CHAPTER 7

COURSES AVAILABLE

Introduction

7.1 The range and variety of courses available to students in Years 11 and 12 attracted considerable comment in submissions to the Inquiry. Many argued that the nature of the courses available has a significant bearing on whether young people stay on to Year 12. Others disputed this view and saw the type of courses available as merely responding to the needs of students in a general climate of increasing retention.

7.2 There was a common thread of agreement, however, that the type of courses offered in the senior secondary years must change to be more relevant to the needs of the large number of students who want to complete a full secondary education but who are not aiming for higher education.

Traditional Courses/New Needs

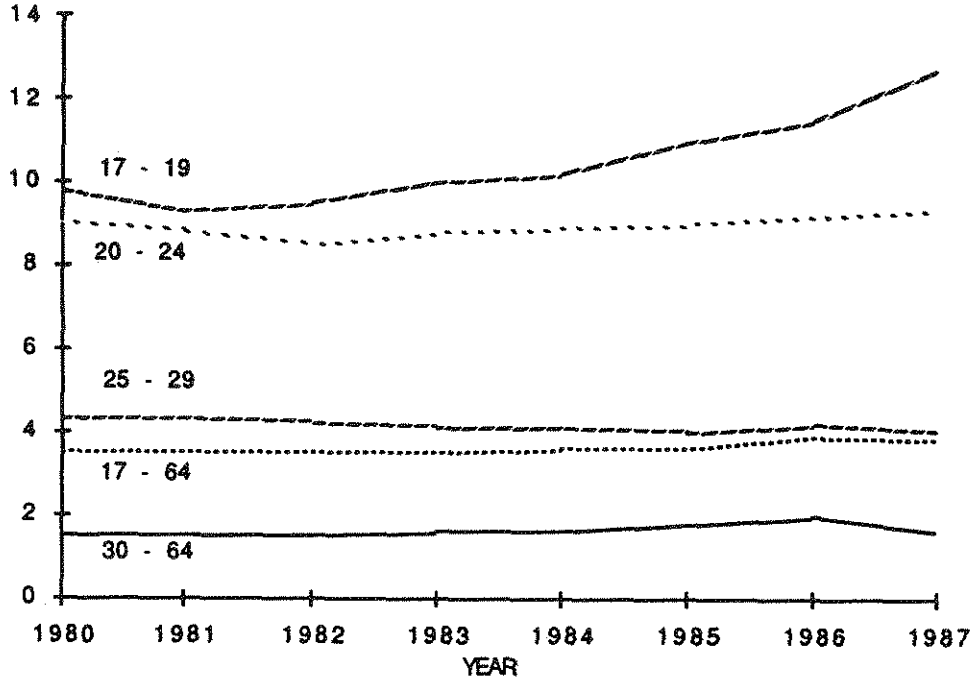
Preparation for Higher Education

7.3 The traditional purpose of the senior secondary years has been to prepare young people for higher education. This has meant that schools have provided courses in subject areas considered appropriate for young people proceeding to further study. It has also influenced teaching methods and encouraged particular forms of assessment aimed at helping universities and colleges of advanced education select those most likely to succeed in further studies.

7.4 It is a national economic imperative that more young people go on to higher education. The senior secondary years have, therefore, a legitimate and undiminished role in preparing young people for further studies. As the following graph demonstrates, there has been a significant increase in the number of young people participating in higher education since the early 1980s.

FIGURE 2

PARTICIPATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION* FOR SELECTED AGE GROUPS, 1980-1987 (Percent)



* Universities or colleges of advanced education.
Source: DEET, *Taking Part – Education Participation in the 1980s*, Canberra, 1988, p.19.

7.5 The figures also indicate, however, that Years 11 and 12 are no longer the exclusive domain of those proceeding to higher education. At present, only about 40% of Year 12 students move directly from school to higher education.[1] A clear majority of young people in Years 11 and 12 are not bound for either universities or colleges of advanced education. If schools are to provide adequately for these students they must change their focus. The reality is that Years 11 and 12 now have a new educational purpose:

[1]Commonwealth Tertiary Education Commission, *Report for 1988-90 Triennium*, Volume 1, Part 2, Canberra, 1987, p.136. NOTE: A further 20% of school leavers proceed straight to TAFE institutions, although most Year 12 leavers in TAFE study only part-time (from DEET, *School Leavers*, Eighth Edition, 1987, p.14)

> ... [senior secondary] schooling prepares students for adult participation in society and therefore should provide the skills, understandings and knowledge necessary to ensure the student is competent to make the transition from school to the workforce and adult life.[2]

Preparation for Life

7.6 The priority that many students now place on Years 11 and 12 is clear – they want the senior secondary years to help them get a job. This view was frequently put to the Committee in its discussions with students and accords with the results of a recent survey of students which found that students felt it was important that the subjects available in Years 11 and 12 ought to be more relevant, interesting and work-related.[3]

7.7 The Committee agrees with the many submissions that say the senior secondary years should not provide job training at the expense of a general education. The widespread introduction of vocationally specific training courses would:

> ... limit a student's post-secondary options, deny the right to a broad general education and expect schools to assume the employer's responsibilities of training in job specific work skills.[4]

7.8 Nevertheless, young people are increasingly recognising the link between education and employment and it is important that the courses available at school have a practical orientation.

7.9 The point was made in *The Challenge of Retention* that giving courses a more practical orientation can improve the learning experience for young people in all courses. Making courses relevant to the future needs of young people does not necessarily jeopardise the intellectual integrity of what schools offer. For example, a practical orientation for courses like physics and mathematics can be just as valuable for young people aiming to get into medicine or engineering, as it is for students whose main interest is courses that are traditionally deemed to be 'vocational'.

7.10 Giving courses a practical orientation can also be of great value for young people who have experienced little success in learning. During the Inquiry the Committee met with students and teachers involved in the Alternative Upper Schools program at Morley Senior High School in Perth, Western Australia. This program provides students with a range of practical course options as alternatives to the traditional course offerings. One teacher expressed the view that:

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[2]DEET, Submission, p.18.
[3]ANOP, *A Survey of Community Attitudes to Commonwealth Employment, Education and Training Policies and Programs*, p.55.
[4]South Australian Independent Schools Board Inc., Submission, p.4.

> ... the practical orientation of the course enables students to succeed and can give them the confidence to attempt some more 'difficult' subjects in which they would not otherwise have enrolled.[5]

A Range of Courses

7.11 In recognition of the need to provide for all young people in Years 11 and 12, not just those bound for higher studies, all education systems have developed a range of courses in the senior secondary years. The courses currently available in the various States have different names but, as the following table shows, they are of similar types.

[5]NOTE: A similar assessment was also made by teachers involved in the Technical Year 12 (T12) course at St Arnauds High School in rural Victoria.

TABLE 8

SENIOR SECONDARY COURSE STRUCTURES – A GENERAL PICTURE

STATE	TERTIARY ENTRANCE COURSES	NON-TERTIARY COURSES	PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT OR APPLIED STUDIES COURSES
Australian Capital Territory	Tertiary (T) Courses	Accredited (A) Courses	Registered (R) Courses
New South Wales	Board Courses	Other Approved Studies	–
Queensland	Board Subjects	Board Registered School Subjects	School Subjects
South Australia/Northern Territory	Public Examined Subjects (PES)	School Assessed Subjects (SAS)[1]	Registered Subjects
Tasmania[2]	Level III	Level II[3]	–
Victoria[2,4]	Group 1	Group 2[1]	–
Western Australia	Tertiary Entrance Subjects (TES)	Non-tertiary Entrance (non-TE) Accredited Courses	Registered Courses

NOTES:

1. Some universities and most colleges of advanced education in South Australia and Victoria accept SAS and Group 2 courses as contributing to a student's tertiary entrance score. For example, the Victorian Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC), a Group 2 study structure, is accepted by many tertiary institutions.

2. Tasmania and Victoria are in the process of restructuring the courses available in Years 11 and 12.

3. In Tasmania, Level II courses may contribute, to a limited extent, to a student's tertiary entrance score.

4. In Victoria, two alternative course structures are presently available to senior secondary students:

   (a) Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP) – which is largely TAFE based; and

   (b) Technical Year 12 (T12) – a practical or 'vocational' program.

Most institutions recognise TOP and T12 in some way, although they may be discounted in relation to Group 1 and 2 courses. (Other alternative courses or programs brought to the Committee's attention are: Employment (E) courses in the Australian Capital Territory and the Alternative Upper Schools Program in Western Australia.)

Sources: B Shadwick, B Williams and G Withers (for DEET), *Prerequisites and the Curriculum*, Canberra, 1988; *The Challenge of Retention*, pp.49-50; and submissions from the States.

7.12 Each type of course is intended to provide for a particular group of students. For example, in Queensland, Board Subjects are intended mainly for students who are seeking to qualify for higher education, while School Subjects (of both the Board Registered and Applied Studies type) are designed primarily for those students who are not considering tertiary studies.

7.13 The Committee supports the efforts that have been made to diversify the courses available in Years 11 and 12. The introduction of non-tertiary courses and applied studies courses has given many students, who formerly may have been disenchanted with school, a pathway to achievement and the opportunity to improve their job prospects or options for further study.

7.14 Although progress has been made in redressing the imbalance between tertiary and non-tertiary courses a great deal remains to be done. Many teachers and students with whom the Committee met claimed that the present range of courses available in Years 11 and 12 is not broad enough to cater adequately for the interests, needs and abilities of all young people and, therefore, that the talents of a great many young people continue to be wasted. In an honest appraisal the Western Australian Government notes that:

> It is fair to say that currently the balance between the general and vocational subjects is skewed in favour of general subjects ... the curriculum very much reflects the generalist/academic tradition with minimal vocational orientation at present.[6]

7.15 During the Inquiry a number of suggestions were made about ways of improving the range and relevance of courses available in Years 11 and 12. Most of these suggestions refer to strategies that have been successfully developed and implemented in particular areas or States. The following section considers some of these strategies and looks at whether they should be adopted more widely.

Successful Strategies

School-based Course Development

7.16 A significant element of the diversification of courses that has occurred to date has been the involvement of individual teachers and schools in the development of courses.

> School-based responsibility for curriculum development has played a key role in enabling schools to react quickly to changing circumstances and the needs of students by making adjustments to the curriculum offerings.[7]

7.17 The adaptability and responsiveness that school-based course development allows is demonstrated in the ACT, where:

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[6]Western Australian Government, Supplementary Submission, p.8.
[7]ACT Schools Authority, Submission, p.3.

> ... Computing Studies [has been taught] since 1977 while other ... [States] systems are today still contemplating its introduction. The Information Management course, that covers such topics as keyboarding, spread sheets, data bases and desktop publishing was able to be conceived, developed [by teaching staff] and accredited [by the Schools Authority] within twelve months, a time frame that could not be contemplated elsewhere.[8]

7.18 As well as allowing schools to provide courses that are relevant to students' future needs, it is argued that school-based course development can encourage more commitment among teachers and thus higher quality teaching. This is because those who design a particular course are also involved in the teaching of that course.[9]

7.19 There were consistent comments from teachers and students with whom the Committee met that school-designed courses have grown in popularity and have encouraged more young people to stay on. One particularly successful example often referred to was the Victorian Schools Year 12 and Tertiary Entrance Certificate (STC) course. In the last three years, enrolments in Group 1 tertiary courses have increased by 15% compared with an increase of 134% in school-based Group 2 courses. STC is seen by many to be the key variable in encouraging increased enrolment in Group 2 courses.[10] STC, which incorporates both school-based course development and school-based assessment, was devised in the mid-1970s by teachers who believed that the traditional focus in Year 12 on competition for tertiary entrance was failing to meet the educational needs of large numbers of students:

> the existing HSC [Higher School Certificate] was felt to be narrow, exclusive and discriminatory, particularly on grounds of gender, class and ethnicty.[11]

7.20 There is mounting evidence that STC is overcoming barriers to participation and providing challenging and worthwhile education for a growing number of students previously under-represented in the final years of school.[12]

7.21 The success of both the ACT's system of school-designed courses and the Victorian STC course structure demonstrates that there is considerable merit in allowing schools, which are in the best position to judge students' needs, to be involved in the process of developing courses to meet these needs.

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[8]M Lee, Submission, p.6.
[9]ACT Schools Authority, op. cit., p.4.
[10]See *The Challenge of Retention*, p.53.
[11]M Freeman and J Anwyl, 'The STC Course – An Overview', pp.27-28 in R Toomey (ed), *Passages from Secondary School to Higher Education, Australian Education Review: No. 25*, ACER, 1987.
[12]ibid., p.26. See also D Colk, Submission; P Jonas, Submission and M Batten, various Research Monographs prepared under the auspices of the Australian Council for Education Research.

School-TAFE Links

7.22 Another approach taken by schools in response to the demand for courses of a more practical nature has been to offer senior secondary students access to TAFE courses in their final years at school. All States have policies on joint school-TAFE links. For example, in New South Wales, the Joint Secondary Schools-TAFE program has been running in government schools since 1985. The scheme is designed to offer Year 11 and 12 students courses not otherwise available at school. The subjects studied are usually at the certificate or diploma level in business, agriculture, the hospitality industry, electronics, mechanics, computers and a range of trade courses. In 1989 funding approval has been given for:

> four hundred and seventy three joint courses involving some 9,840 students from 312 secondary schools clustering with 102 College of TAFE ...[13]

7.23 Although the program is well established in New South Wales and provides many students with additional, practically oriented course options, it would appear that there is great variation in the degree of co-operation between schools and TAFE colleges in other States. During discussions with principals and teachers it was said that the successes in this area were largely attributable to the vigorous and unstinting efforts of individual principals and teachers who were committed to the development of school-TAFE links and were prepared to devote considerable time and effort to ensure their success.[14]

7.24 A number of difficulties associated with developing integrated school-TAFE programs were drawn to the Committee's attention. These include:

(a) differences in school and TAFE timetables;

(b) the time and cost involved in travelling from one institution to another;

(c) concern to ensure that work done at TAFE is properly recognised and accredited by school authorities; and

(d) working out who should pay for link programs, schools or TAFE colleges.

7.25 If the potential of link programs to help provide a diverse range of practically oriented courses is to be maximised these problems need to be addressed and resolved on a system or State-wide level. It is unreasonable to expect enthusiastic individuals to continue to grapple with these problems.

7.26 The Committee understands that the State and Commonwealth Ministers for Education have established a working party to examine ways of narrowing the gap between the 'ideal' of school-TAFE co-operation and the 'actual' practice. A similar and complementary project is being sponsored by the Commonwealth Government as a Project of National Significance.[15]

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[13]F Sharpe and M Brinsden, *The Joint Secondary Schools/TAFE Program: Developments in 1989*, p.2.
[14]See also *The Challenge of Retention*, pp.117-119.
[15]DEET, Supplementary Submission, pp.15-16.

7.27 The Committee supports the initiatives taken in this area to date and looks to the Commonwealth and State Governments to remove administrative obstacles to the further development of school-TAFE programs and to provide adequate support and assistance to schools and TAFE colleges in the development of such programs.

7.28 It is important that courses developed under school-TAFE link programs are not seen as suitable only for students who would otherwise leave school early. These types of courses can provide all students with the opportunity to pursue special interests and build more practical components into their general pattern of studies.

School-business Links

7.29 A third approach to the task of making Years 11 and 12 more relevant to young peoples' needs, is for schools to develop close co-operation with the business community.

7.30 Most schools have developed work experience programs where students spend some time 'on the job' with local businesses. From discussions with students it seems that work experience is generally considered to be a worthwhile activity. In some cases a work experience placement can be a strong motivation for a young person to stay on at school to improve their chances of a satisfying career.

7.31 The benefit gained from a work experience placement depends to a large degree on the preparation offered to students before the placement and the attitude and commitment demonstrated by the employer during the placement. Adequate preparation requires that students are informed about the type of business in which they will be working and the nature of the tasks they will be performing. The other side to the equation is that employers be genuinely committed to giving students an appreciation of the various aspects of the world of work. If insufficient preparation is offered and employers use students as 'slave labour' the experience is unlikely to be beneficial.

7.32 A criticism made of work experience programs is that they are only a discrete and infrequent part of school activities.

7.33 To address this deficiency, a number of States have developed broader programs to link schools with industry and the business community. For example, in Victoria, Project School-Industry involves students:

- touring work places;
- reporting on the use of technology in factories;
- interviewing employers and workers; and
- learning about maths in the workplace...[16]

[16]Victorian Department of Education, *Project School-Industry Information Brochure*, p.4.

7.34 Another example of an integrated program is the Schools/Industry Link developed in New South Wales. One highly successful project under this program has involved two high schools in south-western Sydney and a major local employer, the international aerospace company Hawker de Havilland.

> Students visit the company to undertake specific projects relevant to their areas of study. For example, chemistry students make observations of industrial processes such as electroplating; [and] geography students use the company's aerial photography to examine land pattern use.[17]

7.35 The Committee is most impressed by the potential of these programs to enhance the learning opportunities for young people and give a more practical orientation to a wide range of courses in the senior secondary years.

7.36 Young people can also gain an appreciation of the world of work by taking part-time jobs. The Committee was struck by the growing tendency for young people in the senior secondary years to take on part-time work.[18] A few students and parents with whom the Committee met reported that the income earned from part-time work helped meet some of the costs of schooling. For most young people, however, a part-time job is a means of getting some extra pocket money. One concern expressed about the increasing tendency of young people to take on part-time work is its effect on their school work. The principal of one high school in Darwin pointed out that if a young person is working long hours in a part-time job, it can mean that he or she has less time to devote to their studies. This problem, however, does not appear to be widespread.

Summary

7.37 In summary, the Committee considers that school involvement in the development of courses, the negotiation of school-TAFE Link courses, and the development of integrated programs linking schools and industry can all play an important role in diversifying the range of courses available in Years 11 and 12.

7.38 The Committee recommends that:

> **the States encourage the development of a broader range of courses to provide more appropriately for the majority of students, who are not bound for higher education, and as a way of encouraging more young people to stay on to Year 12. In particular, the States should -**
>
> **(i) encourage school-based course development;**
>
> **(ii) ensure that school-TAFE link policies provide adequate support and assistance to schools and TAFE colleges so that link programs can be more widely implemented; and**
>
> **(iii) establish, if they have not done so already, regional consultative councils with business and industry representatives to facilitate the development of integrated school and industry link programs.** *(Recommendation 15)*

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[17]New South Wales Government, Submission, Part D: The Role of the New South Wales Department of Business and Consumer Affairs, p.1.
[18]See also *The Challenge of Retention*, p.101.

Choosing Courses

Perceptions of Status

7.39 Despite the often considerable effort put in by schools and individual teachers to develop a range of practically oriented courses, teachers have reported that in some cases they are unable to attract students to the courses. The reason is said to be that if a course does not count for tertiary entrance it is seen by students, parents and employers as being of lower status. This perception can result in considerable pressure on young people to choose higher status tertiary entrance courses in preference to practically oriented non-tertiary courses:

> ... students tend to choose the higher status courses because they believe they will be more highly regarded by employers or because their parents advise them not to do non-tertiary courses.[19]

7.40 An example reported in a recent study is that:

> A 'Mathematics in Society' course [in Queensland] is not recognised by the tertiary institutions as a satisfactory prerequisite, and because of this many students, to 'cover all options', are unwilling to take what would otherwise be a quite satisfactory course for them.[20]

7.41 Inappropriate course choice can greatly affect a young person's chances of achieving success in learning. Those students not aiming for higher education who choose, or have no option but to take, tertiary entrance subjects risk being labelled as failures. The result of taking such courses for many students is that they:

> ... see themselves as failures of the system and their self-esteem plummets. That low self-esteem goes with them ... out into the workforce. Their concepts of what they have achieved are obviously not good ... [21]

7.42 It is unacceptable that a young person's learning experiences and further options are shaped so profoundly by pressures to take higher status courses and to shy away from courses that are, in many cases, more appropriate but which are despairingly labelled 'Mickey Mouse' or 'vegie' courses.

7.43 It is vitally important that young people are not encouraged to choose courses on the basis of perceptions about the status of subjects; rather, they should be encouraged to maximise the benefits of staying on by choosing courses that are appropriate to their interests and talents, and relevant to their needs. A critical task for education authorities is, therefore, to make it clear to principals, teachers, parents, young people and employers – in fact, the whole community – that choosing courses on the basis of the perceived status of the

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[19]*The Challenge of Retention*, p.52.
[20]B Shadwick and others, op. cit., p.26.
[21]Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta), Evidence, p.78. See also Townsville Grammar School, Submission, p.1; and St. Joseph's Vocational College, Submission, p.1.

course, does not guarantee an appropriate educational outcome for young people but can in fact greatly limit both their chances of success in school and their future prospects.

Overcoming the Status Barrier

Ensuring Quality

7.44 A necessary step in overcoming perceived differences in status is for education authorities to ensure that the non-tertiary courses, which are largely school-designed, are educationally sound and offer young people a rigorous and fulfilling study program. Most States have recently conducted reviews of the courses available in the senior secondary years and a focus of all reviews has been to ensure that schools achieve and maintain high standards of quality in their school-designed courses.[22] The Committee endorses the involvement of the various Boards of Education in guaranteeing the quality of these courses. Such reviews and the consequent Board approval of school-based courses are important ways of demonstrating to the community that these courses are educationally sound and represent a valid and educationally demanding alternative to tertiary entrance courses. It is essential, however, that the process of Board review and approval does not compromise the relevance and accessibility of school-designed courses.

Community Involvement

7.45 It will take more than a review of the courses available to overcome the status barrier, however. One positive approach that schools can take to this issue is to develop mechanisms to involve local communities in the planning and development of courses.[23] As noted earlier, some States have encouraged schools to develop links with industry and business groups. This has created a range of new and relevant learning experiences for senior secondary students. An additional benefit of encouraging business and community involvement in the process of course development is that:

(a) a sense of community ownership of what is taught in schools is guaranteed;

(b) a greater understanding of the value of school-designed courses can be fostered; and

(c) some of the prejudices that have arisen about schools and the courses they offer can be broken down.

7.46 On a more general level, such developments are vital if schools are to be an integral part of the communities they serve. Too often schools are isolated islands in the community rather than being responsive to community needs and, more particularly, young people's needs (see Chapter 4).

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[22]*The Challenge of Retention*, p.50.

[23]This approach was suggested in a number of submissions including S Dinham, p.127; Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta), p.8.

7.47 It is important to stress that the Committee recognises that in this, as in all areas of community involvement in education, the experience, expertise and professional leadership of school principals and teachers is essential.

Restructuring Courses

7.48 The Victorian education authorities are seeking to overcome the status barrier with a radical restructuring of the courses available in Years 11 and 12. The new Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) is very different from the typical course structure (as outlined in Table 8) in that it draws no distinction between tertiary and non-tertiary courses.

7.49 The VCE, which will be fully operational by 1992, provides a comprehensive range of optional courses and, apart from certain core areas of study (for example, English, Australian Studies and Mathematics/Technology), which are required to be completed to qualify for the certificate, young people are able to make subject choices on the basis of personal interest and future relevance. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board explains in its submission that:

> Efforts have been made ... to ensure that [the courses] ... are all seen to be of equal value and strength, so that students are not confronted to the same degree as in the past with the prospect, when choosing studies, of having to discriminate between studies which they may like to pursue but which may be seen as having no continuing value.[24]

7.50 The VCE is also seeking to combine the credibility of centrally determined courses with the flexibility of school-designed courses. All of the courses have 'common essential structures' prescribed by the Curriculum and Assessment Board, yet are structured so as to allow teachers the flexibility to develop the details of what they will teach in the classroom.

> This means that while the same "essentials" will be taught state-wide, courses may differ quite significantly from one classroom to another ... to meet the needs, interests and backgrounds of students ...[25]

7.51 There is much to commend the approach being taken in Victoria. If successfully implemented, it would appear to offer senior secondary students a range of courses that are sufficiently flexible to be responsive to students' needs; are centrally accredited and therefore quality controlled; and are not ranked by perceptions of their relative 'values'. The Committee applauds the Victorian Government's initiative in restructuring the courses available in the senior secondary years. Other States should consider similar action.

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[24]Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board, Submission, p.5.
[25]ibid., p.4.

7.52 The Committee recommends that:

> **the States be urged to monitor developments in the Victorian Certificate of Education, which provides a diverse range of courses within a common framework, with a view to implementing a similar structure in their own senior secondary courses.** *(Recommendation 16)*

The Attitudes of Higher Education Institutions

7.53 Universities and colleges of advanced education exert a strong influence over the courses available in Years 11 and 12 – some evidence suggests they have a 'stranglehold' over what is offered to senior secondary students. As noted early in this Chapter, the traditional focus in the senior secondary years has been on preparation for higher education. Although recent years have seen a trend away from this exclusive focus, the status barrier between tertiary and non-tertiary courses remains. Higher education institutions have it within their power to diminish the influence of the status barrier and its consequent problems by accepting a greater range of courses for tertiary entrance purposes.

7.54 Action of this type would enhance the status of courses which traditionally have not been accepted for tertiary entrance and would ensure continued expansion in the number of courses available in Years 11 and 12.

7.55 Some higher education institutions have made progress in this direction. As noted in Table 8 (on page 72), higher education institutions in Victoria recognise Group 2 STC courses and to a lesser degree courses under the T12 and TOP programs. STC courses, in particular, have been acknowledged as offering demanding and rewarding learning experiences, relevant for young people aiming for either employment or higher education. A submission from the Executive Officer of the STC group reports that:

> Our 1987 graduates have been placed in 42 Tertiary Institutions Statewide (and Inter-state) including the four major Universities in Victoria and the University of New England. They have enrolled in degree, diploma and certificate courses in a wide range of disciplines.[26]

7.56 The University of Tasmania has a policy of supporting a broad range of courses in the senior secondary years and accordingly it accepts both Level III and Level II courses for tertiary entrance purposes.[27] The Institute of Technology and colleges of advanced education in South Australia also recognise achievements in both types of courses (in this case PES and SAS courses).[28]

7.57 The major stumbling block for the many higher education institutions which appear not to have shown this degree of flexibility seems to be concern about first, the ability of school-designed courses to prepare young people adequately for higher studies and second, whether school-based assessment accurately indicates whether they are likely to succeed in those studies.

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[26]P Jonas, op. cit., p.9.
[27]B Shadwick and others, op. cit., p.45.
[28]ibid., p.32; and *The Challenge of Retention*, p.50.

7.58 It is worth noting that school-based courses and school-based assessment were introduced in the ACT in 1976 and that the Australian National University has accepted students who have done a wide range of courses under this system with no reported decline in its academic standards. A similar system of school-based assessment applies in Queensland and, equally, the academic standards of higher education institutions in Queensland have not been seen to decline.

7.59 The Committee was encouraged by statements from the University of Sydney and the University of Melbourne during the Inquiry which indicated support for an expanded range of more practically oriented courses in Years 11 and 12.[29] These sentiments should, however, be followed up with action. The ACT and Queensland examples show that school-designed courses are not only educationally sound and appropriate for senior secondary age young people but can provide adequate preparation for higher studies and can serve as predictors of success in higher studies.

7.60 If all universities and colleges of advanced education institutions followed the example set by the Australian National University, education authorities would be free to increase the range and diversity of courses available in Years 11 and 12 and great progress would be made toward increasing the status of school-designed, non-traditional courses.

7.61 The Committee strongly endorses the trend by some higher education institutions to recognise that school-designed courses can be educationally sound, are appropriate for senior secondary age young people and can serve as predictors of success in tertiary studies. Accordingly, the Committee recommends that:

> **higher education institutions accept a greater range of school-designed courses as contributing toward tertiary entrance scores.** *(Recommendation 17)*

[29]Professor S Ball, Chairman of Academic Board, University of Sydney, Submission, p.1; and D Penington, Vice-Chancellor, University of Melbourne, Submission, p.2.

CHAPTER 8

CAREER COUNSELLING AND TERTIARY AWARENESS

The Need for Better Counselling Services

8.1 There is wide agreement in submissions to the Inquiry about the importance of helping young people to make appropriate subject choices and providing advice on possible careers or options for further study. The need is said to be especially great in the present school environment where an increasing number of young people are staying on and a wider range of courses is being developed to provide for their differing interests and talents.

8.2 Assistance in subject choice, career counselling and advice about the options for further study will not only help those students already in Years 11 and 12, but will increase the number of young people aware of the benefits to be gained from staying on. The New South Wales Teachers Federation put the view that:

> One reason for low post-compulsory participation rates is simply lack of knowledge concerning what is ... [involved] in further study, and what futures it can lead to.[1]

8.3 This point is also developed in a submission from the Education Participation Studies Unit at the University of Tasmania which discusses the ability of schools and teachers to raise students' goals and expectations by giving advice about career options and subject choices in Years 11 and 12. Schools that provide such advice encourage a 'concept of career' and students then 'see the point' of staying on.[2]

8.4 While acknowledging the importance of careers and study advice, some submissions go on to question the adequacy of the advice currently provided to young people at school. For example, the Australian Chamber of Manufactures reports that a job placement program it ran in conjunction with a Melbourne radio station revealed a significant number of young people:

> ... had ambitions ... [for] careers for which they were far from qualified. They appeared also to be unaware of the educational requirements of their stated preferred career, nor any idea of how they could prepare themselves.[3]

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[1]NSW Teachers' Federation, Submission, p.31.
[2]Professor P Hughes, Dr J Abbott-Chapman and C Wyld, Submission, pp.6-7.
[3]Australian Chamber of Manufactures, Submission, pp.2-3.

8.5 Similarly, the co-ordinators of a program designed to alert young people from the west and south-west of Sydney to the opportunities for further study say that they have been 'appalled by the general lack of awareness by people in these areas of the tertiary education opportunities available to them'.[4]

8.6 The Committee accepts that many schools are able to provide their students with supportive, encouraging and effective counselling services of the type referred to in the submission from the University of Tasmania. It seems, however, that this is not true of all schools. As noted in one study:

> Many schools [in the region being studied] had either no careers counsellors appointed or had a career-teacher who performed the job on only a part-time basis. In no cases were career counsellors professionally trained.[5]

8.7 The importance attached to careers counselling in schools appears to have suffered a decline in recent years. The Commonwealth Government, under its former Transition Education and Participation and Equity Programs, provided funds to support careers counselling in schools. However, since the demise of these programs, in 1984 and 1987 respectively, it seems that not all States have assumed this responsibility adequately.

8.8 There are clearly gaps and deficiencies in the career counselling and information services currently available to young people in schools. It is particularly disturbing that the young people most likely to be disadvantaged by such deficiencies are those from home backgrounds where information about career and study options is typically not available – that is, young people from low socio-economic or non-English speaking backgrounds and young Aboriginal people. Given the ability of career counselling and advice to focus young people's goals and expectations and help them overcome barriers to participation, it is important that current services are substantially improved.

8.9 The Committee is pleased to note that the Commonwealth has sponsored, under its Projects of National Significance Program, an evaluation of career education services.[6] The Committee hopes that this study will recommend practical and appropriate strategies for improving counselling services in schools. For example, Commonwealth Employment Service (CES) Offices could take a more active role in disseminating information about careers and options for further study.

8.10 A related issued is the need for schools to provide appropriate levels of pastoral care for their students. As the number and diversity of students staying on increases, so too does the need for schools to help students' develop independent learning skills and to support their personal, as well as their academic, development.

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[4]M Ramsey and J Temple, *Background to the Tertiary Awareness Program*, p.1.
[5]J Toumbourou, Submission, p.2.
[6]See DEET, Submission, Attachment 7, p.2.

Youth Support Strategies

State Strategies

8.11 A number of States have developed integrated information and awareness strategies to provide support and assistance for young people using both school and community resources.

8.12 The Western Australian Government has developed a Vocational Instruction and Preparation Strategy which, in conjunction with its Post-Compulsory Schooling Program, helps young people prepare themselves for either work or further study.[7] The initiatives incorporated in the Strategy include:

(a) School-TAFE awareness programs – to increase student awareness of the options for further study at TAFE institutions; and

(b) the production of learning and information packages to promote subject and career choices free of traditional gender influences.[8]

8.13 The South Australian Government's Youth Offer is a program designed to better co-ordinate and target the services provided by employment, education and training systems.[9] The Youth Offer aims to improve awareness of and access to the range of Commonwealth and State youth support programs. As well as improving the integration of existing services, regional management committees for the Youth Offer have sponsored a number of initiatives including:

(a) career seminars;

(b) the preparation and publication of a register of all post-compulsory courses available; and

(c) labour market awareness programs – which actively promote greater participation in a full secondary education as a way of gaining improved access to the labour market.[10]

8.14 The development of a broad and integrated network of youth support services has also been a crucial part of the Victorian Government's Youth Guarantee. Key features of the Guarantee are:

(a) a centrally located, shop-front Information Service which provides information and counselling for young people on work, study and training opportunities; and

(b) Job and Course Explorer, a computer based information and access system for young people on education, training and work options.[11]

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[7]Western Australian Government, Submission, p.1.
[8]See ibid., p.3; and Western Australian Government, Supplementary Submission, p.3.
[9]South Australian Government, Supplementary Submission, p.3.
[10]ibid., pp.5-6; and South Australian Government, Submission, p.16.
[11]Victorian Government, *The Youth Guarantee – A progress report, 1987.*

8.15 Job and Course Explorer in particular has attracted wide interest and is commended in a number of submissions to the Inquiry.

Counselling by Computer

8.16 The Committee observed in an earlier report, *An apple for the teacher? Choice and technology in learning*, that there is considerable scope for the application of communications and information technology to a variety of educational tasks. Job and Course Explorer is one such application. The system consists of two data bases: Job Explorer, which contains information on 450 jobs; and Course Explorer, which can search information on 1170 accredited post-secondary courses of study. Although users can obtain information on either jobs or courses separately, the data bases are linked. This means that:

> ... if, for example, after finding details of an occupation the user wants detailed information about educational courses related to that occupation, he or she will be able to move into the courses data base to obtain that information.[12]

8.17 The advantages of using new technology to provide information on jobs and further study are that:

(a) the information base can easily be updated in response to rapid changes in labour market conditions, job requirements and course offerings; and

(b) the information can be made available to all schools and community organisations with compatible computer equipment.[13]

8.18 Job and Course Explorer, and similar applications of new technology, have the potential to considerably improve the access that many young people have to detailed and reliable information on course and career options.

Tertiary Awareness Program

8.19 The Committee is particularly impressed by the New South Wales based Tertiary Awareness Program (TAP). TAP's aim is to provide information and advice to young people from particular target groups about the advantages of and opportunities for further study.

8.20 TAP has targeted three specific groups in the west and south-west of Sydney – Year 10 students, early school leavers and young women – and provides the following services:

(a) **Counselling**... services which may involve individual or group activities with both young people and their parents. These activities include such things as motivational and informational visits to schools, parent talks, provision of individual advice in response to

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[12]Victorian Ministry of Education, 'Job and Course Explorer Information Paper', p.2; and Victorian Ministry of Education, *Which Job? What Courses?*,an information and operational booklet.

[13]NOTE: Job and Course Explorer is currently available to all Victorian schools, career advisory centres, many libraries and community centres and TAFE colleges, universities and colleges of advanced education.

requests, attendance at careers markets, organising seminars and workshops and providing advice to tertiary and government agencies.

(b) **Promotional**... services which involve the distribution of printed cross-sectoral motivational material, general institutional admission information and course specific information relating to courses offered by tertiary institutions. [14]

8.21 TAP is a dynamic program and the 'TAP team' have developed a unique range of resources and skills. Evidence presented to the Committee indicates that these resources and skills have been applied with great effect and that the program has, very effectively, broken down barriers to participation for young people from educationally disadvantaged backgrounds.

8.22 TAP is funded jointly by the Commonwealth Government (under its Higher Education Equity Program), the New South Wales Government and higher education institutions in New South Wales.

Career Markets

8.23 Local and regional initiatives can also play an important role in providing information to young people. Many students commented that local or regional careers markets can be a useful way of learning about the range of jobs available and the options for further study. The level of support provided by individual businesses, employer groups and tertiary and training institutions is crucial to the success of such ventures. It is also important, however, that students take advantage of the information and advice that is available. Careers markets are most effective when there is genuine interaction between young people and employers.

The Need for Early Advice

8.24 Another point that has come through in submissions and in discussions with parents, students and teachers is the need to provide young people with information about career and study options from an early stage in their schooling.

8.25 Careers counselling is directed in most schools towards students in Years 10, 11 and 12. By this stage, however, many young people have already confirmed their attitudes and taken decisions. Counselling and advice at this stage may therefore have only limited success in changing attitudes and opening up options.

[14] 'A Proposal for the Continuation of TAP: 1989-91', p.7 (from *TAP Information Guide* a collection of leaflets, newsletters and booklets about the program).

8.26 The Australian Council of State School Organisations submits that:

> There is considerable evidence that most students have decided whether to complete ... [secondary school] by the end of primary school or in the early years of secondary schooling.[15]

8.27 In referring to the success of TAP, the Council notes that:

> ... after two years of operation, the [TAP] project officers are convinced they need to direct their efforts much more towards primary-aged children and their parents if they are to make any real changes in attitudes to education and career opportunities for disadvantaged children.[16].

8.28 Many parents and teachers said that girls in particular tend to think about broad career options at an early stage and that if options are to be opened up for girls, advice and information in the primary school years is essential.

Conclusion

8.29 The advice presently available to young people in schools about career options and opportunities for further study is generally inadequate and not available early enough to effect real changes in young people's attitudes and expectations. A number of States have, however, developed programs and strategies to meet the information and advice needs of young people.

8.30 The Committee recommends that:

(a) in the evaluation of career education services currently being sponsored by the Commonweath, the following issues be addressed -

- **(i) the need for more trained careers counsellors in schools;**
- **(ii) the need for information and advice to be provided to young people in the early secondary years;**
- **(iii) the need to ensure every young person has access to a regional careers market; and**
- **(iv) the potential role the Commonwealth Employment Service could play in providing careers information and counselling services in schools;**

(b) the Commonwealth negotiate cost-sharing arrangements with each of the States for the implementation of -

- **(i) a computer based information and access system (like the Victorian Job and Course Explorer system) to provide advice on education, training and work options; and**
- **(ii) a targeted program aimed at increasing awareness of the options for further study (like the Tertiary Awareness Program operating in New South Wales); and**

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[15]Australian Council of State School Organisations, Submission, p.2.
[16]ibid., p.3.

(c) **the Commonwealth establishment a national database of all Australian tertiary education courses, as was recommended in the Committee's earlier report *An apple for the teacher? choice and technology in learning.*** *(Recommendation 18)*

CHAPTER 9

TEACHERS AND TEACHING

Influence of Teachers

9.1 School principals and teachers have a critical influence on retention rates. In the words of a high school principal in Queensland:

> ... the most important factors in making people of any age enjoy schooling and therefore want to stay on in school are the qualities of the teachers.[1]

9.2 A similar view was expressed by a principal from a Catholic high school in New South Wales, who said that:

> ... [teachers] are the people who make school alive for students. They make one's experience of school pleasant enough for students to want more of it after Year 10 or make it unpleasant enough for students to opt out as soon as they are able to legally do so.[2]

9.3 The Committee's attention was also drawn to recent studies on the influence of principals and teachers on students' decisions about staying on. This work, by researchers at the University of Tasmania, has found that some schools and teachers are able to inspire young people from socially and economically disadvantaged backgrounds to overcome barriers to participation:

> ... those disadvantaged pupils in 'at risk' groups who have gone on to Years 11, 12 and tertiary studies despite all handicaps are more likely to have responded to the encouragement and advice of an influential teacher than are students in general.[3]

9.4 The research has gone on to identify particular teachers from different parts of Tasmania who have demonstrated that they are 'effective and inspirational'. The purpose of identifying these teachers is to:

> ... look at their teaching styles, their classroom strategies, their training and other background characteristics in order to find out what has made them so good.[4]

9.5 These teachers have shown that they are able to help young people overcome educational disadvantage by being:

(a) enthusiastic about the subject they are teaching;

(b) able to communicate their enthusiasm;

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[1]Bluewater State School (QLD), Submission, p.1.
[2]St Pius X High School (NSW), Submission, p.3.
[3]Professor P Hughes, Dr J Abbott-Chapman and C Wyld, Submission, p.6.
[4]Dr J Abbott-Chapman, Evidence, p.1549.

(c) willing to provide learning support and encouragement for students; and

(d) willing to treat students in a respectful way.[5]

9.6 In the Committee's view, education authorities should place greater reliance on these attributes in their systems of intake and promotion of teachers.

9.7 Teachers who do not possess these attributes can, by their actions and attitudes, discourage young people from staying at school. In a submission from the West Moreton Region of the Queensland Department of Education it is acknowledged that:

> (a) Maths and Science teachers have actively discouraged girls from undertaking their subjects because of the view that they are not up to the rigour of the subjects.
>
> (b) Teachers are often loathe to write or adapt a work program in their subject area to make it more relevant. This is seen as 'diluting the subject'. The alternative is to dissuade interested, but academically unsuited students from taking the subject.
>
> (c) There still prevails an attitude [amongst teachers] that subjects are either academic (useful) or a waste of time. Good students therefore do academic subjects and not so good students need to be kept busy ... [6]

9.8 The quality of schooling and eventual educational outcomes clearly depend to a large degree on the overall quality of teaching. It is important therefore, particularly in regions that are experiencing low retention to Year 12, that high standards of teaching are developed and maintained. The Committee agrees with DEET's assessment that:

> Improving Australia's teaching force is a pre-requisite to strengthening its schools.[7]

New Challenges for Teachers

9.9 A recent Commonwealth report on teachers and teaching (*Teachers Learning: Improving Australian Schools through Inservice Teaching Training and Development)* describes teaching as a complex and demanding enterprise during which:

> ... teachers need to draw upon a repertoire of appropriate teaching strategies, a knowledge of cultural context and subject content and be able to interpret classroom events and adjust teaching behaviour constantly throughout the teaching day.[8]

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[5]See ibid., p.1550.

[6]Queensland Department of Education, (West Moreton Region), Submission, p. 4.

[7]DEET, Submission, p.30.

[8]G Boomer and others, *Teachers Learning: Improving Australian Schools through Inservice Teacher Training and Development*, AGPS, Canberra, 1988, p.53.

9.10 The pace of technological change, the greater number and diversity of young people staying on at school and the broader range of courses being provided at school have all added to the complexity and demands of the task.

9.11 These new challenges mean that teachers need new knowledge and skills, both in terms of subject knowledge and methods of teaching. In particular, teachers will need to acquire:

> ... the capacity to teach ... [with] and about new technologies and media. In order to promote and reward new kinds of practical skills, teachers will need to develop new forms of student assignments and assessment. If schools are to become more responsive to the community and to the world of work, teachers will need to develop the capacity to move out from the school to learn more about the needs and demands of society.[9]

9.12 The need for new knowledge and skills is heightened by the fact that:

> Most of the teachers employed today were initially trained in practices that were applicable in past years but which may be inappropriate today. As well, teachers and school principals are now called upon to carry out roles that their initial training never considered.[10]

9.13 This period of new expectations and challenges for schools has coincided with a period in which the size of the teaching force has remained relatively static.[11] This has meant that, in some States, class sizes have increased, thus placing additional demands on teachers.

9.14 If teachers are to meet the new demands being made of them they must be given the opportunity to upgrade and diversify their knowledge and skills. The urgent need to give priority to teacher retraining and professional development has been strongly put to the Committee by teachers, staff associations and school administrators across the country.

Retraining for Teachers

9.15 In its report *An apple for the teacher? Choice and technology in learning* the Committee considered the need for teacher retraining and professional development in some detail. The Committee concluded that teacher retraining is a matter of fundamental importance and that current retraining efforts are dispersed, lack co-ordination and are in need of a greater degree of strategic planning.[12]

9.16 From 1974 to 1986 the Commonwealth played a key role in stimulating teacher retraining by providing funds for this specific purpose under its Professional Development Program. Because this program required the

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[9]ibid., p.3.
[10]*The Challenge of Retention*, p.113.
[11]See DEET, op. cit., p.19.
[12]House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *An apple for the teacher? Choice and technology in learning*, February 1989, pp.85-86.

establishment of State co-ordinating structures to administer the funds, there was a more integrated and coherent approach to the provision of teacher retraining than exists at present.

9.17 Since 1986 the Commonwealth has contributed less directly to this area through its General Recurrent Grants Program. Each of the States spends about $18 *million per year of Commonwealth money on teacher retraining activities.* The Commonwealth also provides about $1.9 million annually through the Education Centres Program and through higher education institutional funding for upgrading post-graduate award and non-award courses for teachers.[13]

9.18 *Teachers Learning* notes that a lack of consistency in information recorded by the States makes it difficult to draw comparisons between the contributions made by individual States and school systems to teacher retraining. It is possible to say only that:

> the funds, provided ... vary considerably from system to system. Some authorities use Commonwealth funds as the major source. Others have a tradition of providing considerable funds themselves.[14]

9.19 In *An apple for the teacher?* the Committee noted that evidence received suggested that there had been a decline in the States' commitment to teacher retraining.

9.20 Teacher retraining is a national responsibility requiring all governments, Commonwealth and State, to share the effort and costs of developing co-ordinated strategies which reflect the new challenges facing teachers. Better co-ordination, more effective practice and better use of existing resources and expertise will greatly improve the quality and availability of teacher retraining programs. Some elements of an effective national teacher retraining program will require additional funding. For example, an effective program may require:

> The availability of consultants, advisors and other resources, including time release and replacement teachers, [all of which] depend upon funding ...[15]

9.21 The Committee has been advised that DEET and the National Board of Employment, Education and Training are currently examining the issue of teacher quality. One aspect being considered is the provision of retraining opportunities so that teachers can improve or upgrade their knowledge and skills, to better cater for the now more diverse student population in Years 11 and 12. A grant of $100 000 was recently approved from the Commonwealth's Projects of National Significance Program for a complementary project to

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[13]See *Teachers Learning*, pp.9 and 67; and DEET, op. cit., p.30. NOTE: The Education Centres Program provides direct support to 23 Education Centres in city and country locations throughout Australia. Most of the Centres' activities are directed at improving the quality of school level education through the provision of curriculum and professional development support for schools and teachers. (From DEET, *Commonwealth Programs for Schools, Administrative Guidelines for 1989*, p.89.)

[14]*Teachers Learning*, p.10.

[15]*Teachers Learning*, p.47.

examine the challenges for teachers arising from increased retention.[16]

9.22 The Committee is hopeful that the information arising from these projects will provide a satisfactory basis on which to negotiate a co-ordinated, national approach to teacher retraining.

9.23 The Committee recommends that:

(a) **following the completion of current studies in the area, the Commonwealth and the States negotiate a co-ordinated, national approach to teacher retraining as a matter of priority and that programs arising out of this strategy be implemented on a cost-share basis;**

(b) **effective principals and teachers should be involved in these teacher retraining programs wherever possible; and**

(c) **as an integral part of this national strategy, genuine opportunities be provided to teachers for industry linked workforce exchange programs.**

[16]DEET, Supplementary Submission, p.12; and DEET, Submission, p.30.

CHAPTER 10

MEASURING SUCCESS

Introduction

10.1 Taking tests, sitting for examinations and completing projects and assignments are all important parts of schooling. Without some form of assessment, students and teachers would find it difficult to measure the progress a student has made in his or her studies.

10.2 As well as measuring progress through a program of study, assessment tasks measure how successfully a student was able to learn. As discussed above, success in learning, or perceptions of likely future success in learning, can have a substantial influence on a student's attitude toward school and toward staying on.[1] Given the central role that assessment plays in measuring progress and indicating success, the types of assessment that schools use deserve careful consideration.

External Examinations

10.3 The traditional approach to senior secondary assessment has been by end of year examination: in the case of Year 12, a uniform, State-wide public examination. External exams are used in all but two States (the ACT and Queensland) as part of the assessment process. A number of parents and employer groups with whom the Committee met expressed support for external exams as a reliable and objective method of assessment that enables comparisons to be made between students and between schools. The Business Council of Australia, for example, argues that external examinations provide business organisations with a benchmark which helps assess student potential during the recruitment process and allows judgements to be made about the comparative excellence of schools and teachers.[2] The importance of a form of assessment that allows a high degree of comparability is also referred to in evidence from the Australian Chamber of Manufactures.[3]

10.4 Despite its popularity in certain sections of the community, the traditional approach to assessment has come under increasing attack from teachers and students. The criticisms made of external exams broadly fall into two interrelated categories – the inherent educational weakness of this type of assessment and its impact on the courses available in Years 11 and 12.

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[1]See Chapter 6.

[2]See Business Council of Australia, *Education and Training Policy*, 1987, p.6.

[3]Employers' Education Consortium of Victoria, *Education and Industry – Developing a Partnership: A Report on Employers' Views of the Victorian Education System*, March 1989, Section 9.

10.5 The educational limitations of a 'narrow competitive approach to assessment' are referred to in a submission from the National Catholic Education Commission[4] and are clearly outlined by the Commonwealth Schools Commission:

> Traditional assessment methods rarely involve students in the setting of goals or targets, and students therefore rarely fully understand where their work is taking them, or why they are doing it. Nor does assessment come at a time which can be useful to teachers or students. To be helpful to learning, assessment needs to come during the learning, and to show where weaknesses are appearing, and how they might be overcome.[5]

10.6 Senior secondary school students, particularly in New South Wales, expressed the view that the courses available in Years 11 and 12 focussed almost exclusively on preparing them for end-of-year exams at the expense of providing relevant or worthwhile skills and knowledge. One student at an independent school in Sydney made the comment that:

> school does not provide you with an education but trains you for the Higher School Certificate exam which, in turn, has nothing to do with education but just tests your ability to take tests.

10.7 Concern about the effect that external exams can have on the way in which subjects are taught and on what is learnt in the senior secondary years was also expressed by the Australian Teachers' Federation. The Federation argues that the limiting effect that external exams can have:

> ... is shown in the tendency for much of schooling to be devoted to easily memorable (and easily forgettable) facts at the expense of analysis and creativity.[6]

10.8 It would seem that, because external exams exert a powerful influence over the courses available and the way in which they are taught, students are not encouraged to respond to the tasks at hand with adaptability and creativity. This means that students are given little opportunity to develop the kind of practical communication, problem-solving and decision-making skills that many employers are seeking and which are required in everyday life.[7]

School-based Assessment

10.9 The validity of the criticisms made of external examinations is implicitly acknowledged by the fact that there are now no school systems in Australia which continue to rely entirely on external exams for senior secondary assessment. The Committee strongly endorses this development. All systems have devised alternative approaches to assessment which contribute significantly

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[4]National Catholic Education Commission, Submission, p.3.

[5]Commonwealth Schools Commission, *In the National Interest*, p.75.

[6]Australian Teachers' Federation, 'Curriculum Policy', p.2. (an attachment to the Federation's submission to the Inquiry).

[7]See Business Council of Australia, op. cit., p.5; and Employers' Education Consortium, op. cit., section 5, for detailed analysis of the attributes employers seek from school leavers.

to determining end-of-school results. A common feature of these alternative approaches is that they are 'school-based'. School-based assessment can take a variety of forms, including:

> ... conventional school-developed examinations, standards-based assessments of performance and activities [such as] assignments, projects, tasks or tests.[8]

10.10 The strengths of school-based assessment in many respects mirror the weaknesses of the traditional approach. Such assessment enables teachers and students to set achievable learning objectives which are understood by students. It allows for continuous assessment during the course of studies, provides useful feedback to the student as a basis for further learning and can avoid undue emphasis on one final end-of-year assessment. School-based assessments can provide teachers with a considerable degree of flexibility to ensure that forms of assessment are compatible with course objectives and with students' interests, abilities and learning goals.

10.11 It is argued in some quarters that external exams spur students on to greater efforts and that school-based assessment is a 'soft option'. The Committee acknowledges that for some students the pressure of external exams can be a powerful motivating force and spur to higher achievement. However, many of the students and teachers with whom the Committee met asserted that the continuous, year long assessment usually associated with school-based assessment is a more effective motivator as it places students under pressure to perform assessment tasks throughout the year. Moreover, as students are being continually assessed on their performance the learning environment can be both more rigorous and demanding.

10.12 Further criticisms made of school-based assessment are that the results it provides are neither as 'objective' as those provided by external exams, nor allow the same degree of comparability between students from different schools. These objections arise out of the fact that school-based assessments are made by a student's classroom teacher. To overcome these objections, various techniques of 'moderation' have been developed, both in Australia and overseas. As described by the Schools Commission, two forms of moderation are used in Australia to reconcile the diversity of school-based assessments with the need for fairness and comparability: 'statistical' and 'consensus' moderation. The former is essentially retrospective, subjecting raw scores to various statistical procedures. The latter is interactive, involving teachers, and in some cases others, in discussions of students' work and the scores the school proposes to give. Each has strengths and weaknesses. The great strength of statistical moderation is its cheapness. The great strength of consensus moderation is its powerful developmental effect on the thinking and practice of teachers involved in it.[9]

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[8]Commonwealth Schools Commission, op. cit., p.78.

[9]ibid. NOTE: The Commission goes on to explain that these techniques have much in common with moderation techniques developed to solve similar, although less complex, problems in the use of examination scores, where moderation is required to get comparability between different questions, examiners and subjects (ibid.)

10.13 The Committee acknowledges that there is some concern in the community about the reliability and effectiveness of the moderation applied to school-based assessment. It is important to note, however, that moderated school-based assessment has been successfully used in the ACT and Queensland for many years.

Assessment and Retention

10.14 A number of submissions claim that there is a close relationship between the introduction of school-based systems of assessment and improved retention to Year 12.

10.15 The ACT Schools Authority points out that school-based assessment has developed in tandem with school-designed courses and the flexibility associated with the former has complemented and enhanced the diversity and practical orientation of the latter.[10] As discussed earlier, a diverse range of courses in the senior secondary years can both encourage students to stay on and ensure that staying on is a relevant and worthwhile experience.

10.16 The Queensland Department of Education concludes that school-based assessment, in conjunction with school-based course development, can create a more flexible and responsive school environment:

> ... we have not had external examinations in this State since 1970 ... [Their absence] does free up the talents of principals and teachers in schools to look very closely at the needs of students and at the needs of their local communities ... That is quite a different model from the situation where if you have got an external examination the curriculum decisions are made at the centre and it is all top down.[11]

10.17 The claim is also made by the principal of one secondary college in the ACT that:

> It is no coincidence that the two education systems in Australia with the highest retention rates, ACT and Queensland, are those with full school-based student assessment.[12]

10.18 For many young people, external exams represent all that is 'bad' about school. They are intimidated by the process and see it as appropriate only for those aiming for tertiary entrance. This is especially true for young people who have experienced little academic success or who, because of their family background, are less likely to stay on to Years 11 and 12.

10.19 The flexibility inherent in a system of school-based assessment provides many young people with a way of participating in Years 11 and 12 and successfully achieving personal and educational goals. For students in Victoria, for example, T12 and STC courses (both of which involve school-based assessment) provide an alternative to the mainstream of tertiary oriented courses

[10]See ACT Schools Authority, Submission, p.4.
[11]Queensland Department of Education, Evidence, p.792.
[12]M Lee, Submission, p.4.

where assessment is partly based on external exams. Submissions from teachers involved with T12 and STC praised the way in which the courses are based upon the needs, aspirations and capacities of individual students and reported that:

> Most of the students who chose to do STC ... did so because they were afraid of the external exams and felt that it was unfair to base a whole years work on an end of year exam.[13]

10.20 But for the existence of a school-based alternative:

> ... many of these students would have dropped out at the end of Year 11 through fear of external examinations or through poor performance in their school subjects.[14]

Conclusion

10.21 It is the Committee's view that undue reliance on external examinations as a form of assessment can impede the development of a diverse range of courses, restrict the type of teaching methods employed by teachers and impose obstacles to learning and achievement. As a result, external exams can also discourage young people from going on to Years 11 and 12.

10.22 The Committee endorses the moves being made in all States to introduce or strengthen school-based assessment as a fundamental part of the system of education. This trend should continue although care must be taken to ensure that, where appropriate, sound moderation is applied to these assessments and that public confidence is generated in this alternative.

10.23 The Committee recommends that:

> **the States continue to strengthen the place of school-based assessment in the education system and actively encourage community debate and public confidence in these approaches.** *(Recommendation 20)*

[13]D Colk, Submission, p.52.
[14]ibid., p.49.

CHAPTER 11

CERTIFICATES OF ACHIEVEMENT

Certificates and their Purposes

11.1 Young people who complete secondary school are issued with a certificate – known variously as the Year 12 Certificate (in the ACT); Higher School Certificate (in New South Wales); Senior Certificate (in Queensland); Year 12 Certificate of Achievement (in South Australia and the Northern Territory); Tasmanian Certificate of Education; Victorian Certificate of Education; and Certificate of Secondary Education (in Western Australia). Traditionally a certificate has also been available to young people who leave school at the end of Year 10.

11.2 The purpose of a senior secondary certificate is to mark the successful completion of a full, general education and to record the achievements (both personal and academic) of young people in the last phase of that education.[1] While this role is rarely disputed, it is often overlooked.

11.3 Certificates are of course also used by higher education institutions when selecting students for entrance to further study and by employers when selecting young people for employment. As well as being a useful tool for higher education institutions and employers, the role of senior secondary certificates in helping to get a job or get into further study is highly valued by students. For many young people, getting a senior secondary certificate to help them in the transition from school to work or further study is one of the main motivations for staying on. If certificates are able and are seen to be able to fulfil these purposes even more students may be inclined to stay on to Years 11 and 12. Concern was expressed during the Inquiry, however, that the certificates typically available to young people leaving school do not in fact adequately fulfil all of these purposes.

The Need to Record More Information

11.4 Traditionally, senior secondary certificates have recorded a list of academic grades, an aggregate score and/or the student's position in a rank order.

11.5 A common theme in evidence presented to the Committee is that senior secondary certificates must provide a more comprehensive statement of a young person's accomplishments and capacities than is represented by a list of academic grades or an aggregrate score showing the student's position in a rank order.[2]

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[1]Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta), Submission, p.9; and Evidence, pp.80-82.
[2]See DEET, Submission, p.20; Tasmanian Government, Submission, p.8; and South Australian Government, Submission, pp.17-18.

11.6 A certificate, comprising a list of academic results, has been a traditional requirement of higher education institutions. It should not be forgotten, however, that the clear majority of young people in Years 11 and 12 are not tertiary bound but will, in the main, seek employment after Year 12. Further, schools are beginning to recognise the needs of these students and are offering more appropriate and practically oriented courses; courses which it seems are not necessarily recorded on the existing certificates.[3]

11.7 This is both inequitable – in that it affects only those students studying school-based, non-tertiary courses – and damaging to their self-esteem – in that they are being told that their efforts and achievements are not worth recording. For a significant number of young people, existing senior secondary certificates are failing in their fundamental purpose as a record of achievement. Unless this deficiency is addressed promptly, existing certificates may well become increasingly irrelevant to non-tertiary bound young people.

11.8 Many schools have developed their own certificates to recognise the *achievements of young people in school-based, non-tertiary courses. While this* initiative is commendable, it is clear that certificates awarded by individual schools are not regarded as highly in the community as those awarded by the State Boards of Education. The Committee believes that it is vital for the self-esteem and future work and study options of young people that the certificates awarded by the State Boards of Education more adequately recognise a broader range of the achievements of young people.

11.9 Ideally, certificates should concentrate on recording what students have learned and are capable of; they should aim to make an assessment of what an individual student can do and is good at. Too often, certificates are seen to be a record of failure rather than of achievement. A certificate which records a more complete assessment of a student's skills and abilities – including achievement *in all subjects studied – will provide students with a more accurate record of* achievement that fairly rewards their performance in all areas of endeavour.

11.10 A certificate that records a broader range of achievement and personal attributes (including sporting, community and personal development activities, as well as academic results) can also be of advantage to potential employers.

11.11 The skills that many employers are now seeking from school leavers, according to the Australian Chamber of Manufactures, include:

> ... skills in analytical thinking, problem solving and communication as well as attitudinal skills of co-operation, enterprise and responsibility. [4]

11.12 Similar attributes were sought by the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia:

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[3]Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta), Evidence, p.80.
[4]Australian Chamber of Manufactures, Submission, p.1.

> From the Council's point of view, an important quality [in school leavers] ... is an attitude conducive to getting things done in a flexible, informal and sometimes less than perfect working environment.[5]

11.13 None of these attributes are capable of adequate representation on a senior secondary certificate that lists academic grades alone. If certificates were adapted to give broader recognition of a young person's attributes and abilities, employers would be better able to make informed judgements about the suitability of young people for job vacancies.

11.14 The Business Council of Australia highlights what business wants in a senior secondary certificate in a paper commenting on the then proposed Victorian Certificate Education:

> Business requires ... [a certificate] with sufficient information to enable a potential employer to gain a reliable perception of a person's attainment and capability ... Business favours a detailed transcript [or] 'assessment profile' ... which provides a description of the course; explains the grades; and shows how the student performed in the various assessment tasks.[6]

11.15 The Committee agrees that the certificates awarded by the various State Boards of Education should adequately recognise the diversity of young peoples' achievements in schools and record a more complete assessment of their abilities, capacities and personal attributes.

11.16 While there is wide agreement that young people should leave school with more than a list of academic grades, certificates should not be so complex that they become confusing. It is important that certificates are easily understood.

11.17 One approach is to present young people with a portfolio of documents which includes both a formal certificate and a range of more detailed assessments. In South Australia, for example, young people are presented with a 'Personal Portfolio' which includes:

> ... a particular report on the [individual's] activities and responsibilities in school, a description of subjects, a report on achievement, a statement about the student's use of the English language in at least three subjects ... formal certificates, references, other awards and examples of their work.[7]

11.18 The value of the portfolio approach is that it enables young people to present to prospective employers a complete set of documents outlining their personal attributes, skills and abilities as well as their achievements at school. The Committee understands that similar portfolios are being, or have been, developed in Tasmania, New South Wales and Victoria.

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[5]Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, Submission, p.2.
[6]Business Council of Australia, Submission, p.24.
[7]South Australian Department of Education, Evidence, p.1096.

11.19 The success of student portfolios depends to a large degree on whether students and employers understand the information provided and thus are able to use it effectively. In this regard, the Committee was most impressed by the determination of business groups and the education authorities in South Australia to work co-operatively on the development of student portfolios.[8] Such involvement and co-operation are essential if education systems are to adapt to the new realities of adequately providing for those students not bound for higher education, and if employers and the wider community are to understand and appreciate the educational goals and strategies of the school system.

Tertiary Entrance Score

11.20 Another issue raised during the Inquiry is the practice, in some States, of recording a student's tertiary entrance score on the senior secondary certificate. While this may be acceptable for those students who are aiming for tertiary entrance, it may do nothing but devalue and belittle the achievements of those students who are not planning to undertake higher studies. Such students may have achieved good results in subjects which either do not contribute to a tertiary score or contribute at a less than full rate. The tertiary entrance score that appears, therefore, will not reflect their achievements adequately. The new Victorian Certificate of Education gets around this problem by clearly separating the role of the certificate as a record of achievement and as an aid to selection for tertiary entrance. The Victorian certificate provides a detailed profile of a student's achievements and includes a comprehensive statement of results. It does not, however, record a tertiary entrance score. Young people who are aiming for tertiary entrance will go through a separate process whereby the results on their certificate are considered by the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Committee.[9]

11.21 This process ensures that those young people who have achieved success in the senior secondary years but are not seeking admission to tertiary institutions do not leave school with a certificate that denies or diminishes their achievements.

The Value of Year 10 Certificates

11.22 In its submission the Tasmanian Government claims that the traditional system of awarding a certificate at the completion of Year 10 can actually discourage young people from staying on to Year 12.

> The issuing of a certificate seems to suggest to students that the education process has reached an end point and a special effort is then required to commence a new phase of education ... [this] is likely to lead to a very significant withdrawal rate at that point [that is at the end of Year 10].[10]

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[8]ibid., p.1097.
[9]Victorian Ministry of Education, Evidence, pp.515-6.
[10]Tasmanian Government, Submission, p.3.

11.23 A Year 10 certificate may in the past have been appropriate when Year 10 marked an exit point from school into jobs in the skilled trades and clerical and secretarial areas. However, in an era when many employers are looking for higher educational qualifications from job seekers and the community is encouraging all young people to complete a full 12 years of schooling, the purpose of a Year 10 certificate is becoming less clear.

11.24 The Tasmanian response to this situation has been to phase out the old Year 10 and Year 12 certificates and introduce a single, new certificate – The Tasmanian Certificate of Education.

> This document will in effect be a single ... certificate awarded to a student for all results achieved from Years 9 through 12. The Certificate, which will consist of a computer print-out of all results obtained will be issued whenever a student leaves between Years 9 and 12.[11]

11.25 The Tasmanian certificate aims to offer a simple and more meaningful alternative to the traditional 'multiple exit' system and encourage young people to progress through high school to the senior secondary years.

11.26 The Committee accepts that there is merit in phasing out the Year 10 certificate in all States and replacing the old dual certificate arrangements with a single, senior secondary certificate reflecting the achievements of students from Year 9 until the time of leaving school.

Early Leavers

11.27 A key element in the Tasmanian certificate is that young people who leave school early will receive full recognition and credit for the subjects they have completed. This important feature is also provided in certificates awarded by the Victorian and South Australian education authorities.

11.28 This development addresses the concern expressed to the Committee that young people who leave school before the end of Year 12 may not receive any centrally issued certificate at all. Young people in this situation are greatly disadvantaged when either seeking a job or trying to return to school because they are unable to present a complete record of their achievements at school.[12] One way to overcome this problem is for the State Boards of Education to follow the lead of South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria and award a certificate to all young people who leave senior secondary school, whether they complete Year 12 or not. This would provide all young people with a certificate that records their school achievements up to the point of leaving and would be useful when seeking either employment or, at a later date, re-entry to education.[13]

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[11]ibid., p.8.
[12]See Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta), op. cit., pp.81-2.
[13]Commonwealth Schools Commission, *In the National Interest*, p.77.

11.29 There is considerable merit in this approach especially if, on re-entry to education, young people are given credit for units they have already completed at the senior secondary level.[14]

Comparable Certificates

11.30 *It has been said, by business and employer representatives in particular,* that there would be much to gain from greater uniformity in the certificates awarded by the States.[15] At present the differences in the type of certificates awarded by the States and, in some cases, awarded by individual schools, make it unnecessarily difficult for employers to assess the educational achievements of applicants for employment.[16]

11.31 Although there is wide support in the community for greater comparability between senior secondary certificates, this problem cannot be resolved by changes to the *certificates alone. Certificates merely represent a record of a* young person's achievement at school and as such they reflect the type of subjects that were available to the student and the methods of assessment used by the education authorities. Unless moves are made to ensure greater commonality in these areas, it is unlikely there will be much progress toward making certificates more comparable. [17]

Conclusion

11.32 *Senior secondary certificates have traditionally played a major role in* selection for tertiary entrance. Certificates should concentrate more on providing each student with a comprehensive record of their achievement. Some States are taking positive and innovative approaches to the development of detailed, relevant and non-discriminatory certificates, but these developments have not proceeded uniformly and the States have much to learn from each other.

11.33 If these new approaches are to be widely implemented and fulfil their potential, it is essential that individual schools, school systems, higher education institutions, employers and the wider community are clear about the information they want certificates to convey. To this end the States must develop networks of consultation involving schools, employers and other community representatives.

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[14]DEET, op. cit. NOTE: The question of how best to cater for the particular needs of re-entry students is addressed in Chapter 12.

[15]See DEET, op. cit., pp.19 and 24; Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia, Evidence, p.1351.

[16]Business Council of Australia, *Education and Training Policy*, p.7.

[17]NOTE: The Committee is pleased to note that the State and Commonwealth Ministers for Education have recently agreed that all States should consider the introduction of student portfolios with a degree of common structure and content for Years 10 to 12 (see DEET, op. cit., p.29).

11.34 The Committee recommends that:

(a) **those States which have not already done so should review, in consultation with the wider community, the form and content of the senior secondary certificates they award; and**

(b) **the senior secondary certificates should more adequately recognise the diversity of young people's achievements in schools and record a more complete assessment of their abilities, achievements and personal attributes, and be part of a comprehensive student portfolio.** *(Recommendation 21)*

11.35 Because of the role certificates play in recording achievement at school, any changes to the nature of certificates may influence or be affected by changes in other areas, particularly in relation to the type and range of courses available and the methods of assessment used in Years 11 and 12. The changes recommended here, in relation to senior secondary certificates, should therefore be read in conjunction with reforms recommended elsewhere in the Report. The Committee urges the States to consider and implement these reforms as an integrated package.

CHAPTER 12

SCHOOLS AND THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

Introduction

12.1 A number of submissions argue that the ability of schools to create an appropriate learning environment in Years 11 and 12 can influence students' decisions about staying on. If schools are able to create a learning environment in which young people are given confidence and self-esteem, yet are challenged by the educational program, they will stay on in increasing numbers. If, however, young people feel alienated from school they will leave at the first opportunity. If more young people are to be encouraged to complete secondary school and to be given the opportunity to experience success it is important to consider whether and why some schools are better able than others to create an appropriate and constructive learning environment.

An Appropriate Learning Environment

12.2 An appropriate learning environment in Years 11 and 12 is clearly very different from that which is appropriate for younger school age people. High schools catering for Years 7 to 12 often develop rules and discipline codes appropriate for the youngest students but to which all students must conform. By the time students reach the senior secondary years of school they are, generally speaking, beginning to see themselves as young adults. They want their families to acknowledge that they are no longer children and when at school they expect to be treated differently from the younger students.

12.3 During the course of the Inquiry the Committee met with many senior students and, although the discussions ranged far and wide, there was agreement that schools and teachers ought to accept that senior secondary students are no longer children and that they ought to be given the respect and courtesy of being treated as young adults with views, values and experiences of their own. The suggestions made by students about the ways in which schools can create a learning environment which ensures their active involvement and participation included:

(a) the relaxation of some school rules and discipline codes for senior students;

(b) the provision of common rooms for senior students; and

(c) the adoption of teaching styles that recognise that students have a positive role to play in the learning process and reflect the fact that students have the capacity to contribute in the classroom and in the community.

12.4 It is not uncommon for schools to respond to the first two of these suggestions and allow senior students greater freedom and more independence. While these are positive steps, it is only when principals and teachers take the further step from acknowledging that students in Years 11 and 12 are different from younger high school students, to accepting that they deserve to be treated differently, that young people will begin to feel that they are being respected as individuals and that progress will be made toward an appropriate and constructive learning environment. This step, as well as being the most significant, is often the most difficult for principals and teachers to take because it can require a change in attitude as well as behaviour.

12.5 The relaxation of school rules and discipline codes does not necessarily imply a relaxation of academic discipline. By treating senior students as young adults, teachers expect them to take greater responsibility for their own learning as well as for their own behaviour. Students are expected, for example, to take charge of their own study programs and to ensure that their work is completed on time.

12.6 At a number of the schools the Committee visited, principals and teachers had made a conscious effort to reshape their attitudes toward and their expectations of their students. In every instance the Committee was impressed by the way in which students had responded to this new environment. Almost all students welcomed the relaxed and mature way in which classes were conducted and the additional responsibility required of them. It was apparent at other schools the Committee visited, that some principals and teachers underestimated the maturity of their students. On a number of occasions teachers' commented that the Committee's visit had made them realise that their students had valid attitudes, values and experiences which, if given a chance, they are willing and able to express. At these schools, the Committee's visits acted as a catalyst for dialogue between the teaching staff and students.

12.7 Apart from being more socially appropriate and educationally demanding for young people of senior secondary age, this type of learning environment can also help young people to develop the qualities of self-motivation and self-reliance - skills which are valuable when embarking on further study and which are demanded by many employers.

12.8 School structure can play a crucial role in determining the learning environment and secondary colleges, which cater only for Years 11 and 12, are said to help create an appropriate learning environment for their students by separating them from younger high school students. This is not to say that principals and teachers in schools which offer all levels of secondary education cannot create a constructuve learning environment for their students in Years 11 and 12, but that secondary colleges start with an advantage.

Secondary Colleges

12.9 Secondary colleges for students in Years 11 and 12 are well established in the Australian Capital Territory (ACT) and Tasmania, having been in operation for over 10 years. Secondary colleges have also been set up in the Northern Territory and Queensland and are being developed in New South Wales and Victoria.

12.10 During the Inquiry the Committee visited colleges in all States except Queensland and met with students, parents and teachers. There was almost universal support for the college concept among those with whom the Committee met. Students, parents and teachers all agreed that the atmosphere or learning environment in colleges is considerably different from that otherwise found in secondary schools. The atmosphere in colleges is less formal and more comfortable for students than that in traditional secondary schools. The principal of a college in the ACT referred to these differences when, in his submission, he described how colleges set out to create a more adult learning environment for senior secondary students:

> The colleges did away with all of the traditional trappings of the 'control over' high school [students] – the bells, the uniforms, concern with hair, etc – and adopted the general mores of adult society. Most staff soon moved on to a first name basis with their students.[1]

12.11 A number of teachers at colleges said that having young people of senior secondary age in a separate institution makes it easier to focus on their needs and treat them as young adults. Students, too, commented that being able to proceed from Year 10 to a separate institution is beneficial. It is for them a clear break from the restrictive junior years and allows them to start afresh without penalty for past indiscretions or indifferent academic achievement. It was also said by students that it is easier to study in an environment which is free from the noise and distractions of younger students.

12.12 Another factor that contributes to the college environment is the ability of colleges to provide a wide range of courses to cater for the diverse interests, needs and abilities of senior secondary students. Typically, students progress to senior colleges from one of a number of 'feeder' high schools that cater for students from Years 7 to 10 (or Years 8 to 10 in some States). By combining the senior secondary student population from a number of schools, colleges are able to create a relatively large student population. This allows colleges to develop a very wide range of courses while ensuring that there are sufficient student numbers to fill the classes. Moreover, it allows colleges to provide courses in a very cost efficient manner. In a Year 7/8 to 12 high school with a relatively small senior student population the opportunity to develop a wide range of courses is much reduced – in some cases it is non-existent.[2] Bendigo Senior High School in Victoria, for example, has a student population of over 1 000 in 1989 and Casuarina College in Darwin has more than 1 100 students. In 1989, Bendigo Senior High offered 80 courses to enrolling students. Students at

[1] M Lee, Submission, p.2.
[2] See ACT Schools Authority, Submission, p.3.

Casuarina College are able to choose from over 160 courses. A typical Year 8 to 12 high school which the Committee visited in Western Australia had a senior student population of 250 and was able to offer 39 courses.[3]

12.13 The environment in secondary colleges is very similar to that found in many tertiary institutions, and students, teachers and administrators said to the Committee that, for this reason, colleges are able to prepare young people well for the transition to further study.[4]

12.14 A number of submissions point to the fact that the ACT has the highest retention rate of all States and argue that the ACT system of secondary colleges – which was established in 1976 – has been a major influence on students' decisions to stay on.[5] There are a range of factors which combine to create, in the ACT, a situation conducive to high retention, such as, higher than average socio-economic status, generally high parental expectations and employer demand for higher educational qualifications. Nevertheless, it is clear that the college system is popular and has widespread community support. Indeed, evidence suggests that the colleges regularly attract students from outside the ACT[6] and that a significant number of students from non-government schools transfer into the college system for Years 11 and 12.[7]

12.15 Although the extent of the influence of the college system on retention in the ACT is difficult to quantify given the presence of these other factors, it seems clear that the influence is positive. Colleges are places that young people want to be. As noted in one submission, the prospect of going on to college is attractive to high school students and there is usually considerable excitement among Year 10 students about the idea of going on to college.[8]

12.16 It should be noted that Tasmania, which has also had a secondary college system for some time, has the lowest retention rate of all States. Evidence suggests, however, that this may well be due to Tasmania's isolated and predominantly rural environment.[9]

12.17 The criticisms that were made of secondary colleges relate mainly to:

(a) the effect on the feeder high school of removing Years 11 and 12;

(b) the effect on teaching staff; and

(c) the effect that the prospect of possible additional travel has on students' decisions about staying on.

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[3]Figures and information obtained from Bendigo Senior High School Course Description, Year 11 (1989), and informal discussions with teachers in the Northern Territory and Western Australia.
[4]See Government of Tasmania, Evidence, p.1502.
[5]For example, ACT Teachers' Federation, Submission, p.2; Council of ACT Parents and Citizens Associations Inc., Submission, p.5; DEET, Submission, p.21; ACT Schools Authority, op. cit., pp.2-3.
[6]ACT Schools Authority, op. cit., p.3.
[7]ACT Schools Authority, Evidence, p.316.
[8]M Lee, op. cit., p.6.
[9]DEET, op. cit., p.21; Government of Tasmania, Submission, p.1 and Evidence, pp.1497-9.

12.18 Concern was expressed on a number of occasions that students in Years 7 to 10 – particularly those in Year 10 – would be disadvantaged by the creation of secondary colleges. It was said that the younger students would lose contact with important role models and that the Year 10 students would be expected to take on a leadership role in the school – a role that they are too young to fulfil.[10]

12.19 In the first few years after the creation of the college system in the ACT, there was some uncertainty and disorientation amongst students and teachers in the feeder high schools. It seems, however, that these uncertainties have now largely been overcome. Parents and administrators report that students in the feeder schools have risen to the challenge and that the Year 10 students are well able to assume the role of student leaders.[11]

12.20 A number of teacher representatives with whom the Committee met expressed concern that in a secondary college system teachers would lose the opportunity to teach across the full range of junior and senior high school classes. The Committee acknowledges that there is a possibility that, if teachers were permanently locked into teaching in either a feeder high school or a college, their work experiences may not be as diverse and their opportunities for career and professional development may be more limited. The education authorities in the ACT, in recognition of this problem, have attempted to encourage mobility of staff between the two sectors. It would seem that this strategy has seen only limited success so far. One of the major impediments to staff mobility is that teachers in colleges find that the more adult learning environment in colleges makes them enjoyable places in which to teach.[12] This has meant that while there is movement of staff from high schools to colleges, there is very little or no mobility in the opposite direction.[13]

12.21 On balance, it would appear that secondary colleges offer teachers access to a desirable and challenging teaching environment – one to which they would not have access in a traditional Year 7 to 12 school. It is an opportunity that should not, however, be restricted to only a few teachers. All secondary teachers should have the opportunity to teach in colleges at some stage and extend their professional expertise. In States where colleges already exist it is therefore desirable that teachers be able to transfer between the two sectors with ease. These States should also look at ways of encouraging the rotation or exchange of teachers between colleges and feeder high school to increase teacher mobility and development opportunities. This would also foster closer links between colleges and their feeder schools, which are essential if young people are to be encouraged to make the transition from high school to college.

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[10]See South Australian Department of Education, Evidence, p.1089.
[11]See ACT Schools Authority, Evidence, p.310 and Australian Council of State School Organisations, Evidence, p.1338.
[12]M Lee, op. cit., p.2
[13]*The Challenge of Retention*, p.61.

12.22 Because most colleges have relatively large catchment areas some young people may have to travel further than their 'neighbourhood' high school to enrol in Years 11 and 12. Some submissions expressed concern that this additional travel burden could discourage some young people from staying on to Years 11 and 12.

12.23 *Additional travel was not seen as a disincentive by the college students* with whom the Committee met. Indeed, the college environment is such that young people seem prepared to travel considerable distances to enrol. As mentioned earlier, ACT colleges attract students from interstate. Nevertheless, the Committee acknowledges that the need to minimise any additional travel required of students is an important consideration when colleges are being planned and established.

12.24 Most of the colleges established to date in the government school sector have no academic entry requirements. The Committee supports this arrangement. The Committee is strongly opposed to the notion of creating academically selective colleges for Years 11 and 12 as a means of increasing retention. One of the great advantages of secondary colleges is their ability to cater for the diverse interests and talents of all those who stay on to Years 11 and 12. The aim of encouraging more young people to complete secondary education will not be furthered by imposing selection tests for entry into the senior secondary years.

12.25 In conclusion, the Committee strongly believes that there is considerable merit in the concept of non-selective secondary colleges and that by their nature they are able to generate a more adult learning environment which is appropriate and attractive for young people and teachers alike. Colleges have the potential to dramatically lift retention rates in areas that have traditionally been educationally disadvantaged.

12.26 The Committee recommends that:

(a) **the States be urged to establish senior secondary colleges in metropolitan areas and in non-metropolitan areas where the population density is such that students will not have to travel excessive distances to attend;**

(b) **entry to these colleges be open and not based on selection tests; and**

(c) **to enhance the career and professional development opportunities for teachers, methods of encouraging the rotation and exchange of teachers between colleges and their feeder schools be investigated.** *(Recommendation 22)*

Re-entry Students

12.27 One group of people for whom the traditional learning environment poses particular problems is re-entry students – that is, those people of all ages who, having left school without completing Year 12 or with results with which they are dissatisfied, now want to return to school to improve their opportunities for further study or work. There is little or no information available on the number of people

who want to have a second chance at senior secondary education and whose opportunities for work or further study are hampered by their present lack of qualifications, although anecdotal evidence suggests that the number may be significant. The Committee strongly supports the right of this group of people to have a second chance at senior secondary education.

12.28 Most re-entry students would not consider going back to a traditional Year 7 to 12 high school – an environment that was unable to meet their educational needs in the first place and has contributed to their current position of disadvantage. Moreover, it is entirely inappropriate that students who are generally older than senior secondary age be expected to return to an environment of discipline codes and uniform requirements.

12.29 Secondary colleges, however, are well able to meet the needs of re-entry students. The freedom of a more adult learning environment, the greater personal responsibility and the broad range of courses, makes the step back into education for re-entry students easier and means that they are not discouraged from giving education another go. The fact that most colleges have no formal academic entry requirements can make a second chance a more realistic option for many people. Evidence indicates that re-entry students find that colleges provide an appropriate learning environment:

> ... one of the things ... [such] students find ... is that they are not visibly different from the existing students and in most colleges the groups are mixed. For example, in ... subjects like English or History you could have Years 11, 12 and ... [re-entry] students in the same class ... [14]

12.30 The transition back into school is made easier by the fact that colleges are able to accommodate students who have full-time jobs by providing evening programs and timetables which allow such students to attend classes at times acceptable to their employers.[15] This type of flexibility is also helpful for single parents who wish to return to school.

12.31 A number of witnesses suggested that the advantages of encouraging re-entry students extend beyond improving the educational outcomes for the individuals concerned and improve the educational experiences of all students. One teacher commented that:

> There is no doubt that the students who are in classes with even one mature-age student really benefit. I taught psychology in a college and I had a couple of adult students in the class and the [other] students would tell me how much they got out of that ... [16]

[14]ACT Schools Authority, Evidence, p.310.
[15]Government of Tasmania, Submission, p.7.
[16]M Lee, Evidence, p.435.

12.32 Another teacher said that re-entry students were a vital, enriching addition to the life of the college 'the 22 year old mum who is ... having to put herself through an education is a delightful force to have in the place'.[17] The participation of re-entry students in a senior secondary college also highlights, for other students, the importance of making the most of education the first time around.

12.33 The ability of secondary colleges to cater effectively for re-entry students is a further reason in support of their widespread introduction.

Other Avenues for Re-entry Students

12.34 The recognition that traditional Year 7 to 12 secondary schools are unable adequately to meet the needs of re-entry students has seen the development of specific purpose re-entry centres in some States. Re-entry centres have been established in Queensland, South Australia and Western Australia.

12.35 The structure of these centres varies considerably. Both of the centres in Queensland and two of the South Australian centres are part of a traditional high school located on the same site and sharing the same facilities. A third re-entry centre in South Australia is located on a separate campus but is part of a five campus amalgamation of high schools. The two re-entry centres in Western Australia have been established as separate senior colleges and incorporate many of the features of secondary colleges as described above.

12.36 All of the re-entry centres aim to create a learning environment that is appropriate for a generally older student group and provide a range of general education, preparatory and transition to work courses to meet the needs of students looking to enhance their prospects for further study or employment.

12.37 The centres also bring a flexible approach to the delivery of their services by enabling students to study part-time. This facility is particularly valuable for single parents and those students who have full-time jobs. A number of these centres also have flexible hours of operation. At one centre in South Australia classes start at 7.30am, while the centres in Queensland are working toward the situation where classes will operate from 8.00am until around 10.00pm.[18]

12.38 Re-entry centres are performing a valuable role in meeting the educational needs of a group of people who would otherwise have little or no opportunity to have a second chance at education and the Queensland, South Australian and Western Australian Governments are to be commended for their initiatives in this area.

12.39 It is the Committee's view, however, that the creation of a network of specific purpose re-entry centres is not necessarily the most appropriate way to respond to the needs of re-entry students. The Committee's preferred approach is for the needs of re-entry students to be met through a system of secondary colleges. In addition to the demonstrated ability of colleges to provide for

[17]V MacAulay, Evidence, p.435.
[18]Queensland Department of Education, Evidence, p.798

re-entry students and the educational advantages of having students of different ages and experiences in the senior secondary years, it would seem a more appropriate use of limited resources to provide for all students studying senior secondary courses in one type of institution rather than establishing a duplicate, second layer in the system of senior secondary education.

12.40 The Committee is aware that TAFE colleges are involved in the provision of senior secondary courses, or their close equivalents, through their adult matriculation programs and various other bridging and pre-employment courses.[19] In addition to these formal structures, a range of less formal evening colleges, adult education centres and vocational education agencies have developed to provide educational opportunities for people who have left secondary school.[20]

12.41 As indicated above, the development of a system of secondary colleges would be an important step towards making secondary education more flexible and accessible, not just to young people, but to people of all ages wanting a senior secondary education. In this event the need for TAFE and other institutions to provide senior secondary courses would diminish. This would also help draw a more clear distinction between the institutions that provide secondary and further education and, as a consequence would avoid, or at least reduce, the considerable overlap and duplication that has developed in the provision of senior secondary courses. It would also allow TAFE colleges to redirect the staffing and financial resources they currently allocate to senior secondary provision to their core areas of activity, that is, the provision of technical and further education. A refocussing of resources within the TAFE sector would allow TAFE colleges to better respond to the significant increase in demand for industry training and skill development expected to arise from the award restructuring processes currently underway in Australian industry.

12.42 The Committee recommends that:

(a) **existing senior secondary colleges advertise more widely their ability and preparedness to cater for re-entry students;**

(b) **the Commonwealth conduct or sponsor a study of the number of people who want a second chance at senior secondary education; and**

(c) **with the establishment of senior secondary colleges, the study should also clarify the potential for overlap by providers of senior secondary education.** *(Recommendation 23)*

[19]South Australian Department of Technical and Further Education, Submission, p.4.
[20]NSW Board of Adult Education, Submission, pp.1-2 and Evidence, pp.52-8.

PART FOUR

Resources, Roles and the Future

CHAPTER 13

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The Cost of Increasing Retention

13.1 There is little evidence available on the cost to the community of increasing retention. In 1986 the Commonwealth Schools Commission addressed this question when recommending that governments establish the present national retention rate target. The Commission considered that if more young people were to stay on to Years 11 and 12:

> ... more relevant curriculum and mixed ability teaching, new assessment methods, co-operative arrangements with out-of-school agencies and strengthened counselling services [would be required. And that as a consequence] ... the present real per capita costs will need to rise.[1]

13.2 This assessment was based in part on data showing that the per capita cost of providing for senior secondary students is considerably more than the cost of providing for students in Years 7-10.[2] The Commission goes on to note, however, that there are compensatory savings which make it difficult to quantify the cost to the community of increased retention rates.

13.3 The first of these savings arises from a projected decline in overall secondary school enrolments – from 1 289 457 in 1986 to 1 181 303 in 1992. This decline will result from a reduction in the number of young people of secondary school age in Australia's population and will impact mainly on the early secondary years. The Commission concludes that it would seem that the costs associated with increasing Year 12 retention to 65% by 1992:

> ... will be substantially if not fully offset by savings from lower enrolments in Years 7-10.[3]

13.4 The Commission anticipates that further savings will be made in relation to costs that would otherwise be incurred in youth support and development activities. For example, a proportion of those who leave school early may be unable to find a job and may therefore be eligible for unemployment benefits.

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[1]Commonwealth Schools Commission, *In the National Interest*, p.67.

[2]NOTE 1: The Commission cites a study which estimated that in 1982 the average cost of providing for a Year 12 student in Victoria was 78% higher than a student in Years 7-10. (ibid., p.68). NOTE 2: It is not clear whether these different costs represent an actual difference in the cost of providing educational services to each age group, or merely a difference in the level of resources historically allocated to each group. In view of the importance of early intervention in the learning process, this issue warrants further investigation – it is possible that a reallocation of resources to the earlier years of school may be more cost-effective.

[3]ibid., p.69.

Some may become apprentices or take up traineeships, in which case Commonwealth financial assistance is available to their employers, to TAFE or to other training agencies.

13.5 The Commission concludes that:

> Taking the long view and considering the social and economic benefits involved in completing secondary school, the lifting of retention rates ... is, for the nation and the individuals concerned, a sound investment.[4]

Funding for Schools

13.6 The Commonwealth provides funds for about 11% of total spending on government schools with the balance being met by State governments. The Commonwealth is also the main source of public funding for non-government schools, providing about 36% of total spending, with the balance being met by other governments (18%) and private sources (46%).[5]

13.7 During the present funding period from 1985 to 1992 the Commonwealth has guaranteed significant and continuing real increases in grants provided to government and most non-government schools.

> In real terms, in 1985 the Commonwealth provided $429 million to government schools and $826 million to non-government schools under the general recurrent grants program. By 1992, it is estimated that they will have increased to $642 million ... [an increase of 50%] for government schools and $1 043 million ... [an increase of 26%] for non-government schools.[6]

13.8 Commonwealth funds are distributed through general recurrent grants, capital payments and specific purpose programs.

13.9 The General Recurrent Grants Program is the cornerstone of Commonwealth funding for schools. Funds are provided to the States on the basis of the number of students enrolled in schools and are intended to supplement State funds for the general support and on-going operation of schools.

13.10 Payments under the Capital Grants Program are intended to supplement State funds to help provide adequate school buildings and other facilities.

13.11 The Commonwealth also funds a number of specific purpose programs which focus on improving the educational experiences for particular groups of young people. These programs, some of which have been referred to elsewhere in the Report, include:

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[4]ibid.

[5]See Commonwealth Government, *Budget Statements, 1989-90: Budget Paper No. 1*, p.3.74.

[6]'Commonwealth Funding Arrangements for Government and Non-Government Schools After 1992 – A Discussion Paper', June 1989, p.1.

(a) *The Disadvantaged Schools Program* – which assists school and school community groups improve the educational participation and achievement of young people disadvantaged by socio-economic circumstances;

(b) *The Special Education Program* – which assists schools and community organisations improve the educational participation and outcomes of children with disabilities or children in institutions;

(c) *The English as a Second Language Program* – which assists schools and education authorities improve the educational opportunity and outcomes for, and participation in Australian society of, English as a Second Language students;

(d) *The Ethnic Schools Program* – which assists ethnic community groups and organisations maintain and increase awareness of the languages and cultures of their communities for the benefit of both non-English speaking background students and other students; and

(e) *The Country Areas Program* – which assists rural schools to improve the educational participation and achievement of students disadvantaged by restricted access to social, cultural and educational activity and services, as a result of geographic isolation.[7]

13.12 The changing economic climate during the 1980s, both nationally and internationally, has led to growing concern that governments should contain and target public spending more effectively. In education there has been a continuing debate about relating public investment in schooling more explicitly to educational outcomes. To this end the Commonwealth has developed, for its general recurrent grants, a system of resource agreements. These agreements, which are negotiated between the Commonwealth and the States and non-government schools, are intended to ensure that Commonwealth funds are directed toward activities it considers to be a high priority for schools (such as increasing retention rates and broadening the educational experiences of girls).

13.13 The Committee supports the concept of resource agreements between funding partners and agrees with the assessment of the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training that:

> ... the Commonwealth is entitled and, in the public interest, obliged to seek prior assurance through agreements that the operation of schools in which its funds are being invested are consistent with its own broad objectives and purposes.[8]

13.14 The value of specific purpose programs has been endorsed in many submissions to the Inquiry and by principals and teachers with whom the Committee has met. Concern was expressed, however, about an apparent trend by the Commonwealth away from funding for specific purposes and, in particular, about the demise in recent years of programs such as the Basic Learning in

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[7]DEET, *Commonwealth Programs for Schools: Administrative Guidelines for Schools*, pp2-3.
[8]National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET), 'Schools Council Advice: Commonwealth General Recurrent Funding Agreements', October 1988, p.9.

Primary Schools Program (BLIPS); the Participation and Equity Program (PEP); and the Professional Development Program. During the Inquiry PEP was widely supported:

> ... PEP was a successful and significant stimulus to improvements in attitudes and practices relating to secondary participation. Of particular importance was the way in which PEP facilitated a co-ordinated effort in support of targeted groups of students ...[9]

13.15 Withdrawal of funding from these programs is seen in some quarters as representing a decrease in the Commonwealth's level of commitment to these important issues.

13.16 The need for revitalised effort in the areas of basic learning, parent and student participation and professional development is considered elsewhere in the Report. As a matter of general principle, however, the Committee feels it is important for the Commonwealth to reaffirm its commitment to specific purpose programs as a valuable means of encouraging improved educational opportunities and outcomes among specific groups of educationally disadvantaged young people. In particular the Committee calls on the Commonwealth to reaffirm its commitment to, and provide enhanced support for, the Disadvantaged Schools Program.

13.17 In conclusion, the Committee notes that in its August 1989 Budget Statement the Commonwealth Government announced the introduction of a new 'Students At Risk' strategy. Although full details were not available as at October 1989, it appears that the program will aim to identify students 'at risk' of leaving school early and to encourage them to stay on. The Committee commends the Government for this initiative.

Resource Needs of Schools

13.18 Despite the general and continuing increase in funding for schools, it is apparent that many schools are finding it increasingly difficult to cope with the demands of higher retention.[10] While in many cases schools and school systems have responded to these demands admirably by developing innovative, imaginative and cost effective strategies, a significant number of schools are unable to provide adequate and appropriate learning experiences for the increasing number of young people now staying on. For example, a broader range of practically oriented courses is considered by many to be necessary but, as pointed out in a number of submissions:

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[9]National Catholic Education Commission, Submission, p.4.

[10]NOTE: It is worth noting that the Schools Council of the National Board of Employment, Education and Training considers that, despite these increases, schools have not been insulated against budgetary fluctuations. The real value of the resource improvements incorporated in the General Recurrent Grants Program has been eroded by changes to the Commonwealth's specific purpose programs, reductions in general revenue grants from the Commonwealth to the States and corresponding budgetary measures at State and Territory level (NBEET, op. cit., p.7).

> An expanded range of courses is costly. Practically oriented courses need materials and equipment and space not currently possessed by most high schools.[11]

13.19 Concern has been expressed that, unless schools are provided with adequate resources to meet the demands of increased retention, the school environment will suffer and the quality of education that schools are able to provide will be placed in jeopardy. The Australian Council of State School Organisations submits that:

> As well as being wasteful to have students at school aimlessly, students ... who are not occupied in a rewarding way are likely to cause disruption or to create serious discipline problems in schools.[12]

13.20 Similar findings were reported in *The Challenge of Retention* which concluded that schools are in need of an urgent investment of human and physical resources. The report identified five priority areas of resource provision:

- More teachers need to be employed so that there can be more emphasis on practical subjects in Years 11 and 12. These subjects require smaller classes, often because of expensive equipment, and their availability in the timetable depends on the number of available teachers.
- More facilities such as workshops and specialist classrooms are needed. Teachers argued that it was impossible to respond to the need for a more practical orientation in subjects without the appropriate accommodation.
- Professional development of teachers is needed so that teachers can cope with the new cohort of students in Years 11 and 12, and can teach the new courses.
- Schools need assistance in developing the new courses, teaching materials and associated teaching strategies for students in Years 11 and 12.
- More academic and career counsellors and student welfare workers.[13]

13.21 The Schools Council in recent advice to the Commonwealth Government argued that:

> Gains in efficiency and effectiveness alone will not be sufficient to address the full implications of rising educational expectations [that is, what is expected of schools] ... or of changing patterns of school retention ... [and that] schools will need additional resources, including the increased general recurrent grants to be made available by the Commonwealth ...[14]

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[11]Professor S Ball, Chairman of Academic Board, University of Sydney, Submission, p.1. See also Catholic Education Office (Hobart), Submission, p.2; Catholic Education Office (Adelaide), Submission, p.1; and J. O'Connor, Submission, p.1.

[12]Australian Council of State School Organisation, Submission, p.4. See also Professor S Ball, op. cit.

[13]*The Challenge of Retention*, p.149.

[14]NBEET, op. cit., p.3.

13.22 The Schools Council points to the need for funds to:

(a) update and replace school buildings and equipment;

(b) maintain and improve the quality of the teaching force; and

(c) provide more imaginative and flexible approaches to school to create appropriate educational settings.[15]

13.23 The Committee supports the findings of *The Challenge of Retention* and the arguments of the Schools Council.

13.24 As governments have taken and are continuing to take positive steps to encourage more young people to complete secondary school, they have a responsibility to help schools meet the costs of retention. The Committee agrees with the following sentiments as expressed in one submission to the Inquiry:

> It is absurd and unacceptable for governments to expect schools to continue to absorb increases in enrolments in the senior secondary years without additional funds to ensure that all students benefit from staying on at school.[16]

Conclusion

13.25 Determining the precise resource implications of increasing retention is a complex task. It is, nevertheless, a task of vital importance. Government's can not, with credibility, continue to encourage more young people to stay on at school unless they give careful and detailed consideration to the resource implications of increased retention. The Committee strongly supports the Commonwealth Government's role in setting the agenda for strengthening Australia's schools, and in encouraging increased retention, but believes that it is also appropriate for the Commonwealth to take a leading role in assessing the resource implications of such strategies. The Committee has, however, been advised by the Department of Employment, Education and Training that:

> [as the] Commonwealth is not directly responsible for school-level education and does not run any schools [it] has not done any specific work on the cost implications of increasing Year 12 retention.[17]

13.26 This is a disappointing response to an issue of national importance. The Committee recommends that:

> **the Commonwealth, through its Projects of National Significance Program and in co-operation with the States, sponsor a study into the cost implications of increasing Year 12 retention rates and the nature and extent of additional resources required to provide for increased retention.** *(Recommendation 24)*

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[15]See ibid., pp.3-4.
[16]Australian Council of State School Organisations, op. cit. p.4.
[17]Letter to the Committee from DEET dated 27 September 1989.

CHAPTER 14

THE NATIONAL OBJECTIVE

Year 12 for All

14.1 Every Australian is entitled to a senior secondary education. Devising means of ensuring this entitlement is a real option for young people ought to be the objective of all governments - Commonwealth and State.

14.2 The present national goal of achieving a Year 12 retention rate of 65% by 1992 is well on the way to being achieved. While the Committee applauds the dramatic increase in retention in the last decade there is still a long way to go before the aim of Year 12 for all is met. Renewed effort is needed to ensure that the momentum that has been built up is not lost and that individuals who are currently educationally disadvantaged are not excluded from the general pattern of increase.

Implications of Year 12 for All

14.3 The Committee acknowledges that completion of senior secondary education by all young people would have significant and wide-ranging implications which are not at present well understood.

14.4 The Committee re-affirms its belief that, for reasons of social equity, national economic well-being and personal development, governments should work towards the achievement of Year 12 for all young people. It recommends, however, that:

> **the Commonwealth, through its Projects of National Significance Program and in co-operation with the States, sponsor a study into the social and economic implications of achieving universal retention to Year 12.** *(Recommendation 25)*

Strategies to Achieve the Objective

14.5 To achieve the objective of Year 12 for all the community must focus on improving the educational opportunities and outcomes for young people from educationally disadvantaged groups. The Committee hopes that this Report will help governments and the community focus on this task. The preceding Chapters have identified the groups of young people who currently experience such disadvantage and have considered various means of overcoming it. In order to improve access to, and outcomes of, the senior secondary years, governments should commit, or recommit, themselves to strategies incorporating the Committee's findings.

14.6 The Committee has found that the provision of financial support to young people from low-income families can help remove some of the barriers to participation in education. Accordingly, it is important that financial assistance schemes be maintained and that support continue to be provided to those most in need.

14.7 Family background can play a very important role in influencing decisions about staying on to Years 11 and 12. Efforts must therefore be made to ensure that the value of senior secondary education is widely appreciated in the community. To this end the States should encourage and develop:

(a) awareness campaigns;

(b) concerted efforts by schools and school principals to communicate with their local communities; and

(c) programs designed to encourage parent and community involvement in schools and learning programs.

14.8 If students are able to experience success in learning from an early stage in their schooling (as early as primary school), the likelihood that they will complete secondary school is considerably enhanced. The quality of education in the primary school years is therefore of fundamental importance. So too is the early identification of learning difficulties and the provision of prompt and effective learning assistance. Schools, teachers and parents all have roles to play in providing such learning assistance.

14.9 The provision of relevant and appropriate courses in the senior secondary years is vital if young people are to be allowed to maximise the benefits of staying on. This means that schools must offer a broad range of practically oriented courses and that the traditional emphasis of Years 11 and 12 exclusively as preparation for tertiary entrance must be broken down. Necessary elements of this process are:

(a) that education authorities emphasise, and higher education institutions accept, that school-designed courses are educationally sound and can be used for tertiary entrance; and

(b) the wider development of school/TAFE links and school/industry links.

14.10 Improvements in the provision of information about course options, job opportunities and avenues for further study will both alert young people to the benefits of staying on to Years 11 and 12 and allow them to make appropriate subject choices in the senior secondary years. Again this is an area where the provision of early advice and assistance is needed.

14.11 Principals and teachers can play a crucial role in inspiring students to overcome barriers to participation in the senior secondary years. Increases in retention in recent years have placed additional demands on teachers and a co-ordinated approach to teacher retraining is needed.

14.12 For many students external examinations represent all that is 'bad' about staying on to Years 11 and 12. The Committee applauds the trend toward school-based assessment as a way of overcoming the discouraging effect of external exams and notes that in many respects school-based assessment can be an even more rigorous test of knowledge.

14.13 The development in some States of comprehensive records of achievements is also to be applauded.

14.14 The creation of alternative learning environments in Years 11 and 12 has been shown to be both popular and beneficial. Secondary colleges are a particularly effective way of creating such an environment.

14.15 Finally, there is obvious merit in continuing government programs, both Commonwealth and State, which focus on overcoming particular difficulties or barriers experienced by young people from educationally disadvantaged groups.

Roles and Responsibilities

14.16 Primary responsibility for the education of young people in Australia lies with the States. For this reason, the implementation of many of the strategies described above requires State government action. However, the Commonwealth Government also has an important role to play. The Commonwealth provides substantial financial support for schooling and accordingly has a responsibility to provide national leadership in education. The Committee therefore urges the Commonwealth both to respond to those recommendations for which it has prime responsibility and to encourage the States to implement the other strategies recommended in this Report.

14.17 The Committee has been impressed by the commitment to strengthen Australia's schools shown in recent meetings of the Australian Education Council. The Commonwealth has taken a leading role in this process and has encouraged the States to enter into a co-operative national effort to improve the capacity of schools to accept the challenges they face. Encouraging increased retention and enabling schools to provide better for young people in the senior secondary years are among those challenges and, in the Committee's view, it is appropriate for the Commonwealth to raise these issues in the Australian Education Council.

A Co-ordinated Approach

14.18 The Australian Education Council is fostering the increased co-ordination in education which is vital for Australia's future. As has been shown in this Report, many schools and school systems have developed innovative and appropriate strategies to increase retention and improve the relevance and quality of education. In most cases these initiatives have been developed in relative isolation however and have not been implemented widely.

14.19 The Committee agrees that there is considerable merit in encouraging schools and school systems to develop diverse and regionally appropriate responses to the challenges they are facing – indeed, a number of the

recommendations in this Report support the further development of such responses. On the other hand, a more co-ordinated approach has the potential to encourage the wider implementation of successful strategies. Greater co-ordination does not necessarily imply uniformity in education, but it does allow for an exchange of ideas and information. In this way the States, school systems, schools, parents, students and the wider community can learn from each other and a more consistent emphasis can be brought to bear on the challenges facing Australia's schools.

Conclusion

14.20 If governments, both Commonwealth and State, do not respond to the challenges facing Australia's schools promptly and with genuine commitment, a large number of young people will continue to be denied the opportunity to participate fully in senior secondary education. In this event Australia will be the poorer: socially, culturally and economically.

JOHN BRUMBY, MP
Chairman

October 1989

ROGER PRICE, MP
Sub-committee Chairman

October 1989

PART FIVE

Appendices

APPENDIX A

SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

Individuals

Anderson, Mr W, Ainslie, Australian Capital Territory

Baker, Dr R, University of New England, New South Wales
Bicket, Ms J, Braddon, Australian Capital Territory
Blair, Mr J, and Year 10 students, Camperdown High School, Victoria
Boswell, Mr J, Walgett, New South Wales
Braithwaite, Dr J, Macquarie University, New South Wales

Callaghan, Mr V, and Mr P Dryden, Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, Victoria
Clarke, Mr J, Macksville High School, New South Wales
Clothier, Mr A, Kenmore, Queensland
Colley, Mr A, and Ms G Collard, Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training, Bunbury, Western Australia
Cornish, Ms A, and other ESL teachers, Narrabundah College, Australian Capital Territory
Cunningham, Ms L, Dolans Bay, New South Wales

Dinham, Mr S, Bomaderry, New South Wales
Dix, Ms G, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory

Eisner, Ms J, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory

Frankling, Mrs L, Newstead, Tasmania
Fraser, Dr W, Lindfield, New South Wales

Garmonsway, Ms P, Willmot, New South Wales
Goninon, Mrs M, Smithfield, New South Wales
Gregory, Mrs V, Dongara, Western Australia
Guy, Ms A, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory

Hart, Mr N, Bluewater State School, Queensland
Hayes, Sister R, St. Mary's College, Wollongong, New South Wales
Holland, Mr J, Yarraville, Victoria
Holland, Mr M, Heywood High School, Victoria
Holmer, Mrs P, Ringwood, Victoria
Hughes, Professor P, and other staff of the Centre for Education, University of Tasmania
Hunt, Dr J, and other staff of the Faculty of Education, Monash University, Victoria

Huthnance, Mr P, Institute of Industrial Arts (Metropolitan West Branch), New South Wales

Ivor F, The Stowe Foundation, New South Wales

Jefferis, Mr L and Mrs P, Baralaba, Queensland

Kaye, Ms J, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory
Kelleher, Sister M, Stella Maris College, Manly, New South Wales
Kelly, Sister N, St. Ursula's College, Kingsgrove, New South Wales
Kemmis, Professor S, Deakin University, Victoria

Latona, W, Johns River, New South Wales
Lee, Mr M, Copland College, Australian Capital Territory

McClintock, Ms W, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory
McInerney, Mr D, Macarthur Institute of Higher Education, New South Wales
McTaggart, Mr R, Deakin University, Victoria
Money, Mr L, Shelley, Western Australia
Morris, Mr B, and N Stewart-Dore, Brisbane College of Advanced Education
Murphy, Mr K, Ministry of Education, Victoria

Nicoll, Dr P, Campbell, Australian Capital Territory

O'Connor, Mr J, Beaudesert State High School, Queensland

Peart, Mr A, St. Pius X High School, New South Wales
Penington, Professor D, and members of staff, University of Melbourne
Pollard, Mr P, Clontarf, Queensland
Power, Professor C, Flinders University of South Australia
Prior, Ms H, Australian National University

Ross, Dr K, Deakin University, Victoria
Russell, Sister L, Sister of St. Joseph, Goulburn, and schools in Goulburn, Temora and Leeton, New South Wales

Sachsse, Mr M, Tea Tree Gully College of TAFE, South Australia
Sellick, Mr L, Parafield Gardens, South Australia
Storer, Mr G, Portland, Victoria

Teese, Dr R, University of Melbourne
Toumbourou, Mr J, Warrnambool Institute of Advanced Education, Victoria

Williamson, Dr J, Curtin University of Technology, Western Australia
Winchester, Mr J, St Patrick's College, Campbelltown, New South Wales
Windschuttle, Mr K, University of New South Wales
Wise, Dr P, Dickson College, Australian Capital Territory
Wiseman, Mrs D, Koorda, Western Australia

Schools and other Educational Institutions

Balmoral High School, Victoria
Beenleigh State High School, Queensland

Footscray Technical School, Victoria

Hawkesbury Agricultural College, New South Wales
Holy Spirit School, Queensland

Ingham State High, Queensland

Nepean College of Advanced Education, New South Wales

Princes Hill Secondary College, Victoria

Richlands State High School, Queensland
Rollingstone State School, Queensland

St. Joseph's Vocational College, New South Wales
St. Scholastica's College, New South Wales

Townsville Grammar School, Queensland
Trinity College, Queensland

University of Sydney
University of Wollongong Gender and Education Unit, New South Wales

Western Australian College of Advanced Education

Organisations

ACT Council of Parents and Citizens Associations Inc.
ACT Teachers Federation
Association of Independent Schools of the Northern Territory
Association of Independent Schools of Victoria Inc.
Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools Inc.
Australian Chamber of Manufactures
Australian College of Education
Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc
Australian Parents Council Incorporated
Australian Teachers' Federation

Brotherhood of St Laurence
Business Council of Australia

Caloundra and District Action Group
Catholic Education Centre, Queensland
Catholic Education Office, Diocese of Parramatta, New South Wales
Catholic Education Office, South Australia
Catholic Education Office, Tasmania

Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia Ltd

Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia Inc.
Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales

Independent Schools Parents Council (Northern Territory)
Isolated Children's Parents' Association (NSW Council)
Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Federal Council)
Isolated Children's Parents' Association (Queensland Council)

Migrant Resource Centre, Southern Tasmania Inc.

National Catholic Education Commission
National Council of Independent Schools' Associations
New South Wales Teachers Federation

Redeemer Lutheran College Parents' and Friends' Association, Mt Gravatt, Queensland

Secondary Colleges Staff Association, Tasmania
South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs Inc.
South Australian Independent Schools Board Incorporated
South Australian Institute of Teachers
SPELD Queensland Inc.
Student Transition Services Inc., Western Australia

Terang Community Youth Support Scheme, Victoria

Victorian Federation of Catholic Parents Clubs Inc.
Victorian Parents Council Inc.

Western Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc.

Governments and Government Agencies

Commonwealth Department of the Arts, Sport, the Environment, Tourism and Territories
Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training
Commonwealth Department of Primary Industries and Energy
Commonwealth Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet
- Office of Multicultural Affairs

New South Wales Government
- Board of Adult Education
- Metropolitan West Region, Western Sydney High Schools Program, Ministry of Education

Northern Territory Department of Education

Queensland Department of Education
- West Moreton Region

South Australian Government
- Department of Education
- Department of Technical and Further Education
- Office of Employment and Training
- Senior Secondary Assessment Board

Tasmanian Government

Victorian Government
- Central Highlands-Wimmera Region, Ministry of Education
- Curriculum and Assessment Board
- Country Education Project
- SCOPE Project, Ministry of Education
- STC Group

Western Australian Government
Wollongong Junior Council

APPENDIX B

EXHIBITS

1. **Ms Bonnie Duguid-Siegel**
   Hawkesbury Agricultural College

   Comer, J.P. 'Educating Poor Minority Children'. *Scientific American*, vol. 259, no. 5, November 1988.

2. **Dr Dennis McInerney**
   Macarthur Institute of Higher Education

   McInerney, D.M. The Determinants of Motivation of Aboriginal Students in School Settings. Paper presented to conference of the Australian Institute of Multicultural Affairs, Melbourne, 14-16 May 1986.
   McInerney, D.M. A Cross Cultural Analysis of the Determinants of Motivation for Urban Aboriginal Students in School Settings Using the Triandis Model of Social Behaviour, May 1988.
   McInerney, D.M. A Cross-Cultural Analysis of Student Motivation in School Settings: An Australian Perspective. Paper presented to 9th International IACCP Congress, Newcastle, August 1988.
   McInerney, D.M. Psychological Determinants of Motivation of Urban and Rural Non-Traditional Aboriginal Students in School Settings: Summary of Findings, Conclusions and Recommendations. Paper presented to national conference on Aboriginal issues, Sydney, 25-30 September 1988.

3. **Mr Keith Windschuttle**
   University of New South Wales

   Windschuttle, K. *Education in the USA: Statistical comparisons with Australia*. Department of Employment, Education and Training, AGPS 1988.
   Windschuttle, K. *Education in Canada: Statistical comparisons with Australia*. Department of Employment, Education and Training, AGPS 1988.

4. **Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools Inc**

   Table: Teenage Unemployment Rates ACT and Australia 1981-1988.
   Extract from Newsletter of the Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools, February 1988.
   Table: Female Appentices in the ACT 1984 and 1987.
   Extract from submission for funding.
   Summary of Recommendations.

5. **Mr Mal Lee**
Copland College (ACT)

Lee, M. The E Stage of the ACT Secondary Colleges – A Personal Perspective, June 1988.

6. **National Catholic Education Commission**

National Catholic Education Commission. *Report 1987.*

7. **Victorian Government**

VCAB Newsletter, October 1988
State Training Board. Pre-Employment Programs Policy, August 1988.

8. **Dr Richard Teese**
University of Melbourne

The SCOPE Project. *Senior School Subjects: The 1986 SCOPE Survey of Victorian Year 10, 11 and 12 Students*. Ministry of Education, Victoria.
The SCOPE Project. *The 1986 SCOPE Report: Overview of Results of the 1986 SCOPE Survey of Victorian Students in Postcompulsory Schooling*. Ministry of Education, Victoria.

9. **Professor Stephen Kemmis**
Deakin University

Rizvi, F., Kemmis, S. *Dilemmas of Reform*. Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Deakin University, Geelong, 1987.

10. **Mr John Toumbourou**
Warrnambool College of TAFE

Toumbourou, J. *Hidden Unemployment Amongst Rural Youth*. Warrnambool College of TAFE, June 1986.

11. **Australian Teachers' Federation**

Submission to the Government for a national approach to Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Schools Education, May 1988.
Australian Teachers' Federation. Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander Education Policy, as adopted by the 1989 Annual Conference, Melbourne.
Australian Teachers' Federation. 1988 National Survey of Public Schools – Retention Issues.
Graph: 'Participation in education, 15-19 year olds, by sector, sex and single year of age'. From *Taking Part: Educational Participation in the 1980s*, Department of Employment, Education and Training, October 1988.

12. Business Council of Australia

Business Council of Australia. Report on Education, March 1986.
Business Council of Australia. Education and Training Policy, April 1987.

13. Dr Robin McTaggart
Deakin University

McTaggart, R., Dickie, B., Grenfell, J. *Arts and Disadvantage: An Evaluation of Arts LINK Courses*. Report to the Commonwealth Department of Education, Deakin Institute for Studies in Education, Deakin University, Geelong, 1987.

14. Queensland Department of Education

Supplementary submission to the Inquiry.

15. Queensland Department of Education

Division of Schools: Core Values for Senior Secondary Schooling. Draft.

16. Queensland Department of Education

Department of Education, Queensland. *Departmental Syllabuses: New Subjects for Years 11 and 12 Students in Queensland Schools*, 1988.

17. Queensland Department of Education
West Moreton Region

West Moreton Post Compulsory Education Centre. *The Centre: Report of Project, June-November 1988.*

18. Mrs Teresa Cobb
Isolated Children's Parents' Association

Ashby, G.F., Robinson, N.M., Taylor, A.J. *Assistance for Parents of Disabled Students in Pre-primary, Primary and Secondary Education*. Commonwealth Department of Education, February 1987.

19. Mrs Teresa Cobb
Isolated Children's Parents' Association

Tomlinson, D.G., Tannock, P.D., *Review of the Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme*. Commonwealth Department of Education, 1982.

20. Dr Norman Pyle
SPELD Queensland Inc

Speld news, vol. 21, no. 1, March 1989.

21. South Australian Government

Statement by the Minister of Education and the Minister of Employment and Further Education. For the Future: Directions in Post-Compulsory Schooling in South Australia. December 1988.

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APPENDIX C

HEARINGS AND WITNESSES

SYDNEY, WEDNESDAY 15 FEBRUARY 1989

Australian Parents Council	Mr Leo Dunne Mrs Margaret Slattery
Catholic Education Office (Diocese of Parramatta)	Mr Christopher Barrett Mrs Helen Sinclair Ms Pam Smith Mr Gregory Whitby
Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales	Dr Graeme Aplin Mrs Janette Hyde Mrs Sally Ray
Hawkesbury Agricultural College (Faculty of Nursing)	Ms Bonnie Duguid-Siegel
Macarthur Institute of Higher Education (School of Education and Language Studies)	Dr Dennis McInerney
New South Wales Board of Adult Education	Mr Phillip Barry
New South Wales Department of Education	Mr Bernard Henry Mr Doug White
New South Wales Department of Technical and Further Education	Ms Ellen Rainson Ms Jozefa Sobski
New South Wales Teachers Federation	Mr Raymond Cavenagh Ms Patricia Simpson
University of New South Wales (School of Social Work)	Mr Keith Windshuttle

CANBERRA, THURSDAY 16 FEBRUARY 1989

ACT Administration	Mr Peter Kearns Mr Keith Lyon
ACT Schools Authority (Schools Division)	Mr Brian Dooley Mrs Gwenyth McNeill Mr Maxwell Sawatzki

ACT Teachers Federation	Mr Stephen Alford Mr Clive Haggar
Association of Parents and Friends of ACT Schools	Mr Graeme Bell Mr James Collins Mrs Therese Hawke Mr Owen Heness
Catholic Education Office (Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn)	Mr Graeme Bell Mr Donald Christie
Copland College	Mr Mal Lee Mrs Valerie Macaulay
National Catholic Education Commission	Mr Ian Baker Dr James McMorrow Miss Patricia Ryan

MELBOURNE, WEDNESDAY 22 FEBRUARY 1989

Australian Teachers Federation	Ms Joan Corbett Ms Barbara Preston Mr David Robson
Business Council of Australia	Mr Ray Costello Mr George Hutton
Deakin University (School of Education)	Dr Robin McTaggart
Ministry of Education	Ms Jill Anwyl Mr John Rudolph
University of Melbourne (Institute of Education)	Dr Richard Teese
University of New South Wales (Counselling and Research Unit)	Mr Vincent Callaghan
Appearing in a Private Capacity	Professor Stephen Kemmis Mr John Toumbourou

BRISBANE, TUESDAY 21 MARCH 1989

Beaudesert State High School	Mr John O'Connor
Brisbane Catholic Education	Mr Thomas Lambert
Brisbane College of Advanced Education Centre for Research and Learning in Literacy	Mrs Nea Stewart-Dore
Isolated Children's Parents' Association	Mrs Teresa Cobb

Queensland Department of Education	Mr Denis Frederiksen Mr Frank Peach
Richlands State High School	Mr Desmond Crump
SPELD Queensland Inc.	Dr Norman Pyle
Trinity College	Mr Robert Peacock
Queensland Department of Education (West Moreton Region)	Mr Kenneth Maynard Mrs Susan Youngberry Mr Geoffrey Ginn Mrs Mary Hyndman

ADELAIDE, TUESDAY 28 MARCH 1989

South Australian Institute of Teachers	Mr Phillip Endersby
Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools	Mr William Griffiths
Tea Tree Gully College of TAFE	Mr Michael Sachsse
Catholic Education Office	Ms Jane Swift
Education Department of South Australia	Ms Catherine Alcock Dr Janet Keightley Dr Paul Kilvert Dr Claire Woods
Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia	Mr Russell Craig Dr Vivian Eyers Mr John Foyster
Independent Schools Board of South Australia	Ms Anne Dwyer Miss Helen Reid Mr Noel Volk
South Australian Department of TAFE	Mr Barry Grear Mr Robin Ryan
South Australian Office of Employment and Training	Mr Peter King

CANBERRA, THURSDAY 6 APRIL 1989

Australian Council of State School Organisations	Ms Shirley Allen Ms Leeta Bacon Ms Joan Kellett
Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia	Mr Robert Bastian
Appearing in a Private Capacity	Mr Warren Anderson

SYDNEY (ROOTY HILL), FRIDAY 7 APRIL 1989

Junior Council of the City of Wollongong	Miss Robyn Elliott Mr Stephen Murray Miss Anna Watt
Macquarie University	Dr John Braithwaite
University of Sydney	Professor Samuel Ball

HOBART, FRIDAY 28 APRIL 1989

Education Department of Tasmania	Mr Brian Hortle
Secondary Colleges' Staff Association	Ms Patricia Moran
University of Tasmania (Centre for Education)	Dr Joan Abbott-Chapman

CANBERRA, MONDAY 8 MAY 1989

Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training	Mrs Helen Allnutt Mr Peter Grant Mr Robert Harvey Dr Neil Johnston Mr Victor Price
New South Wales Department of Education	Mr Sam Weller

CANBERRA, THURSDAY 1 JUNE 1989

Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet (Office of Multicultural Affairs)	Ms Tina Karanastasis Mr Peter Vaughan Dr Judith Winternitz
Federation of Ethnic Communities' Councils of Australia	Dr Heinrich Stefanik

DARWIN, THURSDAY 27 JULY 1989

Association of Indpendent Schools of the Northern Territory and Director of Kormilda College	Dr Peter Harris
Catholic Education Office	Miss Veronica O'Sullivan
Northern Territory Council of Government School Organisations	Mr Richard Creswick Mrs Karen Hall
FEPPI – Northern Territory Aboriginal Education Consultative Group	Mr Robert Dunbar Mr Alan Ludwig
Independent Schools Parents Council (NT)	Mr Bill Burford Mr Bernie Sutherland
Northern Territory Department of Education	Mr Bob Cox Mr Clifford Fowler Mrs Mary Lefevre Dr Charles Payne Dr Richard Watkins

APPENDIX D

SCHOOL VISITS, PARENTS' MEETINGS AND INFORMAL DISCUSSIONS

During the Inquiry the Committee visited a number of schools – both government and non-government in both city and country areas. On these visits the Committee had the opportunity to meet with students and teachers and discuss various issues relevant to the Inquiry. The schools visited are listed below:

Date	School
7 April 1989	Shalvey High School (Sydney, NSW) St Marys Senior High School (Sydney, NSW)
10 April 1989	Narrabundah College (Canberra, ACT) Dickson College (Canberra, ACT)
28 April 1989	Rosny College (Hobart, TAS) Hobart College (Hobart, TAS)
19 May 1989	Girrawheen Senior High School (Perth, WA) Morley Senior High School (Perth, WA)
6 June 1989	Dom Remy College (Sydney, NSW) St Patrick's College (Sydney, NSW)
21 June 1989	The Parks High School (Adelaide, SA) Woodville High School (Adelaide, SA)
13 July 1989	St Arnaud High School (St Arnaud, VIC) McCauley College (Dooboobetic, VIC) Bendigo Senior High School (Bendigo, VIC)
26 July 1989	Casuarina College (Darwin, NT)
27 July 1989	St John's College (Darwin, NT) Kormilda College (Darwin, NT)

The Committee also held a number of meetings with parents and other interested groups and individuals. These informal discussions are listed below:

Date	Activity
7 April 1989	Meeting, at Rooty Hill High School, (Sydney, NSW) with NSW Department of Education officials involved in the 'Staying On' program Parents' meeting at the Rooty Hill School of Arts (Sydney, NSW)
17 May 1989	Informal discussions in Melbourne with: • Diane Colk, Pam Jonas and Kelvin Murphy; • the Australian Chamber of Manufactures; • The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board; • The University of Melbourne; and • The Brotherhood of St Laurence
18 May 1989	Parents' meeting at Mirrabooka Senior High School (Perth, WA)
6 June 1989	Informal discussions with the Director and staff of the Holy Family Education Centre (Sydney, NSW)
21 June 1989	Informal discussions with staff of Parent Participation Centre (Adelaide, SA)
26 July 1989	Parents' meeting at Darwin High School (Darwin, NT)

APPENDIX E

COMMONWEALTH ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS – AUSTUDY

AUSTUDY is an allowance paid to senior secondary and tertiary students who are from low income families or who otherwise need financial assistance to complete their studies full-time.

It is available to students who are Australian citizens or permanent residents of Australia and are at least 16 years of age. Homeless students who have reached school leaving age are also eligible if they meet strict conditions.

While it is usually paid to the student, parents of 16 and 17 year old secondary students can have the allowance paid to themselves instead.

The allowance is paid at three rates:

- **Standard**, for students who live at home and are financially supported by their parents.
- **Away**, for students who for certain reasons live away from home to study but are still financially supported by their parents. Students who were able to receive boarding allowances under the old Assistance for Isolated Children Scheme are now eligible for the Away rate of AUSTUDY instead.
- **Independent**, for students who are married, over 25 years of age, have been full-time in the workforce for 3 of the past 4 years, have a child, or for certain other reasons are not financially supported by their parents.

Most senior secondary students who receive AUSTUDY are paid either the Standard rate or the Away rate. How much money they actually receive each fortnight depends on their age, their income and their parents' combined income. They personally can earn up to $3,000 during the year before their AUSTUDY allowance is affected.

Currently, the Standard and Away allowances are paid in full to students whose parents' combined taxable income in 1987-88 was $16,950 or less. Smaller amounts are paid to students whose parents' income is higher. Some examples follow.

Standard rate (per fortnight)

Age	Parents' combined taxable income for 1987-88				
	Up to $16,950	19,000	21,000	23,000	25,000
16 or 17	$53.55	43.73	34.14	24.55	14.96
18 or over	$64.30	54.48	44.89	35.30	25.71

Away rate (per fortnight)

Age	Parents' combined taxable income for 1987-88				
	Up to $16,950	20,000	23,000	26,000	29,000
16 or 17	$81.40	66.79	52.40	38.02	23.64
18 or over	$97.70	83.09	68.70	54.32	39.94

AUSTUDY phases out altogether once the parents' income exceeds certain amounts. The cut-off point varies according to the rate paid and the number of students in the family. Some examples of the parental income limits at which AUSTUDY phases out are shown below:

Parental Income Limit

Age	Standard rate	Away rate
16 or 17		
One student	$27,919	$33,729
+ one other student in family	$38,889	50,509
18 or over		
One student	$30,169	37,129
+ one other student in family	$43,379	57,309

Further information and application forms are available from CES offices and AUSTUDY offices. Country students can ask for forms to be sent to them by calling (008) 11 2338 for the cost of a local call.

Source: *AUSTUDY. Parents Guide to Financial Support for Students in 1989*, Department of Employment, Education and Training.

APPENDIX F

STATE FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR STUDENTS -STATE EDUCATION ALLOWANCES

The following information was compiled from evidence presented to the Committee and the appendix to V Sheen, A Fair Chance in Education: Education Allowances for Low-income Families, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Melbourne, 1988. Further information about the eligibility criteria and rates of payment of State education allowances is available from the education authorities in each State.

Australian Capital Territory

An education allowance of $450 per year for 14 year olds and $500 per year for 15 year olds is available.

An income test of $6,000 plus $2,850 for a dependent spouse and $870 for each dependent child applies.

New South Wales

Secondary Bursary Grants may be payable at the following rates:

Years 7-8: $216 per year
Year 9: $320 per year
Year 10: $500 per year

An income test of $6000 plus $4000 for a dependent spouse and $1520 for each dependent child applies.

Northern Territory

An income tested assistance scheme at Junior Secondary level of up to $280 per year.

Queensland

A text book allowance is paid to all students in Years 8-12. Students in country areas may also be eligible for living away from home and travelling allowances.

South Australia

Government Assistance

This is $48 a year for stationery and text books for primary and secondary school students. The income test is $290 per week with deductions for dependents.

Tasmania

Loan Issue

This allowance goes to the school for children from low-income families to cover costs of books, stationery and subject levies. The income test is $274 per week (gross) plus $17 for each dependent child.

Primary schools: $32 per year
Years 7-11: $69 per year
Secondary college: $97 per year

School Certificate Allowance

An allowance of $100 a year for students in Year 10 with the same means test.

Senior Secondary Accommodation Allowance

For students in Years 11 and 12 who are obliged to live more than 40 kilometres from home to attend school.

Under 16 years of age: $760 per year
Over 16 years of age: between $500 and $760 per year depending on the type, if any, of Commonwealth assistance being received.

Conveyance Allowance

To provide partial reimbursement of costs incurred by students travelling to and from schools and secondary colleges. The allowance is payable for students who live more than 3.25 kilometres from a school or a bus service.

Hostel Boarding Allowance

An income tested allowance of $2.50 per boarding week to assist with the cost of boarding students at Government hostels. To be entitled to hostel accommodation students must qualify for an allowance under the Commonwealth's Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme in excess of the basic $989 per year.

Special Bursaries

Discretionary bursaries are available for those in necessitous circumstances. Amount of bursary is determined according to circumstances.

Victoria

Education Maintenance Allowance

Primary school: $127 per year
Years 7-10: $254 per year

Families are eligible if they hold a Health Care Card.

Education Expense Allowance

$100 per year for each student; payable with Family Allowance.

State School Relief

Assistance for clothing to children from low-income families in primary and secondary schools.

Western Australia

Additional Education Allowance

This is available for secondary students up to the age of 16. All health card holders are eligible.

Years 7-10: $125 per year
Years 11: $180 per year
Year 12 (if student under 16): $76 per year

Concession for Secondary School Clothing

This is $100 per year for clothing for children from low-income families.