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22 March 2013

Mr Tim Watling
Committee Secretary
The Senate
Standing Committee On Education, Employment And Workplace Relations
Teaching and Learning (maximising our investment in Australian schools)
Email ewr.sen@aph.gov.au

Dear Mr Watling

Response to Questions on Notice Sub 34 Australian Council of Jewish Schools

The Australian Council of Jewish Schools (ACJS) acknowledges receipt of the proof Hansard transcripts and thanks the Committee for seeking the ACJS view on aspects of this most important inquiry.

The members of the ACJS have reviewed the transcript and are comfortable with its accuracy.

The ACJS notes that Senator McKenzie has placed two questions on notice. The questions were:

1. In relation to paragraph (xi) of the submission, p. 4, to please expand what is meant by the phrase 'SES factors do not play a role in domiciliary location' and
2. In relation to paragraph (xiv), to please outline the 'other circumstances' where family background will only account for 10-12% of likely student outcome.

In respect of the first question the phrase 'SES factors do not play a role in domiciliary location', we note that the underlying concept in the SES modelling is that people with similar or closely related attributes, such as education, incomes and occupational categories will tend to live in neighbourhoods with members of the community that share similar attributes. Although this premise is generally correct, it is not the resident determining criteria applicable within the Jewish community.

Members of the Jewish community through religious and social need will chose to reside within walking distance of Jewish related infrastructure. This infrastructure consists of shops, synagogues, preschools, playgroups, schools, and a variety of community related resources.

The need to reside within walking proximity of facilities often results in a choice of residency location that is not consistent with the socio-economic level of the average family that otherwise resides in a particular neighbourhood. That need often places an individual family in a situation of rent or mortgage stress. Families overriding religious or social need will often result in accommodation being chosen in an area that is more expensive than affordable. The cost of that choice impacts on the families, their standard of living and comfort and often results in more cramped living conditions than those generally accepted. Other families

reside with extended family in shared accommodation in a neighbourhood that falls well outside their socio economic comfort zone.

Within the Jewish Community this is evidenced by the fact that four of our schools over 3 consecutive quadreniums, successfully appealed the SES score that was naturally determined and based on pure residential addresses.

School	naturally determined SES 2009-2012 quadrenium	Revised SES following specific review
Yeshivah College & Beth Rivkah Ladies College	118	89
Yesodei Hatorah College	118	88
Adass Israel school	116	89
Kesser Torah College	120	91

The appeal mechanism requires that a school is able to demonstrate that there is in each case identifiable unique characteristics supported by empirical evidence that the parents attending the school have socio-economic attributes that are significantly different from the profile of the neighbourhood in which the families reside. The very significant change to the SES score in each of the 4 schools (accommodating nearly 2000 students) demonstrates the extent of misalignment with the premise and the relationship of SES factors to choice of domiciliary residence.

A key element in the criteria for appeal is that the differential must be "significant". Each of our schools has markers and indicators compared to the validation studies that demonstrate that the parent body on the whole does not share the same attributes as the neighbourhood in which they reside. The difference, although evident at our other schools, is not sufficiently extreme to warrant a successful appeal in terms of the "significance" guideline as interpreted. The difference however does exist and demonstrates that in the case of our schools, SES factors do not play a role in the main in domiciliary location.

In respect of the second question where it was asked about other circumstances 'where family background will only account for 10-12% of likely student outcomes' we note initially a research paper prepared by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) entitled "School Completion: What we Learn From Different measures of Family Background", a Longitudinal survey of Australian Youth, Research Report 59 released July 2012.

The NCVER research paper concluded that cultural factors including poor school experiences, participation in risky activities such as smoking and alcohol consumption, along with aspirations, are the main predictors of year 12 completion. The report goes on to argue that commonly used indicators of educational disadvantage such as parental education and occupation are less significant than previously indicated. This is noted specifically in the light of the first 2 drafts of the Gonski modelling for school funding as advised. In those models the primary determinant of disadvantage was determined by parental education and occupation. It remains the primary indicators in determining the ICSEA scores as published on the 'My School' website.

Our schools are yet to fully identify, appreciate and understand what the primary drivers of disadvantage include. The question is not one that is easily addressed and it is one that varies from school to school. It is also a question in this response format that is difficult to respond to, in a reasonable space. What we do understand is that educational attainment and occupational categories are not key indicators of advantage or disadvantage in our experience.

I therefore will touch on the areas of disadvantage and highlight some of the impacting aspects that our schools have noted.

1. **Migration and in particular the period of time since migrating**, has been identified as significant factor at some schools. The impact is multifaceted and touches on aspects of:
 - a. Recognition of overseas qualification
 - b. Obtaining Australian recognition of qualification and accreditation
 - c. Sourcing employment commensurate with that previously enjoyed status
 - d. Competing for employment as an overseas migrant with Australian obtained qualification and experienced applicants.
 - e. The newly found absence of family support,
 - f. And in some cases the difficulty of language, not just the phonics but the nuance.

Each of these factors detract from the quality time and emphasis that can be given to children. Children can experience a loss of familiarity, a loss of close friends and the absence of wider family support, coupled with the language issue. This mix of factors coupled with the change in focus and additional strain experienced by parents impacts on potential student outcomes. The NCVET report noted the importance of school experiences. The potential for a less favourable or even worse first impression is high. This clearly is a factor to be considered that does not relate directly to parent educational attainment and occupational category. It however is a factor that impacts potentially on student outcomes and must be a consideration. There is not any consideration of this aspect in the present modelling.

2. Some schools have experienced **family size** to be a major impact on areas of disadvantage. Family size impacts also on a number of aspects simultaneously. These factors can include
 - a. The greater number of children the less focus and individual attention on any one child or their school achievements.
 - b. The greater number of children, the more times a parent must take maternity leave. The more maternity leave, the greater time out of work and the greater time with no associated income.
 - c. The greater number of children the greater impact on household expenses. A family income of \$160,000 (two family members each earning \$80,000) can go a lot further with 2 children than it can with 6, 8 10 or more children.
 - d. The greater number children and the longer out of the work force time not only impacts the absence of income over the time out of work, but the time out of work impacts on longer term earning capacity and asset accumulation in preparation for retirement.

The impact of debt, in larger families, the greater need for disposable income to be applied to basic necessities, the greater time demands being spread over a larger family are impacts of disadvantage when being compared to average incomes and average family size. There is no consideration with the presently discussed models of the impact of family size.

3. **Cultural background** impacts on advantage and disadvantage.
 - a. A general concept equates education with employment opportunity. Within the Jewish and some other communities education is obtained for knowledge sake, and not with the aim of occupation and lifelong employment.
 - b. We note that many communities, as well as the Jewish community have parents in times past that did not have post school education, yet found the resources and made the effort to ensure this was the case with their children when an opportunity presented. The Greek communities and in particular the Chinese communities are two other examples where education indicators did not resemble the outcomes that would have been associated with the extent of disadvantage.
4. **Families who have a child with a learning or physical disability.** The general concept is that the child with the disability is accommodated separately. What is not taken into account and is a factor in determining educational advantage or disadvantage is the impact of that child on siblings and the family generally. Having a child with a disability is an educational disadvantage on every member of the family and not just the child with the disability. This too is a factor that is not adequately acknowledged.
5. **A child's individual readiness to learn** also plays a role. This aspect goes beyond being "smart" or otherwise, but impacts on areas of adaptation to structures, classroom dynamic, peer interaction, sociability and response to achievement or challenges. It is clearly a factor in determining advantage or otherwise, even though it is most likely immeasurable.
6. **Single parent families** and families encountering extreme illness of a parent impact on educational outcomes at different times and in different ways. As per point 5, the measure of such an impact is extremely difficult to measure, but like point 5 it plays a role.

Every aspect of behaviour and interaction plays a part in educational advantage or disadvantage. Every set of circumstances differs. Our schools demonstrated that there are unique factors present in SES determinations that demonstrate that they do not apply naturally in every case. Elements of education disadvantage like SES similarly do not apply to merely educational attainment and occupational category. There are many other factors that interact and play a significant part. In our schools they play a role greater than in some other schools. The role is exacerbated when multiple factors co-relate as they so often do.

Our reference to SES, the other factors of advantage and disadvantage are of serious concern, as modelling on educational outcomes appears to be using generally accepted principles in complete isolation of other factors, which are without question influencing aspects. The response in this format does not allow full elaboration and explanation. The issue is a large issue as we are sure members of the inquiry appreciate. Members of ACJS would be very happy to discuss and take this aspect further.

Yours Sincerely

Leonard Hain
Executive Director
Australian Council of Jewish Schools