals would be targeted for EEO as they were a fairly small group and new processes could be better explored before wider implementation.
 - While previously applicants on the List 4 (Principal) promotions list had been offered a position at a school they had expressed interest in and listed in order of preference, they had not been obliged to accept the offer. From 1986-87, offers would no longer be made. Applicants would be appointed to schools they had listed in order of their placement on an Eligibility List. Women would be appointed to 40% of the positions available. Lateral transfers would still be allowed.
 - A state-wide Eligibility List would be created using Comparative Assessment procedures, where applicants would provide information about their performance and judgements would be made by a selection committee comparing the relative merits of each candidate, to create the Eligibility List. Assistance was to be provided to the selection committee by Regional panels who would submit a ranked list of candidates.

It was recommended that principals be included on selection committees. Concern was registered by the SPC about the fairness of this process. They believed that:

- Applicants should have access to all reports and comments provided to the selection committee.
- Principals should be involved in the design of the process and the weighting given to the various components by selection committees.
- The Eligibility List should not be published but individuals should be advised of their position on it.

- Quality Education and Teacher Efficiency – The Research Officer, in consultation with Regional Councils, prepared a paper for Annual Conference supporting the concept of a review of the efficiency of teachers and principals at regular intervals using external assessors (inspectors). The annual review would be the responsibility of the teacher and their executive supervisor and would require greater involvement by both parties than currently existed. While the Minister, Rod Cavalier, agreed with the principles behind the scheme, he did not accept the implementation process and deferred further action.
- Executive Restructuring – An extensive paper by Western Region SPC, based on DoE data on the allocation of promotions positions, showed that the number of teachers supervised by head teachers ranged from 7.5 to 3.1, while the number of teachers unsupervised ranged from 100% for Library, GAs and Careers, to 92% for Art and Languages, to 2% for the core subjects. Consistent with earlier findings by the Council’s Research Officer, it was recommended that the executive establishment of a school be related to the staffing establishment, so that the number of senior teachers would be one for every five teachers, a second deputy would be appointed to schools with more than 65 staff and that posts of responsibility would be established for specific roles, e.g. student advisers. It recommended that secondary departments in Central Schools be staffed in the same way as high schools of the same size. Concern was expressed about:
 - The expectation that the Deputy Principal in a small school should be the supervisor of teachers in unmastered departments as well as teacher-in-charge of pupil welfare.
 - The need for clearer role definitions for Head Teacher Girls and HT Administration in the supervision of teachers, and the professional experiences this provided.
 - The need for a head teacher to be appointed when a Special Education Unit is established in a school.

DoE advised that over the next two to three years 60 additional deputy principals would be established, based on the size of the school. It was expected that the majority of these positions would go to women.

- Student Welfare and Behaviour – With the banning of corporal punishment the Council identified the need to change the authority of the principal to suspend/expel students. When all previous initiatives had failed, after parents and guardians had been notified and meetings had been held, a suspension had been imposed, and if there was no improvement the principal needed to have the authority to remove a disruptive student. The DoE advised it would review the existing procedures as they recognised that they did not cover all situations.
 - The Council recommended DoE set up ‘holding classes’ for students suspended from school so expert counselling can be arranged by each Regional Office and decisions reached on each student’s further educational opportunities.
 - When the Department of Community Services increased their role in Child Protection and Family Support, school support for dealing with truancy diminished. The DoE established a Home School Liaison trial program in the Penrith and Orana Districts where School Attendance Officers were authorised to visit homes and follow up absent students. They were also to work in schools, evaluating the effectiveness of attendance programs and providing advice to student welfare teams.

Council Matters

- The Council restated its role in providing opportunities for professional interaction of principals in government secondary schools. This would be done by:
 - highlighting the many positive aspects of education and schools
 - making a specific contribution to the professional development of principals to improve the quality of education for students

- providing interaction between principals and DoE to better improve policies, procedures and service delivery.
- Secondary principal representation occurred on the Study Boards, the Teacher Efficiency Review and on Departmental committees concerned with pupil rights, learning difficulties, school councils, computer education, recalcitrant children, student welfare, department publications, teacher scholarships, career education, maintenance and equipment, public schools sport, film review and the State Dance Festival.
- The Council included in its Annual Conference program for the first time a 'Senior Principal's Address'. Mervyn Gray, Principal of Elderslie HS spoke on 'The importance of philosophy, management and communication in the Principal's special role of establishing a healthy school culture and climate'.

Relationships with the Department

- Unsupervised classes – The DG advised that there were insufficient resources to resolve the ongoing problem of covering all classes during teacher absences, particularly on the first day. He sought Council advice on the following possibilities:
 - Employing 160 casuals on a permanent basis and sharing them between clusters of schools (only 40 applied).
 - Appointing 120 teachers under a program continuity plan and allocating them to schools experiencing difficulty employing casuals.
 - Paying teachers to take additional periods (this was rejected by the Teachers Federation).
 - Reducing the teaching requirement for teachers from 27/28 to 26/27 periods, Head Teachers from 22 to 20/21 periods, and Deputy Principals from 14 to 12 periods, on an individual contract basis where those periods released by this agreement, plus all the non-teaching periods after Year 10 and Year 12 leave, be available to cover teacher absences for all authorised leave, including the first day.

Council appreciated that after many years this issue was being addressed. It felt that each of the proposals were good starting points and agreed to continue consultation. The Council asked DoE to accept responsibility for the appointment of casual teachers for long service leave/maternity leave and for staff deployed or seconded to Regional or Head Office.

- Declining enrolments in secondary schools were affected by the drift to the non-government sector as a consequence of Commonwealth Government funding policies. The reduction in staff numbers and the subsequent displacement of head teachers caused disquiet in the SPC with the potential for industrial conflict over nominated transfers and the loss of salary and status for displaced executives. The Council recommended these head teachers be retained at their current salary in their existing position while the executive restructuring took place. Alternatively, they be allowed to transfer to List 2 Special which would give them more scope for a favourable placement.
- Staffing issues included:
 - Retraining courses in areas of short supply and refresher courses for long term casuals wanting to return to teaching increased the supply of permanent staff but reduced the number of casual teachers available.
 - The staffing formula still caused problems for schools which had a significant loss of students between Years 11-12 and restricted the breadth of curriculum in smaller schools. Council recommended that schools should be able to seek supplementary staffing to maintain their curriculum continuity.
 - Council recommended there be an increase in the staff supplement from 0.1/100 to 0.3/100 to provide flexibility for principals to recognise and compensate staff who did much beyond their normal responsibilities, e.g. timetabling, school magazine, musicals, presentation ceremonies, fashion parades.

- Council was concerned at the increasing demands on the time of paid Year Advisers who were not entitled to a period concession.
- Ancillary Staffing had been the subject of a major review over 1985-1986. The freeze on ancillary staffing was to be lifted and the recommendations to be implemented progressively from 1987 included:
 - A more flexible ancillary staffing formula based on narrower enrolment bands.
 - Immediate relief to be provided where an ancillary staff absence of two or more days is anticipated.
 - That training programs be developed for ancillary staff to recognise technological change and the increased obligations from the new financial management manual.
 - That workload studies be introduced and that schools be allowed to negotiate staggered hours for ancillary staff.

The Council welcomed the recommendations, particularly for the retention of a flexible staffing component, but was concerned at the recommendation “That as the reason for variation in the standard of equipment in schools was a result of the ways in which P&C funds were used, principals must make themselves cognisant of the various types of office equipment and address parents on the benefits of providing ancillary staff with modern equipment which would directly assist with the educational needs of students.”

The Council felt strongly that the provision of appropriate modern equipment was the responsibility of DoE and not that of parents. It approached the Government with the recommendation that an equitable allocation of equipment should be part of any program aimed at raising the productivity and effectiveness of ancillary staff.

- The Effective Schools Project was set up after the Commonwealth withdrew funding for in-service and staff development. The project was to evaluate all previous training programs and develop a state-wide plan catering for all levels within the teaching service.

While principals’ councils were asked to advise on more effective ways for providing professional development, other interest groups including the Inspectorate, the NSWTF, teachers and parents had greater impact on the development of programs. Council was particularly concerned at the failure to develop quality programs for current and prospective principals.

The Teachers Federation

The relationship between the DoE and the NSWTF became less confrontational and more amicable and reasonable. A working party was established to look at matters of concern to both and whilst Council appreciated the sensitivity of industrial relations in the existing social/legal climate, it requested consultation in the development of any guidelines.

The Study Boards

- The Board of Senior School Studies (BSSS) advised schools to be careful not to set too many assessment tasks, and when students missed a task to be judicious in using estimates rather than substitute tasks.
- Leumeah HS students studying Year 11-12 Chemistry and Mathematics sought compensation at the HSC for educational disadvantage caused by the failure of DoE and the school to provide teachers in those subjects.
- The Council asked that each school be given information on the Tertiary Entry Aggregate for their students and that all schools are able to access the cut-off points for entry into each tertiary course.
- The Secondary Schools Board (SSB) advised that a Secondary Education Taskforce had been set up to advise on the implementation of the ‘Future Directions’ paper and that the principals currently on the Board would be members.

Other Matters

- The Minister gave approval to vary the start of Term 1, 1987. Day 1 could be used for staff development, Day 2 for an induction day for new students including Year 7 (thus allowing staff and parents to participate in Day 2 activities), and Day 3 for all other students to resume school.
- The DoE appointed a Grievance Officer to assist teachers lodge complaints about discrimination. While the process was to be conciliatory, the Council expressed concern about the way it operated, the lack of clearly understood procedures and the failure to ensure procedural fairness for all.
- The Government increased the school maintenance grant and the supplementary cash grant but the Council pointed out there were problems with the timing of payments to schools.
- Western Region reported that teachers in more remote schools were disadvantaged as the leave provisions for regular appointments for long term treatments of illness were not appropriate. They recommended that allowance be made for travel time and that first day relief be approved where appropriate.
- The Council was concerned that teacher training faculties in Universities/CAEs seemed to be acting as recruiting agencies for the non-government school sector. DoE were asked to improve their approvals processes so that outstanding graduates would be attracted to government schools in a timely fashion.

Items of Interest

- The Council Secretary Mary Armstrong received 'The Affirmative Action Award' from the Australian Council for Educational Administration.
- The Principal of Canterbury GHS was taken to the Equal Opportunity Tribunal to answer charges relating to a girl's complaint that the school failed to provide Technics, a subject offered in other schools. The Tribunal found the student had received discriminatory treatment because she did not have access to subjects offering better opportunities for employment. The DoE advised the Tribunal that staffing and resource allocation to a school was a DoE decision, but the result forced them to consider how to provide gender equality through subject offerings in all schools. Following the ruling DoE recommended that principals advise their school community how the school's curriculum was determined using the staffing and resources available.

Please see below for the key points from Dr Ken McKinnon's speech at the 1986 Annual Conference.

Key points from Dr Ken McKinnon's speech at the 1986 Annual Conference

Figures from DoE indicated a contraction of secondary school enrolments from 318,000 in 1986 to an anticipated 265,000 by 1993. These figures however understated the actual contraction in government schools as they included non-government school enrolments, which were still increasing. A retention rate of only 41.7% in NSW was the lowest of the eastern states, and he saw considerable scope for upward increases in student numbers. He said there was a need to reflect on what was causing the disparity and proposed that the demographic picture, in conjunction with the broader context, constituted the shaping factors for future policy.

In particular he was concerned with public and private schooling, inclusive versus exclusive attitude, to schooling, the content and skills of secondary education, the quality of teachers and the obligation we must all assume for quality improvement in schools.

Media comment, heavily in favour of non-government schools, lacked balance and fed into public prejudice, as protagonists for government schools had not always succeeded in arguing the importance of universal common schooling. Ironically the most vocal defenders of the public school system, the unions, often inadvertently weakened it by their negativity, industrial actions and pursuit of non-educational political matters that fuel this poor media image, leading the general public and some parents to think that the public school system is weak and poor. Action to promote and sustain a more equal and just society requires some longer-range considerations and the need is to argue for shared/common values in all schools, irrespective of who runs them.

He underlined that everyone had a stake in the future of public schooling, not only parents and the general tax-paying public but also business, because a high proportion of employees will invariably come from government schools. Business, spurred on by the media, attacked the government school system and schools rarely evinced interest in business attitudes or needs. First steps might include discussing what might be included in school curricula, with productive dialogue about appropriate structures, content and accreditation.

A higher proportion of students were staying on but schools were not being ingenious enough to fully cope with this wider range. A compounding effect was when schools did not adjust their programs to suit the variety of student learning styles but relied on an inflexible, rigid, unchanging curriculum that led to students leaving once they were unable to cope. He rejected the argument that an inclusive model of schooling led to soft options and cited the Blackburn Report from Victoria which argued it is possible to provide for a range of learning abilities and styles and still raise the intellectual quality of schooling for everyone, particularly those headed for tertiary education.

Continued criticism of the profession, and lower salaries than other professions, has led to a shortage of teachers. If this is not redressed society as a whole will suffer at a time when the demands will be for teachers with a richness and breadth of mind that can entice students beyond their own perceived limits.

The mandate for the future must be to raise the quality of schooling for all and he suggested that the content side of teaching required increased attention, with better initial training and mid-career top-ups of knowledge for existing teachers in a "pedagogically exciting and infectious way" so that the skills they gained would be valued and transferrable to the classroom.

The vision and actions must be "toward the goal of providing high value added, successfully shaping schooling experiences for every young person in the community, within a framework of shared values, adjusting the details of the organisation of schooling and the end of schooling credentialing and transfer arrangements so as to enhance overall goals."