

FOREWORD

This inquiry follows up a 1988 report by the Senate Select Committee on the Education of Gifted and Talented Children. It was prompted by continuing concern about whether the education system adequately responds to the special needs of gifted children.

Submissions came from all types of interest groups, including gifted education specialists, education authorities, teacher unions and parents and citizens associations. As well there were many submissions from parents of gifted children. These were very valuable in filling out the picture and showing the human dimension of the problem.

There has been little progress in provision for gifted children since 1988. All interest groups agree that there are continuing problems. Gifted children have special needs in the education system; for many their needs are not being met; and many suffer underachievement, boredom, frustration and psychological distress as a result.

Many teachers feel a lack of expertise, lack of confidence and lack of resources to meet the needs of gifted children. The main theme that emerged in the inquiry is the need for better teacher training (both preservice and inservice) so that teachers are better able to identify the gifted and make provision for their special needs. Better curriculum support is also essential so that teachers can differentiate the curriculum for the gifted.

Negative community attitudes to giftedness are widely reported. Many of these are based on misconceptions. Consciousness-raising to improve the acceptance of giftedness should be an important part of the national strategy for education of the gifted which the Committee recommends. The aim should be to have giftedness recognised as a characteristic of some children, and acknowledged as requiring particular interventions. As the Committee notes, 'Equity should be viewed as equal access to an *appropriate* education... The idea of a fully humane society is to treat all individuals and groups with concern and understanding – in other words, to be responsive to diversity.'

The Committee is grateful to all who made submissions, who gave evidence at hearings, and who hosted the Committee's site visits. There were many comprehensive and thoughtful submissions from both individuals and organisations. The Committee greatly appreciates the effort that their authors put into them.

Senator Jacinta Collins
Chair

