

## 1987 – Powerful Legislative Changes

**President** – Ruth Redford; **Vice President** – Carol Preece; **Secretary** – Mary Armstrong; **Research Officer** – Bruce Bensley.

### Major Papers/Reports

- ‘The Education and Public Instruction Act 1987’ – This revised legislation gave the Minister increased powers and included for the first time a reference to the Council in an Act of Parliament. Under the powers of the Act the Minister could suspend or expel a child of any age. Other measures included:
  - The Study Boards to be replaced by a single statutory board – the Board of Secondary Education (BSE) – with 20-21 members including two Council representatives. All bodies, including Council, were to create a shortlist of candidates for appointment by the Minister.
  - The Minister to have responsibility for the registration of schools and the BSE would accept the credentials of existing schools.
  - The BSE to be required to review secondary education as a continuum Years 7-12 and report to the Minister within two years.
  - The School Certificate to be replaced by the Certificate of Secondary Education, which students could receive whenever they left school. This certificate could be refused for unsatisfactory attendance or application.
- ‘The Education Commission Act 1987’ – This Act arose from the Government’s previous attempts to implement EEO policies within teaching service promotions positions without significant success. The Bill legislated for an increase in the number of women in promotion positions over five years by:
  - Targeting 40% of head teacher and deputy principal vacancies for women holding the appropriate listing. It was envisaged that 600 women would be appointed over this time.
  - All primary and secondary principals, plus deputy principals in large primary schools, being appointed to vacancies from ‘merit lists’. This process would require inspection and placement on the promotions list, application for a vacant position, appraisal by Regional Office staff, interview, ranking in order of relative merit, and appointment taking account of choices/rankings.
  - The existing ‘lateral transfer’ arrangements to be maintained with transfers to be made before promotions were dealt with.

The Council and many of the applicants believed that having already demonstrated their eligibility, this ‘comparative assessment’ process was an unnecessary hurdle to be negotiated by those aspiring to be principals.

- Release of a new Suspension Policy – A DoE report on ‘recalcitrant students’, which had been finalised the previous year, had never been released and none of its 21 recommendations had ever been acted upon. As a result, the Minister for Education (Rod Cavalier) required that the current suspension policy and procedures be rewritten to include these recommendations, including the provision for suspension of up to five days for threatening actions or disruptive behaviour. The DoE also recognised a need to provide increased facilities for emotionally disturbed children.

In addressing Annual Conference, the Minister said discipline was central to achieving quality education in schools and that abuse of a teacher by a student warranted severe consequences, “Suspension first, inquiry after.” He said the new policy would fully support teachers, and that principals could suspend violent students immediately. He then reflected on some cases given recent wide media coverage:

- Newcastle High School: In early 1987, after 28 Year 12 students were banned from representing the school for the rest of the year, he had publicly “congratulated the principal for his firm and decisive action” and stated that the students would need to show contrition before any review of their punishment could occur. He said that this showed that the Government would back a principal who behaved professionally; and that the student’s attitude was important in any resolution.

- At Coleambally High School he expelled a student for striking a teacher with premeditation. At Wellington High School however, when a student struck a teacher in the course of a general melee there was no evidence of intent or premeditation and following a suspension the student apologised, accepted further school discipline and there was no school recommendation for expulsion. "Suspension presumes a return to school, but since 1984, whenever expulsion was recommended, I have acted on that recommendation forthwith".

"As principals you hold what is probably the most important position in the Public Education structure. You are at the forefront, dealing with the daily running of schools and with parents and members of your local community.... Public Education depends so much on the quality of our principals. We will back to the hilt any principal who imposes firm discipline on students who misbehave. You should have no doubt about that."

- 'Schools and Schooling Years 7-10' – This was issued by the Secondary Schools Board prior to the new 1987 Education and Public Instruction Act being in place.
  - It dealt with broad generalities of curriculum, school climate and student welfare in two parts. Part A provided a basic set of goals for all secondary schools, and Part B embraced everyday practice and the characteristics likely to be exhibited by schools that achieved these goals.
  - The Council agreed with Part A, the general goals for curriculum design. It believed that the outlined points on 'The Opportunities to be Provided' were consistent with the goals and incorporated the ideals of present-day society and education, and that 'The Knowledge, Attitudes and Skills to be Developed' would best occur through an integrated curriculum.
  - Part B emphasised the 'adaptive school' and the Council suggested that, if schools were to be truly adaptive, there needed to be increased diversity to suit the ethos of the local community and to provide for the different ways in which students learn. This diversity could potentially lead to students being able to attend the school of their choice.
  - The document also emphasised that schools were safe places in which students could take learning risks and where teachers could innovate. The Council believed that this would be best achieved when all staff worked in a secure, harmonious environment and were treated fairly and consistently as valued members of the school community.

The new Board of Secondary Education accepted the principles of this document as their starting point for future deliberations.

- 'The Ministerial Working Party on Secondary Education in Western Sydney' (The Debus Report) – recommended that a second non-teaching Deputy Principal be appointed to 20 schools in Met West and Met South West Regions, with particular responsibility to implement specific programs addressing retention in these schools. These 'Staying On' Deputies were to be three-year appointments with groups of schools required to co-operate in mutual support of each other. The report also identified a need to consider the establishment of a senior high school.

### Council Matters

- The four-term school year was introduced and Council renegotiated their meeting structures with the Director-General of Education (DG) Bob Winder. It was agreed there would be a Plenary Meeting held in three of the terms, one of which as a part of the annual conference. The number of regional meetings would be determined by Regional Directors, dependent on budgetary considerations. The Council was granted \$7000 for Annual Conference which it used to subsidise attendance and fund the cost incurred by regions who were preparing significant papers.
- The Council agreed that its nominees to the BSE should be principals of high schools who were members of both the Council and the NSWTF. They had to be willing to attend both Board and SPC Management Committee meetings and serve for four years on the Board and its committees. Following a postal ballot of Council members Mary Armstrong and Keith Ison were endorsed by the Minister.
- The Council changed its Constitution to expand its Executive and membership of the Management Committee:

- The Executive would consist of the President, Vice President, Secretary, Assistant Secretary and Treasurer who would be elected at the AGM, as well as a Publicity Officer and a Research Officer appointed after the AGM
- The Management Committee would consist of the Council Executive, one representative of each Region and the representatives on the BSE. It would meet prior to each plenary meeting.
- Plenary meetings would include the Management Committee, all metropolitan principals and two additional principals from each country region.

While many principals appreciated the opportunity to be together and share experiences, concerns expressed by some members led to a review of the effectiveness of plenary meetings.

- Annual Conference (Women's College, Sydney University) passed these recommendations:
  - Council to congratulate the Federal Government on the success of its Participation and Equity Program (PEP) and on its future plans, promoting 'a good general education' rather than a vocationally-focussed emphasis in the senior years. This was outlined in the Commonwealth Schools Commission Report 'In the National Interest'.
  - Council to form a standing committee to gather and develop appropriate policies with respect to curriculum and accreditation.
  - A working party to be set up on school retention in cooperation with Met West Principals' Council.
  - DoE and the NSW Government to be asked to give secondary schools a student welfare staffing component of 0.4 plus 0.1 for each 100 students above 500 and that a position of Head Teacher Welfare be established in each high school.
  - Staff development should be school based and provided with adequate resourcing by DoE.
- Met North Regional Council presented a paper at the November plenary meeting on the 'Role of the High School Principal' which described the increasing demands on principals in managing a modern effective school. They identified that a significant number were retiring early, and others were finding that the position placed them under enormous pressure. The paper detailed many of the areas requiring increased attention by the principal. These included financial management and school canteen, staffing, student welfare, assessment and reporting, curriculum liaison with DoE, monitoring staff and professional development, supervision of teaching and ancillary staff, liaison with students, executive, teachers, parents and the community (both collective and individual), property and equipment, planning and evaluating functions and ceremonies.

### Relationships with the Department

- The DG Bob Winder foreshadowed potential critical scrutiny of all curriculum documents by opponents of Public Education who believed the content had become too permissive, open and localised. The DoE and schools would be pressured to produce evidence of the quality of the content and programs associated with student learning. In consultations with Council the DG suggested principals should be proactive in involving and informing their staff and communities about the process of curriculum decision making and the quality of teaching at their school.
- The DG advised that with PEP finishing, Federal Minister Dawkins had established the Commonwealth Advisory Board and indicated there would be no additional money provided for government schools.
- The DG told Council that there would be a review of the casual teachers' award, that there needed to be greater emphasis on personal development and student welfare, and that additional funding would be available for Joint School/TAFE promotions.
- While there were 19 new principal appointments for 1987, there were 13 schools left vacant due to a shortage of Deputy Principals seeking inspection for List 4 (promotion to Principal), e.g. in Met South West only six out of 45 DPs applied. The Council expressed concern that negatives rather than positives were accentuated in List 3 (DP) and List 4 inspections. Proposed solutions included allowing non graduate DPs to apply (not favoured by Council members), changing to an annual inspection period rather than the current biennial program of inspections and the establishment of a group of principals

to assist in the planning of professional development for List 3 and 4 candidates, to improve their readiness for promotion through quality preparation for and presentation at these inspections.

- DoE approved schools to have one school development day each semester providing the community was involved in the planning and the Regional Director approved the program.
- A computerised administrative system to be called 'OASIS' was approved for implementation in schools. The software included office management tools, general school information, student and staff management, financial and library management and system maintenance. The recommended hardware included systems with either five or 18 terminals, but no funding was to be provided.
- There was a high rejection rate by applicants for teaching positions, with one third not accepting appointment in areas they had nominated. Even though 58% of graduating students applied to DoE only 30% took up offers, leaving many vacant positions not able to be filled.
- Itinerant Teachers (Behaviour Disordered) plus other consultants were employed to assist in the integration of students with special needs into high schools.
- The DoE and Council considered the following staffing matters:
  - The Government accepted the need for teacher education scholarships to fill anticipated vacancies. 200 were offered but it was recognised that 1000 were needed.
  - Continuing problems when students dropped 2 units of study at the end of Year 11 while others took on an additional unit requiring more teaching periods. Concern was expressed that this caused some classes in Year 11 to have reduced face-to-face teaching periods, and extra staffing was needed to supervise students during their extra study periods.
  - That staff promoted/transferred during the year not be released until their replacement was available.
  - When a new school was being established, additional staff and financial resources were needed by both the new school and the school where the first student intake was hosted. Principals/Deputy Principals appointed to a new school should be relieved when necessary from their current position and claim compensatory leave if they worked in school holidays.
  - The DoE accepted that staff timetabled out of school hours be granted equivalent deduction of time from normal hours of attendance, e.g. for 3 Unit classes before and after school or for classes scheduled due to timetable clashes.
- Permanent part time work (PPT) was to be introduced in 1988, initially for an equivalent of 150 positions.

### The Teachers Federation

- The DoE and Federation set up a joint working party on 'Restrictive Work and Management Practices' to look at paying teachers' salaries by deposit into financial institutions rather than by cheque, relief for one day absences, bus supervision and a range of other matters.
- Negotiations continued between the Council and the NSWTF about the management of teachers whose efficiency was called into question. Council proposed that after two stages, identifying concern and support to overcome difficulties, a formal efficiency review should take place.
- Talks continued between DoE and NSWTF about the provision of relief for absent teachers. By December 1987 a draft policy on the 'Provision of In-School Relief' was released (*see page 6 for details of this draft policy*).

### The Study Boards

- The Board of Senior School Studies specified that there should be a minimum of four periods face-to-face teaching for 2 Unit courses, regardless of class size.
- With the appointment of Board Liaison Officers, Regional approval panels were established for Other Approved Studies and School Courses and most HSC appeals were resolved with only 10% being referred back to schools.

- Regionalisation of HSC marking in English started.
- As HSC examination results showed fewer than 1% of students gaining less than 20 marks, it was suggested schools should review their own Year 12 reporting practices.
- New syllabuses were to be developed by writing groups drawn from the syllabus committee and other appropriate teachers.

### Other Matters

- The Council was asked to nominate representatives on the 'DoE Sex-based Harassment Policy Task Force'.
- A draft document on 'Procedures to be followed in Cases of Alleged Improper Conduct of a Sexual Nature with a Student by an Employee of the NSW DoE' was released in August. Council, NSWTF and other community bodies were asked to consult on this document.
- The Public Schools Sports Association (PSSA) prepared a report on the talented child in sport, prevention of violence in sport, co-operative development of coaching qualifications, private school participation and sex discrimination in sport. Both the Association and the Council supported the Pacific School Games which were to be held in Sydney in 1988.
- The DG advised DoE would lose the court case of a boy injured in a scrum. This decision would not lead to a ban on contact sport as DoE was developing a contingency plan.
- The Ombudsman advised that the DoE could not make wearing of uniforms compulsory but accepted that the image of a school is raised by the dress and behaviour of staff and students and that most communities supported a school uniform.
- The principal at Arthur Phillip HS was assaulted by a parent, sustaining facial and neck injuries. The Council and DoE provided tangible assistance to the school and its staff.
- The DoE reported to Council that it had no option but to agree to a pilot 'Police in Schools' scheme. It involved two public, one Catholic and one non-government school.
- An additional 350 schools were included in the school security surveillance program.
- A work study report on ancillary staffing included, but did not accept, Council's recommendations. Significant changes included ancillary staffing based on enrolment bands of 50 and removal of the additional flexible hours for secondary schools.
- The Australian High Schools Principals' Association (AHSPA) Conference was held in Sydney in July and several Council members attended.
- Some difficulties were experienced with the 'Smoking in Schools' policy and the Council expressed the view that sanctions should be developed for staff who disregarded the non-smoking policy.

### Items of Interest

- Concern was expressed by Council that, in the run up to the State election in March 1988, the Opposition appeared to be targeting public schools.
- It was announced that Wilkins HS and Cremorne Girls HS would close at the end of 1987.
- Past President Nancye Harris was nominated for Life Membership of the Council.
- The DG Bob Winder announced that he would retire from the 29/4/88 due to ill health.
- Authors Brian Caldwell and Jim Spinks (Tasmania) published a book on 'Policy Making and Planning for School Effectiveness'. DoE provided 2000 copies of their video to schools.
- Beverley Beaman, a member of the Seven Hills High School ancillary staff, completed 10 years of service to the Council as Minutes Secretary for Executive and Management Committee meetings.

*Please see below for the 1987 'Draft policy on the provision of in-school relief'.*

### **Provision of in-school relief (draft policy published December 1987)**

1. This proposal will be conducted as a trial, on a “without prejudice” basis.
2. In agreeing to this trial:
  - a) The Department of Education maintains its view that, under Clause 50 of the ETS Regulation 1982, teachers must teach any class which they are called on to take; and
  - b) The NSW Teachers Federation maintains its view that teachers not take “extras”.
3. The purpose of this trial is to provide a scheme under which teacher absences in high schools are covered in the main by other teachers taking relief periods.
4. The teaching staff establishment of schools participating in the trial will be determined on the basis of the following average weekly teaching allocations (including concessions and exclusive of sport):
  - Deputy Principals - 12 periods (40 minutes)
  - Head Teachers - 21 periods
  - Teachers - 27 periodsTeacher librarians, Resource Teachers, Careers Advisers and School Counsellors will be additional to this staff establishment.
5. In the trial schools, relief periods will be allocated to cover absences of other teaching staff so that the average actual weekly teaching load, in each term, need not ordinarily exceed:
  - Deputy Principals - 14 periods
  - Head Teachers - 22 periods
  - Teachers - 2/3 of the staff on 28 periods; 1/3 of the staff on 27 periodsProvided that the teaching staff on 27 periods may be required to teach up to an average of one further relief period per week where neither relief periods nor casual relief is available to cover the absence of a teacher.
6. Staff will not ordinarily be required to take more than 2 relief periods per week.
7. Staff may nominate a preference list of those periods during which they would least like to be called on to teach relief periods, but the allocation of relief periods is ultimately a matter for the Principal, within the terms of this policy.
8. A fundamental objective of the policy is that a school’s total relief requirements for a term will fully employ the school’s inbuilt staffing provision for relief.
9. Relief periods are not periods in lieu which result from variations to school routines, e.g. school excursions.
10. Casual relief may be engaged to cover:
  - a) Teacher absences of more than one day
  - b) Attendance at in-service or other activities for which relief is approved
  - c) Special circumstances arising from a high level of teacher absences
  - d) A period when the budget for relief periods is exhausted.
11. In implementing this policy schools will be required to maintain accurate and up-to-date records of absences, allocation of relief periods and employment of casual relief teachers.
12. A participating school which fails to honour its commitments under this policy will be removed from the scheme.