

1988 – Tumultuous Times

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

Context

In March 1988 the Greiner Liberal Government came to power in NSW, with Dr Terry Metherell being appointed as Minister for Education (*see page 9 for a timeline of the ‘Metherell Years’ from 1988-1992*).

In April 1988 Dr Metherell announced two reviews and the development of a curriculum white paper. These reviews eventually resulted in the passing of the ‘NSW Education Reform Act 1990’ (*see pages 10-11 below for an overview of the events that led to this new legislation, plus the SPC History paper ‘1990 – Devolution with tighter controls’ for the key features of this new Act*).

Major Papers/Reports

- SPC Submission to the Scott Management Review – The first of Metherell’s reviews was to be a management review of all aspects of the NSW Education Portfolio, to be directed by Dr Brian Scott, a leading businessman and management consultant. The Scott Management Review commenced in June 1988. Its purpose was to provide the Minister with recommendations for (a) decentralising the administration of the Department of Education, (b) changing the structure and organisation of public schools so as to increase parental and local community participation, and (c) reforming existing NSW legislation on education and schooling.

The Council was invited to provide a submission during the early stages of the review (*see submission page 12*).

- SPC Submission to the Carrick Review – The second review announced by the Minister commenced in September 1988. It involved a 14-person committee chaired by Sir John Carrick, who at one stage had been the Federal Minister for Education. Its purpose was to (a) review schooling in NSW, (b) re-assess the previous Labor Government’s ‘Education and Public Instruction Act 1987’, and (c) provide specific recommendations for legislative change and reform to improve the quality of education in NSW schools.

Ron Hurley (Metropolitan South West) led the SPC submission writing team (*see submission page 13*).

- SPC Response to the Minister’s draft curriculum discussion paper – The curriculum white paper proposed by Dr Metherell in April 1988 resulted in the release of a draft discussion paper by the Ministry in November 1988. This paper contained 26 proposals for NSW curriculum reform including the introduction of ‘Key Learning Areas’ within the curriculum, a strengthening of the core curriculum and the provision of a ‘balanced education’ with opportunities to develop technological and vocational skills.

Council submitted a response to this draft paper early in 1989 (*see the SPC History paper ‘1989 – Confronting Change’ for further details*).

- ‘The Proposed Changes to the HSC’: Brian Loader, Met South West.
- ‘The Role of the Principal’: Graham Marr, Met North.
- ‘The Implications of Increased Numbers in the Senior School’: Bruce Bensley, Research Officer.
- ‘Possible Future Structures for NSW Government Schools’: Bruce Bensley, Research Officer.
- ‘The Riverina Principals’ Council Proposal for an Industrial Association’: Noel Beddoe, Riverina.
- ‘Survey of Increased Costs for Schools’: Peter Barry, Hunter Region.
- ‘Legal Issues raised with DoE’: SPC Executive.

Major Impacts on DoE, Schools and Principals

- Towards the end of 1987, Director-General of Education (DG) Bob Winder announced he would retire at the end of April 1988. Early in 1988 he brought his successor, Dr Gregor Ramsay (ex-Commonwealth Schools Commission), to an SPC Management Committee meeting.
- In March 1988 the Greiner Government was elected and Dr Terry Metherell was appointed Minister for Education. In the previous 12 months, as Opposition Spokesman on Education, he had visited many schools across all NSW Regions. He had met regularly with teachers and executives both informally and at staff meetings and used these opportunities to identify what he believed were areas of concern. He then compiled a number of 'Fact Sheets' which were issued by the Opposition prior to the election. In Government a 'free market' philosophy became the basis for educational decisions such as deregulation, local decisions, differences between schools and choice and diversity.
- Within days of his appointment Metherell introduced major changes, including the abolition of the Certificate of Secondary Education (proposed for implementation in 1988), the reinstatement of the School Certificate for Years 7-10 and the introduction of an aggregate within the HSC.
- DG Bob Winder, at his farewell to Council in April 1988, was thanked for his interest, understanding and support of principals and the Council. He cautioned that "change was inevitable" and urged Council to hasten slowly in reacting to these changes.
- On 30 April 1988, the day after Bob Winder retired as DG, the Minister set aside the appointment of Dr Gregor Ramsay and appointed Dr Fenton Sharpe as his replacement, initially for one year. Dr Sharpe's title changed from 'Director-General of Education' to 'Director-General of School Education'.
- New DG Dr Sharpe advised the Council that the newly appointed Senior Officers were substantive for the fixed term, i.e. not in an acting capacity. They were Deputy Director-General Brian Gillette and Assistant Directors-General Vince Delaney, John Lambert, Terry Burke and Ian Vacchini.
- In May the Council wrote to the Minister through DG Fenton Sharpe outlining the history of the SPC and its contributions since 1981 in implementing 'The Future Directions of Secondary Education'. Whilst accepting the Government's challenge to increase retention, especially in disadvantaged schools, Council expressed concern with the suggestion that secondary schools offered a second-rate program in attempting to cater for the wide range of abilities amongst those students who continued to Year 11.

The Board of Secondary Education

- The decision to remove the Certificate of Secondary Education, to reinstate the School Certificate and place an aggregate on the Higher School Certificate resulted in the Council writing to the Minister in April re accreditation and asking for consultation before further changes were announced and implemented.
- While the Council understood change was inevitable with a new government, it hoped the Minister would understand and appreciate that any proposed change that was retrospective would impact on the students currently in the middle of courses. Council believed that the aggregate should be a separate document to the HSC, otherwise it could affect employment opportunities, future study choices and be a disincentive to continuing into Years 11/12.
- With the continuation of the School Certificate and changes to the credentials to be provided at the HSC it was proposed that transcripts of courses studied from Years 9-12 would emphasise that high school education was a continuum. Whilst the Council recognised the aim of the Commonwealth and State Governments to increase retention into Years 11 and 12, it expressed concern that a minority of individual students and some disadvantaged groups might not receive recognition of their work if they left school prior to the HSC.
- In the notice for the NSWSPC July Management Committee meeting, the SPC Secretary Mary Armstrong wrote, "this agenda is open ended – who can forecast the developments of the next few weeks?" At the meeting itself, SPC President Ruth Readford reported that she had tried to express the opinions, policies and role of the Council "in keeping with past practice". She had written to the

Minister listing the SPC representatives on the Board of Secondary Education (BSE), explaining how they had been elected, and emphasised the right of the SPC to talk with the Minister about nominees for appointments before they were made. She noted that a principal appointed by the Minister to his working party could not be a representative of the Council until Council approved the appointment. A major reason for this point was that amongst committee members listed in the press it was implied that Mr Lowe (Sylvania High) was representing principals.

- By August the Council recognised that the Government had modified some of its decisions such as placing the HSC aggregate on the Statement of Results instead of on the Higher School Certificate itself, accepting the role of School Courses and Other Approved Studies (OAS) and also providing the opportunity for Council to negotiate further on curriculum matters.
- The Council's Board of Secondary Education representatives reported that the Board had to make savings of \$800,000. Whilst some essay-type questions would still be double marked this was unlikely to continue. The Government had also accepted that the Board's members were best qualified to provide advice re new syllabuses and how to maintain HSC reliability given the reduction of double marking.

Community Reaction to Government Policy

- The Council responded to a letter from the NSW Federation of P&C Associations expressing concern about the changes to student accreditation that were included in the education platform of the Coalition. Subsequently Council joined with the Teachers Federation, the Independent Teachers Association and the Federation of P&Cs in publishing an open letter to the Minister and Premier in the Sydney Morning Herald on 11th May asking for a delay in the changes, as the Coalition parties and the Minister had given a commitment to consult with interest groups on matters affecting them.
- At the Council's June Management Committee meeting, DG Fenton Sharpe set out his understanding of Council's position in relation to the making of public statements, particularly those of an industrial or political kind. He reminded Council of Section 2.1.0 of its constitution which described the relationship of Council with DoE administrators. In a formal letter to Council he subsequently wrote:
"It is my clear expectation that the Council will not make any public pronouncements which can be construed in any way as relating to political or industrial issues. Indeed, I am not at all convinced that the Council should make public statements at all but that it should accept its responsibility to provide advice to the Director-General or the appropriate Regional Director.
I can assure the Council that I will always give such advice deep and urgent consideration and where necessary will pass on the views of Council directly to the Minister and the Government. From time to time I will assist the Executive of the Council to have opportunities to speak directly to the Minister on matters of concern."
The DG had also set up the opportunity for 'genuine student leaders' in schools (SRC members and prefects) to meet and speak with the DG and Minister. He said he was shocked and shamed by student behaviour towards the Minister at some of these meetings, and said to Council that there was concern that schools might have problems in the future with student discipline.
- On 17th August 1988 over 80,000 teachers, parents and students attended 'A Day of Action' in the Sydney Domain, protesting the significant cuts in funding for school staff and educational programs.
- While Council did not officially support the 'Day of Action', many members did attend. The DG pointed out to the Council Executive that they could not position the DoE against the Government without there being repercussions on the Council's ability to work with Government.
- At Council's August Management Committee meeting, President Ruth Readford spoke of the need to:
 - acknowledge improvements such as the increased textbook subsidy, support for computer systems and increased funding for maintenance
 - recognise initiatives from the previous government on the Review of Ancillary Staffing and teacher promotion on merit

- avoid kneejerk reactions and maintain as many curriculum options and initiatives as possible, even whilst the impact of staff reductions was being felt in schools.

Concern about Council's Reaction to Government Funding Reductions

- In discussions with Council Executive, the DG advised that they should not question the Government's right to make decisions. He said that the problem "arises when the Council, as a Council, goes public in opposition to Government policy, and the DG may have to go into opposition with the Council". He was concerned that this would impact on the benefits gained from the Council's contribution to, and negotiations on, professional and management issues.
- He advised that there was a significant difference between registered industrial unions and the rights and protection afforded to individuals when speaking on behalf of a union vs. the capacity of the Council to give that protection to its members. "It is possible that I could have to discipline the chairman or spokesperson for doing something unwarranted."
- He pointed out that earlier in the year, "I deliberately organised a meeting of the Executive with the Minister to discuss the HSC in relation to your role on the Board of Secondary Education. I broke protocol by asking the Minister to meet your representatives and hope to keep doing that to ensure the Minister is hearing first-hand the issues concerning principals."
- At the Council's September Plenary Meeting a motion was passed that "The Council expresses appreciation for the opportunities provided for consultation with the Minister, and we look forward to the representation of the Council on any Committee which may be set up to evaluate community responses to the Minister's proposed Curriculum Discussion Paper."

Relationships with the Department

- Impact of increasing enrolments –
 - The increase in enrolments across all years and particularly the additional retention occurring in the senior school required 259 extra teachers to be appointed to schools.
 - New 10-week retraining courses were introduced in subject areas of short supply with DoE directly contacting potential applicants.
 - Improved induction programs were implemented for overseas trained teachers.
- Comparative Assessment for Promotion –
 - Concern was expressed by some Regions about the recently introduced Comparative Assessment procedures for promotion and the clear inconsistency created when Inspectors of Schools were interviewing candidates.
 - In February 1988, the DoE advised that there would be a continuation of the number of schools with two Deputy Principals (about six extra appointments per year). Comparative Assessment for DPs was to be done in each Region with the Director of Personnel participating to ensure comparable standards across the State.
 - For 1988 the Comparative Assessment process would also continue with 40% of promotions positions allocated to women under section 2.25 of the EEO strategy. In the targeted schools the sex balance would be considered when determining how the strategy was to be implemented.
 - The introduction of Leading Teachers was announced as a major Government initiative to improve the quality of teaching and learning in secondary schools.
 - When the Minister dismantled the EEO strategy and the Gender Equity Programs, he announced that all appointments thereafter would be made on merit rather than seniority, and that Leading Teachers were to be selected for appointment to 50 large schools in 1989. They would not necessarily be drawn from those on List 3 (i.e. those waiting for promotion to DP) and they were to take a major role in curriculum and teaching. DDG Brian Gillette later reported that there were 573 applicants, 135 of whom were outstanding. Of these 92 were interviewed, 58 considered suitable

and 53 were appointed. The panel included two business community representatives and a retired secondary principal (Past President of the Council, Nancye Harris).

- A major program was announced for 1989 to prepare participants and panel members for selection of principals, deputy principals and leading teachers. The Council identified that executive on List 3 (DP) or List 4 (Principal) who did not get to interview would need support, as they might feel that their careers had stalled.
- Changes to school organisation –
 - The DoE advised Council in April that it needed to find a \$120 million reduction in government funding and that any new initiatives would come from the reduced funding pool created by the reallocation of resources across the Department.
 - In May 1988 the Government announced possible 'Future Structures for NSW Government Schools'. They included an increased number of selective schools, specialist high schools and senior high schools. The Council responded by looking at the implications of these changes, particularly on adjacent schools and identified concerns for each, including:
 - possible drawing areas
 - criteria for student eligibility
 - monitoring of student achievement and transfer mechanisms (both in and out)
 - the curriculum and the impact on subjects within the broad learning area
 - selection of staff including principals.

This proposal involved restructuring the high school system. Council believed this would impact on those schools not reclassified and, as many students would not be able to apply for a place, the goal of 'choice and diversity' would be limited.

- The DG advised dezoning would commence in primary schools initially and in all schools within two to three years. For 1989 there would be some additional selective high schools – two each in Met West and Met South West, one in each of Met East, Met North, Hunter and the Illawarra and that dezoning would apply to all selective schools.
- There would be a senior high school created in Met West and a technical high school model introduced, which would be based on the relationship between East Hills Boys High School, East Hills Girls High School and Hawker De Havilland, with companies supplying significant resources.
- Staffing –
 - Principals were concerned about the impact of the reduction in teacher numbers for 1989. The DG believed that with goodwill from everyone, the reductions would be dealt with without major change and that increased numbers in core classes in Years 7-10 would absorb some of the impact. The DG made a commitment to Council that no school would lose more than three teachers in 1989.
 - Lengthy discussion was held at both the SPC November Management Meeting and Plenary Meeting about problems being encountered by principals in managing their school's curriculum, given the reduction occurring in their staffing allocation.
 - Concern was expressed at the implication of the new staffing formula on schools' rooming entitlements and eligibility for, or removal of, demountable classrooms.
 - Teachers who turned 60 were sent a letter asking them to indicate whether they planned to retire or not. The Council expressed concern at this initiative and the DG responded, "We will not be asking people to leave where there are problems. From the end of 1989 people will be aware of expectations and it will only be on rare occasions that they will be able to stay within the service."
 - The DG issued a memo in October explaining in detail new regulations concerning the need to take Long Service Leave (LSL) and Leave Without Pay (LWOP) in blocks to reduce their impact on students. For LWOP the requirement was to take six months minimum, whilst the DG was prepared to approve LSL if it was not unreasonable, e.g. taking 3-4 weeks in association with school holidays for overseas travel at five-year intervals.

- Curriculum choices for 1989 –
 - Minister Terry Metherell was appalled to discover some junior classes had as few as 22 students. He had stated “no class need exceed 30”, but it appeared he did not realise the implications when enrolments were not in exact multiples of 30!
 - Concerns were expressed by Council on the Minister’s media announcement that no school needed to reduce their elective choices due to reduced staffing and that Departmental Inspectors would show schools how to organise their curriculum to avoid this. Whilst Inspectors monitored school organisation twice a year, it was pointed out by Council there was a need to know student numbers and staffing allocations before finalising elective subjects, as they varied from year to year according to student choice and staffing availability in each subject area.
 - Council was concerned that there was still misunderstanding between the Council and DoE/Ministry about the complexity of ‘class sizes’ and ‘class organisation’ where certain student groups could be seriously disadvantaged by the proposed staffing constraints.
 - The DG wrote to Council in relation to the Minister’s statements on elective subjects and class sizes. He said he was conscious that the Minister understand that it is normal practice for the school’s electives to be reviewed each year and in some instances to be subsequently varied for legitimate reasons. In his briefing note to the Minister, he provided the following advice:
 “Normal curriculum review: Each year schools review subject offerings in the light of student needs and resource provision. Thus, some courses might be dropped, and others added to the curriculum. My intention is that Inspectors of Schools would be available in an advisory capacity for schools, and where schools have a particular problem resulting from staff reductions, Inspectors should then be in a position to make a judgement on school submissions for supplementation.”
 - The DG announced that in the reallocation of resources across the Department there would be a considerable increase in funding for staff development in 1988-89. Following the 1987 review the following program areas had been identified for additional support: Computer Education, Community Awareness, Curriculum Implementation, Student Welfare, Effective Teaching and Classroom Practices, Educational Leadership, Whole School Development, Administrative Skills, Financial Management, Supervisor Development, and Senior and Middle Management.
- Ancillary staffing –
 - Where a school had two General Assistants (GA) one had to leave. The outdoor GA would still be concerned with grounds, heavy carrying, maintenance etc but a range of duties now carried out by the indoors GA would have to be done by School Assistants. The DoE established the ‘School Assistant’ classification to provide flexibility for schools, with principals deciding how staff were to be used within the ‘statement of duties’.
 - In terms of cuts to ancillary staff there were industrial rules about who would be taken out or stay. The Council expressed concern that schools would not have a say in who would be retained.
 - The reduction in Home Science Assistant hours was to be ameliorated by some duties being taken over by cleaning staff. A work study, looking at the role of Clerical Assistants Library, showed that the extra hours were not being used effectively and the NSW Public Service Association (PSA) argued that Clerical Assistants should not be involved in supervision when teachers were not present.
 - The Council pointed out that not all ancillary staff had flexible qualifications, but principals were told they would be responsible for developing the skills of staff who could then work across many areas, despite their previous classification.

Industrial Issues

- The Meadowbank Agreement –
 The Government referred this matter to the Industrial Commission on the basis that the Teachers Federation acknowledged, in the 4% salaries agreement, that teachers would be responsible for taking extras after HSC students left school. However, due to lack of evidence on the matter, Justice Macken

was not prepared to rule that the termination of the Meadowbank agreement was part of that wage rise. He did say however that “if the principal decides that a teacher should do a particular duty and the teacher, in his professional judgement, believed some other duty should be done, the teacher has the right to decide.”

- The NSW Industrial Commission –
 - Concern was expressed that principals needed a clear statement explaining the ‘4% Second Tier salary agreement’ so they knew what was expected of schools and teachers and the requirements that were being placed on principals.
 - Justice Cahill, in his decision to support the government and the DoE, required that DoE planning proceed as it was no more than simply reiterating the right of the employer to state conditions under which work was to be done.
 - The major case covering the 27/28 teaching periods load and the extras issues was still before the bench. The judgement was not due to be handed down until the 1/12/88.
- Employment of casuals –
 - Principals were not authorised to employ casuals when there were teachers available to take extra periods. Council was told that DoE was planning strategies for those who refused to do extras. As late as November DoE proposed that any teacher who refused to take a designated extra period would be declared no longer on duty that day and would not be paid for the day. The Council strongly advised DoE to rethink this plan as it had significant industrial implications and would impact on the ability of principals to lead schools and negotiate with staff on educational issues.
 - Council pointed out that any ‘within-school’ pool of extras would not always be available to cover the pattern of periods required if a particular teacher were absent. The principal might need to employ a casual when there were still extra periods available on that day.
 - The DG advised there was a good deal of judgement and integrity required by principals and it was not possible to set regulations or legislate to cover every set of circumstances. The greatest concern for DoE were the children who were at school and were not taught nor even supervised.

The Council’s reaction was that even if in the long run teachers agreed to take these extras, there should be no doubt some classes would have supervision but not teaching. The DG replied that the Departmental requirement was that they were “taught”.

Formation of a Principals’ Industrial Organisation

In the Riverina Region, principals of high schools and central schools formed a new organisation ‘The Riverina Association of High School Principals’. They believed that their interests had not been well protected in recent years by the Teachers Federation and believed this separate body would give them the opportunity to participate in industrial and work-related matters. In part it was based on their concerns that:

- principal’s workloads had increased significantly
- the role of principals had become more complex and had placed the principal’s responsibilities in conflict with the interests of teaching staff from time to time
- the new ancillary staffing arrangement had not recognised the changing role of the principal
- financial rewards had not increased along with the demands on principals
- the policies and practices of the Teachers Federation did not reflect a sympathy for the position of the principal, and disquiet was felt with some aspects of the relationship between principals and the DoE.

As the proposal was outside the Council’s constitution it was not discussed by the SPC Management Committee and the idea was not taken up in other Regions.

Council's Paper on 'The Role of the Principal'

Graham Marr (Metropolitan North) presented a paper to Council on the complex responsibilities of principals. Subsequently at the July State Conference (held in conjunction with the AHSPA National Conference at the Metropole Convention Centre, Cremorne), several resolutions were passed with a call for:

- opportunities for collegiate interaction among principals, fostered by DoE
- relief from routine administrative processes by introducing administration computer hardware and software, standardising filing processes and providing a bursar to each high school
- using both serving and recently retired principals for consultation with principals, and for the design and implementation of structured induction and inservice courses.
- a clear statement being provided on the role and responsibilities of each category of teaching (including principals) and ancillary staff
- improved procedures being adopted for the selection of ancillary staff and for dealing with unsatisfactory teachers and ancillary staff.

Council Executive were urged to take the resolutions to the Senior Officers of the DoE as soon as possible.

Other Matters

- The smoking ban in schools was deferred until Term 3 due to concern about how it would be enforced.
- Induction and development programs for new principals were conducted at Regional level.
- A report was begun on single-sex classes.
- There was continued concern about the School Monitoring Process, with Regions setting different priorities to be implemented in full by all their schools. The Council gained agreement that monitoring documents would be provided in advance to schools.
- In an amendment to the Education and Public Instruction Bill 1987, the power to expel students was removed from the Minister and placed with the DG and his delegates, the Regional Directors.
- The creation of School Councils was to be actively promoted by the government, the DG and DoE. It was to be based on the model proposed by Bob Winder, the previous DG.

Items of Interest

- Contracts were let for the supply of computers and software as an initiative to introduce Computer Education through the curriculum.
- The July Australian High School Principals' Association (AHSPA) National Conference at Cremorne (held in conjunction with the Council's own Annual Conference) was supported by DoE with a contribution of \$50,000. The conference workshops were on preparation of teachers for assessment, teaching skills analysis, supervision of staff, financial management and computers in school administration.
- Council members unanimously requested a new DoE Handbook of rules and regulations be issued, as none had been received since 1981. New schools did not have one and schools with a Handbook were finding "so many amendments and additions that its use was both difficult and unreliable".

Please see below for these appendices:

- ❖ *The Metherell Years - A timeline of events from 1988-1992 (page 9)*
- ❖ *Policies, reviews and actions leading to 'The Education Reform Act 1990' (pages 10-11)*
- ❖ *Submission from Council to the Scott Management Review (page 12)*
- ❖ *Submission from Council to the Carrick Review on 'Improving the Quality of Education in NSW Schools' (page 13)*

'The Metherell Years' – A timeline of key events from 1988-1992

March 1988	<p>March 17: The NSW Coalition Liberal/National Party elected on a reform agenda. Dr Terry Metherell, following five years as Shadow Minister, appointed Minister for Education and Youth Affairs. He had already detailed the extent of proposed educational reforms in pre-election Fact Sheets.</p> <p>Reforms included a complete review of DoE, integration of children with special needs into mainstream classrooms, revision of how curriculum was developed, legislation to enable home schooling, and the establishment of local school councils.</p>
April 1988	<p>Metherell's immediate follow-through on reform surprised many senior educationalists and bureaucrats in the DoE. To ease the path of reform he announced the establishment of two external reviews (Scott and Carrick) and instructed the Ministry to prepare a Curriculum White Paper. He increased funding for Aboriginal, rural, special, multicultural and technology education programs, and for school maintenance and textbook allowances in government schools. Whilst welcomed, unrest followed as the expenditure was funded from major cuts to existing budgets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Axing of 2400 teaching positions and 800 office positions • Curriculum coming under the central control of the Minister • Changing the HSC and increasing class sizes • Dismantling EEO and gender equity programs • Eliminating free public transport for school students.
29 April 1988	DG Bob Winder retired. Minister Cavalier had announced his replacement would be Gregor Ramsay (Australian Schools Commission), but his appointment was set aside by Metherell.
30 April 1988	Dr Fenton Sharpe appointed DG for one year initially.
June 1988	Dr Brian Scott began a management review of the Department of Education with the aim of decentralising the administration of DoE, recommending changes to the structure and organisation of state schools so as to increase parental and local community involvement, and recommending changes to existing NSW Education legislation.
17 August 1988	Over 80,000 teachers, parents and students held a 'Day of Action' in the Sydney Domain to reject the Greiner/Metherell "attack on public education". Students from at least 100 schools took part. Mosman High School and North Sydney Boys High School led the schools.
September 1988	Sir John Carrick commissioned to review schooling in NSW, to re-assess Labor's 'Education and Public Instruction Act 1987' and to make specific recommendations as to appropriate legislative reform to improve the quality of education in NSW schools.
November 1988	The Ministry issued their curriculum discussion paper and called for public comment. Almost 1000 submissions came from individuals, community groups and organisations, including all key educational interest groups.
1989	<p>The two Ministerial Reviews became major avenues for the expression of concern, and the NSW Government's radical devolution agenda was at the heart of the struggle between the Teachers Federation and the Government from 1988-1992.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scott released his report 'Schools Renewal' in June 1989, recommending radical reform of management in school education over the next five years. The Government accepted the thrust of the recommendations almost immediately, and an Implementation Task Force began work under the leadership of the soon-reappointed Director-General, Dr Fenton Sharpe. • 'The Report of the Committee of Review of New South Wales Schools: Summary of Conclusions and Recommendations' (The Carrick Report) was released in September 1989. It provided a comprehensive review involving 850 submissions and provided a draft revised Act. In most aspects the Carrick Report was congruent with the Scott Report. • In November 1989, the Ministry released 'Excellence and Equity - NSW Curriculum Reform', a detailed K-12 curriculum blueprint designed to underpin the work of the Board of Studies.
1990	Introduction of 'The Education Reform Act (1990)' reflected the key directions of the Carrick Report.
October 1991	Dr Terry Metherell resigned from the Liberal Party and remained in the NSW Parliament as an Independent.
10 April 1992	Dr Metherell resigned from Parliament.

Policies, reviews and actions leading up to ‘The Education Reform Act 1990’

Dr Terry Metherell’s program of reform of the NSW education system resulted in the ‘Education Reform Act 1990 (NSW)’ (now the ‘Education Act 1990’).

Previously NSW school education had been provided under a law developed by Henry Parkes and William Wilkins in their ‘Public Instruction Act 1880 (NSW)’. This 19th Century Act had been amended numerous times, the last being in 1987. Despite these amendments however, the Act continued to impose a structure grounded in a view of society, schooling, parents and the role of the state that reflected 19th Century colonial thinking (Riordan & Weller 2000).

On the significance of this new Act, Metherell said in early 1990, “Chifley in his time was thought of as somewhat of an ogre, but now when we look back on Ben Chifley we reflect upon his statesmanship. People will eventually thank me for these reforms – this is a blueprint for education into the 21st Century” (The Sunday Telegraph, 1 April 1990).

The reforms

Metherell’s reform agenda was “breath-taking in its scope” (Riordan & Weller 2000). It included a complete review of the Department of Education, the integration of children with special needs into mainstream classrooms, revision of the practice through which school curriculum was developed, legislation to enable home schooling, and the establishment of local school councils. It also encouraged diversity amongst public schools and sought to correct the decades of previous neglect of school buildings (Riordan & Weller 2000).

However, the reforms were to be implemented within the constraints of the overarching economic agenda of the government. This soon resulted in industrial upheaval as teachers reacted angrily to the budget cuts needed to finance this reform agenda. To smooth the implementation of the intended reforms, Metherell commissioned two reviews.

The two reviews – Scott and Carrick

The first, commissioned in June 1988 and directed by Dr Brian Scott, involved a management review of all aspects of the NSW Education Portfolio. The final report was to include recommendations for decentralising the administration of the Department of Education, changing the structure and organisation of schools so as to increase parental and local community participation, and legislative reform proposals (B. Scott 1989: iii).

The second, commissioned in September 1988 was a 14-person committee chaired by the Honourable Sir John Carrick. This review incorporated a comprehensive process of community consultation and information gathering in a bid to foster community support for reform (Riordan & Weller 2000). Included in the brief were requirements to re-assess the former Labor Government’s ‘Education and Public Instruction Act 1987’ and to provide recommendations for improving the quality of education in NSW schools (New South Wales Department of School Education 1990).

Immediate impact on DoE and schools

In April 1988 Metherell began reallocating resources. He increased spending on several public education programs including Aboriginal education, rural education, special education and multicultural education (Nation 2001). He also increased funding for technology, school maintenance and textbook allowances in government schools. In the private sector, subsidies were also increased from 20 to 25 per cent of the cost of a student in a government school (Sharpe 1992 as cited in Nation 2001: 58).

While the increased funding was welcomed, throughout the rest of the Education portfolio budget cuts were implemented to fund the programs (Nation 2001). 2,300 teaching positions were eliminated and, consequently, teacher/student ratios were increased (Sharpe 1992 as cited in Nation 2001: 57). Similar proportional cuts were made to the ancillary staffing in schools (Sharpe 1992 as cited in Nation 2001: 57) which meant teachers would have to do more of their own administrative tasks.

Budget cuts were also made through a major restructuring of the NSW DSE (now DoE). Operational structures and administrative functions were devolved down to regions, schools, principals and school councils, resulting in the loss of 1,700 public service positions within the Department (Sharpe 1992 as cited in Nation 2001: 57). In essence, these staffing cuts meant the core functions of the Department were reduced to policy development, corporate planning and educational auditing by a small central executive (Willis 1991).

One key term of reference for Scott was to examine ways in which cost efficiencies could be implemented (B. Scott 1989), thus further budget cuts were imminent once the review was completed.

Continued over page

Continued from previous page

Meanwhile the Carrick Committee conducted their own comprehensive inquiry. Key recommendations included the introduction of a new Education Act, the replacement of the Board of Secondary Education with a new Board of Studies, minimum curriculum requirements in six Learning Areas, and the replacement of the Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs with a new Office of Education and Youth Affairs.

Given that Metherell commissioned these reviews himself, it was not surprising that the findings in their final reports (Carrick 1989 and Scott 1990) supported the new Government policies that were, to a large extent, already being implemented (NSW DSE 1990) before 'The Education Reform Act 1990' was enacted. Their recommendations were substantially embodied in the Act, which was described subsequently as 'the most significant education legislation in New South Wales in the 20th Century'.

In the late 1980s, prior to the reforms, differentiation in the public secondary school system in NSW was modest. In total, there were 370 traditional comprehensive secondary schools (ABS 1988) and only 11 selective secondary schools, including four agriculture selective schools (Esson et al. 2002: 124). Between 1988 and 1994, under a Liberal Government, the number of non-comprehensive public secondary schools had increased to 83 schools (NSW MEYA 1994), representing 22 per cent of all public secondary schools. While most of this growth was accounted for by an increase in the number of specialist schools, the number of academic selective schools also doubled over this period.

The controversial environment created by two years of extensive and radical changes after the election of the Greiner Government in 1988, together with widespread and intensive public consultations surrounding three direction-setting reviews, ensured a heightened public interest in the passage of the new Bill. All major educational stakeholders lobbied fiercely, especially as the Bill's passage through the Legislative Council was by no means certain. The parliamentary debates were clear evidence of the community's recognition of the significance of the Bill regarding the key issues facing NSW education at a time of challenging economic, technological, social and organisational changes.

[A major source document for this information has been: 'The Reformation of Education in NSW – The 1990 Education Reform Act' by Geoffrey Riordan and Sam Weller, School of Education, Macquarie University – a paper presented at the Australian Association for Research in Education (AARE) Conference December 4-7, 2000.]

NSWSPC Submission to the Scott Management Review, 28th October 1988

Formal education takes place at the point of contact between pupil and teacher. The administration of education exists only to improve the quality and efficiency of that contact. Unless the system of administration and its operation has a measurable and positive effect at this point, it becomes irrelevant or obstructive.

Council currently accepts the system of Centre, Regions and Schools as the basis for administration, but emphasises that changes in administration, by themselves, will not produce better education. The quality of education is directly proportional to the quality of teachers in the system:

- Efficiency depends upon the competence and commitment of teachers
- Commitment to education is dependent upon community recognition of each teacher's importance and consequent provision of appropriate individual, professional and financial rewards.

The Centre

- The Centre and sections headed by Directors and Assistant Directors in recent years has grown considerably without a corresponding increase in the services available to teachers, or improvements in the quality of education offered in government schools.
- Federal and State funding of 'initiatives' to which the system must respond should be implemented through such bodies as the Board of Secondary Education so that they are obligatory on all schools, both government and non-government.
- There is growing duplication and resulting confusion where areas of responsibility (e.g. Properties, Personnel and Services) are shared by Functional and Regional Directorates.
- A lack of communication between the Centre and schools diminishes the Centre's authority and makes Regions reprocessing areas for central decisions. Modern communication ('online' computers and fax) could help many administrative tasks (leave, casual relief records etc) be handled directly by the Centre.
- The Teachers Handbook revision still has not been completed. If supplied on disk it could be immediately updated by schools, reducing administrative duplication through the chain of Centre, Region and Schools.

The Regions

- The Regional Director and key staff should be school-oriented rather than administration-centred. Regions should help coordinate and free the Inspectorate for advisory and supervisory functions in schools by reducing their unrelated administrative tasks.
- There should be no need for Regions to develop their own 'special initiatives'.
- Inspectors should spend most of their time within schools in their guidance role and to give recognition to the work and achievements of all staff, not just on the occasions when they seek formal assessment.

The School

- To meet children's rights to have educational opportunities that satisfy their own and their communities' needs and aspirations, schools need greater autonomy, authority and control of financial resources.
- To meet these responsibilities Principals will need a Deputy Principal who is an educational leader who accepts responsibility for the school in the Principal's absence and is supported by two Leading Teachers for Administration and Staff Development.
- Head Teachers should be appointed based on the total number of staff in the school in the ratio of one for every four non-executive staff, and the areas of expertise of Head Teachers required should be determined by the school, with changes made only when a vacancy occurs.
- Executive selection procedures should be comprehensive, consistent and fair to all involved.
- Executives, excluding the Principal and Deputy Principal (in a large school), should have some teaching requirement to keep them in touch with the classroom.
- Schools need freedom to utilise resources, providing requirements and accountability are met. There will be a need to retain the present Inspectorate, or some equivalent structure, in order for the Government to monitor schools.
- Each school will need a bursar, which could be filled by training present ancillary staff.

The roles of the Centre should be broad policymaking and administration. Regions should be supportive and advisory and schools should be given greater autonomy and flexibility to satisfy their community's needs.

NSWSPC Submission to the Carrick Review on 'Improving the Quality of Education in NSW Schools', 16th December 1988

Education and Public Instruction Act – Registration by the Board should be both required and publicly recorded. All state and non-state schools should be subject to the same registration requirements and procedures. The registration should detail Teacher Qualifications, Supervision Practices, Minimal Curriculum Requirements, Financial Accountability and Health, Safety and Building Requirements.

- Parents should still be required by law to send their children to school.
- Government support for non-state schools does not guarantee freedom of choice, as many in the community cannot afford non-state school fees no matter what state subsidy exists.
- The present relationship between the Board and the DoE is strongly recommended, providing the Board's identity remains clear.
- Education is a labour-intensive service industry with long term outcomes and it should not be appraised on short term criteria alone.
- Students in state schools can be placed at a disadvantage by regulatory systems not applying to non-state schools or by discriminatory funding. Compounding elements (e.g. less experienced staff, inability to raise funds from parent contributions or supplementary sources, inadequate buildings and maintenance, and extensive welfare support requirements) must be compensated for to achieve greater social justice. Ongoing support, particularly in staff supplementation, needs to be maintained and increased.
- The State System must accept all students. Staffing must adequately provide for the full range of compulsory and optional experiences suited to the needs, interests and abilities of its community. The curriculum must encompass traditional subjects, as well as basic skills for surviving in our age and for enjoying the whole of life. It must combine these elements in a delicate balance without excessive concentration on one aspect, at the expense of others, or in response to special interest group demands.

Effective Teaching – Schools are centres of learning and impediments to this must be removed; excellence in teaching rewarded; career advancement recognised; inefficient teachers assisted to improve or encouraged to leave the service; all levels of the service to undergo professional retraining and review. Principals to be accountable for more direct control over staff performance (current scheme cumbersome and ineffective); safeguards against unfair assessment must be retained. Disruptive students who detract from the opportunity of others to learn must be dealt with more speedily and effectively with increased counselling staff.

Community participation – The concept of School Councils is valuable and should be encouraged but not forced on school communities against their will.

Curriculum – To attract students to stay on after the mandatory leaving age largely depends on relevant course offerings, e.g. increased joint TAFE/school courses, combined work and school etc. HSC subjects should have parity of esteem, credentialing recognition and OAS subject status.

Course/Career Advice – Students need appropriate advice on course and career options, joint programs and longer work experience is beneficial and recognition of courses undertaken should be extended to Year 9 students.

Participation of Students – Behaviour codes, conduct rewards and participation dealing with real issues affecting students all help develop self-discipline, self-regulation and responsibility to the school. This is the strongest argument for the local co-educational comprehensive secondary school, which should remain as the basis of our secondary education system.

School Ethos – For state schools to offer as desirable educational alternatives, they must be perceived by students, parents, staff and the community as valuable places of learning. The appreciation of quality derives from the school's ethos and the belief of all associated with it of its virtue and excellence. Promotion of school achievements in the local community, recognition of staff achievement, regular programs of educational audit conducted by an independent authority with published school outcomes would all verify performance.

Where a school is perceived as falling short of acceptable standards, sufficient resources both human and material would have to be applied to significantly enhance its performance and image.