

SUMMARY OF RECOMMENDATIONS

CHAPTER 1 - OVERVIEW

In the absence of an overview comparing the problems of *all* disciplines in the education system, the Committee has been reluctant to make recommendations that might be interpreted as 'special favours for the arts'. Accordingly most of the recommendations are deliberately phrased broadly. An underlying theme of this report is the way broader reforms to education have influenced (or, it is feared, may influence) the arts by way of unintended side-effects of 'collateral damage'. An underlying theme in the recommendations is the need to pre-empt, monitor and remedy the detrimental side-effects of change wherever they occur - not only in the arts. In so doing we may hope that if a change is doing the arts collateral damage, the remedy will give the arts - and perhaps other disciplines with similar problems - a collateral benefit.

Uni. entrance and Year 12 subject choice (paragraph 1.118)

There is a perception that the arts are a handicap to university entrance. If the perception encourages brighter or more ambitious students to shun the arts, it is likely to become a self-fulfilling prophecy, to the detriment of a broad education for those students, and to the detriment of our cultural life as the more talented choose other futures. The humanities and arts will not receive the attention warranted by their importance as fields of knowledge.

Recommendation 1 (paragraph 1.131)

The Commonwealth, in consultation with the Australian Vice-Chancellor's Committee and State education authorities, should review the influence of university entrance arrangements on the school curriculum to discover whether they are having a detrimental effect on humanities and arts.

CHAPTER 2

ARTS TEACHING - THE CYCLE OF NEGLECT

Teacher training - a case for positive discrimination? (paragraph 2.51)

Balancing the needs of different subjects for school time is a contentious matter; but there should be no need and no demand to balance their need for competent teaching in whatever time is available. Competent teaching should be available at *all* times. The Committee heard nothing to suggest that generalist primary teachers teach most subjects poorly; we heard strong evidence that they teach arts relatively poorly. That is sufficient reason to recommend that arts should have a high priority in the development of competency standards for newly graduated teachers. It is intolerable

that arts - or *any* subject - should be taught by teachers who, however well-meaning, know themselves that they cannot do the job properly. It is a betrayal of our children.

Recommendation 2 (*paragraph 2.52*)

The Commonwealth, as part of the outcomes of the competency standards element of the National Project for the Quality of Teaching and Learning, should encourage the States and Territories to give priority to development of more detailed competency standards both for specialist arts teachers and for generalist primary teachers teaching arts.

The States employ teachers; the Commonwealth, through its funding of universities, is ultimately responsible for the quality of new graduates available for employment. The Commonwealth, having initiated the National Curriculum project and approved the resulting documents, has a duty to ensure that the universities produce teachers satisfactorily able to teach all its key learning areas.

Recommendation 3 (*paragraph 2.65*)

As part of the National Curriculum for schools project, the Commonwealth should survey university teacher training courses to identify any deficiencies or systematic biases between disciplines. The Commonwealth, in consultation with the States and Territories, the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee and teacher organisations, should develop guidelines to remedy any deficiencies so that all the Key Learning Areas of the National Curriculum can be taught with equal high quality.

Need for more cross-over between arts bureaucracies and education bureaucracies
(*paragraph 2.88*)

There is a general question: What is the right balance of responsibility for arts education between arts bodies and education bodies? The Committee tends to prefer the view that responsibility for what happens in schools must rest *primarily* with schools - particularly since education budgets are huge and arts budgets are tiny. On the other hand, opportunities for diverse co-operative activities should not be missed. Navigating the right course between these conflicting principles will be a delicate matter.

Recommendation 4 (*paragraph 2.91*)

The Department of Employment, Education and Training and the Department of Communications and the Arts should establish a forum of relevant government agencies and peak non-government bodies to facilitate consultation on matter of mutual interest to do with arts education so as to prevent initiatives relevant to both from ‘falling between the stools’.

Inservice professional development for teachers (*paragraph 2.96*)

The arts have special needs in professional development because of their particular emphasis on physical skills. Available courses (whether departmental inservices or university courses) tend not to acknowledge this. The result of this and various other factors seems to be that arts teachers need inservice professional development more than most teachers, but are less likely to get it.

The Commonwealth has acknowledged the need for better inservice professional development for teachers generally, and to this end has established the National Professional Development Program with funding of \$60 million over three years starting 1993-94. It is focused on national initiatives such as the National Curriculum for schools (see chapter 3), the Key Competencies (see chapter 4) and vocational education.¹

However, if it is expected that the program will act as seed money, in the hope that the professional organisations it helps will continue a high level of activity beyond the end of the program, the Committee thinks that this may be unrealistic - particularly in the case of the smaller groups such as the arts educators. There is no doubt that the need is ongoing; it would be a pity to let the head of steam that the program builds up evaporate again at the end of the three years.

As well, the focus on national initiatives such as the National Curriculum for schools, the Key Competencies and vocational education must be balanced with the need for more targeted assistance to areas of particular need, such as particular disciplines, particular levels of schooling, or particular parts of the country. It would be regrettable if the program came to be dominated by things like ‘how to assess students’ progress against the National Curriculum profiles’ - things that are basically to do with administrative procedures rather than quality teaching.

1 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Annual Report 1993-94*, p66.

Recommendations 5, 6 (paragraph 2.114)

5. The Commonwealth's National Professional Development Program for teachers (NPDP) should continue beyond the end of the current 1993-96 three year plan.

6. To better target the expenditure of NPDP money the Department of Employment, Education and Training, in consultation with State education authorities, teacher organisations and the Australian Vice-Chancellors Committee, should investigate the current state of inservice professional development (including by discipline) and identify areas of need for priority action.

CHAPTER 3

ARTS IN THE SCHOOL CURRICULUM - HOW MUCH IS ENOUGH?

Slicing the cake - a fifth of an eighth? (paragraph 3.2)

Figures on how much time subjects get in school seem to be much more elusive than figures on what subjects students take; yet neither is meaningful without the other. Commonsense suggests that the way children spend their time during the school week is a fairly basic piece of accountability information about education systems - one that is practically absent from present annual reports.

Recommendation 7 (paragraph 3.9)

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia* should report on the inputs to school education (such as enrolments, lesson time, teachers employed) broken down by the various subjects and Key Learning Areas and level of schooling, to allow a measure of the place of the arts (or other subject areas) in the school curriculum.

A common theme in submissions was the need for more research into the characteristics and outcomes of a good arts education. The National Board of Employment, Education and Training (NBEET) has commented generally on the lack of systematically collected, nationally consistent data on educational outcomes generally.

Recommendation 8 (paragraph 3.12)

The *National Report on Schooling in Australia* should record educational outcomes for all Key Learning Areas, not only literacy and numeracy.

The National Curriculum for schools (paragraph 3.59)

The National Curriculum is a co-operative curriculum development project by Commonwealth and State governments. The project has produced 16 framework documents: a 'statement' and a 'profile' in each of eight 'key learning areas'. These documents are now in the hands of the States and Territories to be used as a resource, according to their priorities, in making more detailed curriculum documents.

Arts educators have various fears about the detailed implementation of the framework, of which the chief is the concern that it will encourage an undue emphasis on measurable behavioural outcomes, leading schools and teachers to undervalue the creative and unpredictable element in arts learning.

Recommendations 9, 10, 11, 12 (*paragraph 3.104*)

9. In any further consideration or development of the National Curriculum documents the purpose of education must be clearly and strongly asserted, with a well-rounded and liberal education being the benchmark, so that education will be an effective instrument by which children become socialised, participating, informed and creative adults.

10. Further development of national curriculum initiatives at State level should adapt the National Curriculum framework to take account of the particular needs of each discipline, paying particular regard to the creative and unpredictable element of arts learning which cannot easily be accommodated in a framework of pointers and outcomes.

11. In light of this the Commonwealth and the States should monitor the implementation of national curriculum initiatives to assess whether changes are relatively disadvantaging the arts, and should devise pre-emptive or remedial strategies.

12. Professional development programs for teachers relating to national curriculum initiatives, including those funded by the Commonwealth's National Professional Development Program, should pay due attention to the particular problems and needs of each discipline in implementing national curriculum initiatives.

CHAPTER 4

'KEY COMPETENCIES' IN SCHOOLS - FOR WORK OR FOR LIFE?

Some general issues to do with the Key Competencies (*paragraph 4.13*)

In 1992 the Mayer Committee, on a brief from Australia's Ministers for Education, produced a list of seven 'key competencies', said to be things 'that all young people need to enable them to participate effectively in the emerging forms of work and work

organisation.’ Pilot projects are now under way to integrate the Key Competencies into schools.

The Committee is concerned that the Key Competencies are now also being billed as not merely vocational, but also part of ‘general education’. We suspect that the implications of this conceptual shift have not been fully thought through. It makes the deliberate omission of ‘competencies’ relating to values and attitudes much more contentious.

Given that it is necessary to put more vocational training into schools (because of increasing Year 12 retention among students not destined for university), it is equally necessary to ensure that the education of the whole person is not pushed out. The Committee considers that the Commonwealth, having taken a leading role in the first matter, should also take a leading role in the second.

Recommendations 13, 14, 15 (*paragraph 4.43*)

13. In increasing the profile of vocational training in schools, the Education Ministers should pay particular attention to the need to ensure that a broad general education is not marginalised. Monitoring the implementation of Key Competencies projects must address this question. Commonwealth special purpose funding of Key Competencies related projects should be conditional on this.

14. Professional development programs for teachers (including the National Professional Development Program) should address the relationship between the Key Competencies and broader educational aims, so the Key Competencies are not misused outside their proper sphere.

15. The Education Ministers should initiate a project of comparable status and focus to the present Key Competencies project to clarify the broad purposes of school education and re-assert their importance beside the employment-related purposes which are the focus of the Mayer report.

Arts educators’ concerns about the Key Competencies (*paragraph 4.44*)

The Mayer report strongly emphasises the notion that competence is the capacity to ‘do’ something rather than just ‘know’ something. The implications of this, if implemented uncritically, are a fair cause of concern for the arts educators who say that in education the process of coming to understanding is as important as the product. Because of the creative and unpredictable elements of arts learning this problem probably applies more to arts than to some other subjects where outcomes and understandings are more easily measurable.

Recommendations 16, 17 (paragraph 4.51)

16. Projects to integrate the Key Competencies into the school curriculum should monitor the effects on the various disciplines, paying particular regard to the creative and unpredictable element of arts learning which cannot easily be accommodated in a framework of measurable behavioural outcomes. Commonwealth special purpose funding of Key Competencies related projects should be conditional on this.

17. In light of this the Commonwealth and the States should monitor the integration of the Key Competencies into the school curriculum to assess whether they have effects that are relatively disadvantaging the arts, and should devise pre-emptive or remedial strategies.

Arts educators also argued that the Key Competencies should include a competency relating to ‘aesthetic awareness’, as this is an *employment-related* competency no less than the chosen seven. The Committee agrees.

Recommendation 18 (paragraph 4.67)

A competency relating to aesthetic awareness should be added to the head list of Key Competencies.

CHAPTER 5

UNIVERSITY REFORMS - THE ROUGH END OF THE PINEAPPLE FOR THE ARTS?

The Unified National System of universities (paragraph 5.5)

In 1989 the historic division between universities and colleges of advanced education ended when they were amalgamated into the 35 enlarged universities of the Unified National System. Formerly independent specialist art schools and conservatoriums of music became attached to large universities. Many of these are not happy with the amalgamation. The burden of their complaint is that universities have an academic, research-oriented culture that does not accommodate the different nature of arts activities.

Recommendation 19 (*paragraph 5.21*)

The Commonwealth and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee, as part of the Quality Assurance Program in higher education, should monitor the effects of the Unified National System reforms to universities on a discipline by discipline basis. They should report on any trends which are disadvantaging some disciplines relative to others. They should suggest strategies for ameliorating these trends.

The Relative Funding Model for university teaching costs (*paragraph 5.23*)

The Relative Funding Model was devised in 1990, with the purpose of discovering whether any universities were significantly over-funded or underfunded in their Commonwealth operating grants. Three teaching cost studies were carried out; disciplines were grouped into clusters and a weighting given to each cluster to show its average relative teaching costs.

Submissions to this inquiry from university people were unanimous in condemning the effects of the Relative Funding Model on the arts. Their complaint was simple: teaching practical arts involves high cost studio and small group teaching, with costs more comparable to the practical sciences than to other humanities. It is claimed that putting them in the cluster with average weighting 1.6 does not recognise this; the 1.6 weighting is too low for arts; as university administrations tend to follow the Relative Funding Model weightings when dividing their operating grants among their faculties, this disadvantages arts.

The Commonwealth acknowledged at the time that the Relative Funding Model held problems for the arts, and promised a followup study of arts teaching costs. This has never been done.

Recommendation 20 (*paragraph 5.31*)

The Department of Employment, Education and Training should carry out the further investigation of arts teaching costs promised when the Relative Funding Model was introduced, with a view to establishing the extent of any relative disadvantage to the arts under the current model.

It seems that the Commonwealth wanted to keep the Model simple largely to discourage universities from using it in their internal budgeting decisions - just as a computerised photographic database might deliberately blur the images so that they are not of publishable quality, to prevent them from being published illegally.

Since this purpose has failed - the universities *do* use it in their internal decision-making - perhaps the situation should be reconsidered. The Committee considers that

it would be better for the universities to use good detailed information rather than the approximate, possibly misleading information of the present clusters and weightings.

Recommendation 21 (*paragraph 5.48*)

The information base of the Relative Funding Model should be disaggregated and published, so that universities' internal budgeting decisions may be informed by detailed information rather than by the approximate and possibly misleading information contained in the present clusters and weightings.

As well, there is an argument that the Relative Funding Model should be revisited from time to time, not only because of the possibility that some original figures were inaccurate, but also because the relative teaching costs of various subjects may change over time. Subjects may be differently affected by new teaching methods or the need for new technology, for example.

Without periodic reassessment of relative teaching costs there is a risk that over time the new level playing field may gradually become bumpy again as the costs of different subjects are differently affected by new developments in ways that might affect some universities disproportionately.

Recommendation 22 (*paragraph 5.55*)

The Commonwealth should update the Relative Funding Model now and each five years to ensure its continued accuracy, and should use the information as one of the inputs to ongoing recalculation of the allocation of Commonwealth funding among the universities.

Funding research in universities (*paragraph 5.56*)

Arts faculties argue that present research funding arrangements have the effect of discriminating against the arts in several ways, of which the chief are the relatively poor ability of the arts to attract private research funding, and a 'science culture' in the universities and the Australian Research Council which does not recognise the distinctive character of arts research.

Recommendations 23, 24 (*paragraph 5.72*)

23. The Commonwealth should investigate the general question of whether current research funding arrangements have the effect of discriminating systematically against particular disciplines in unintended ways.

24. The Australian Research Council and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee should form a working party to address the problems of university research in the arts; including, to investigate whether current definitions of 'research' are appropriate in the light of Australia's goals for cultural development; to consider whether there are activities that ought to be funded by one or other but are now funded by neither; to consider whether current research funding arrangements have the effect of discriminating systematically against the arts; to suggest remedies to any problems.

The 'research quantum' (*paragraph 5.73*)

The 'research quantum' is an amount added to a university's operating grant from the Commonwealth, and intended to help fund research infrastructure - that is, the facilities that a university needs to provide from its own resources to support grant-funded research projects. The amount is based on a weighted formula. There is a concern that the formula will encourage universities to concentrate their research effort in higher direct cost areas and to discriminate against relatively low direct cost areas such as the humanities. Arts educators also complain that the Australia Council is excluded from the list of Commonwealth granting bodies whose grants are counted in the formula.

Recommendation 25 (*paragraph 5.82*)

The Commonwealth and the Australian Vice-Chancellors' Committee should investigate whether there are any biases in universities' behaviour in supporting research, biases that could be attributed to the 'research quantum' arrangements; if so, whether the biases affect particular disciplines systematically or specifically disadvantage the arts.

'When words are no longer adequate, when our passion is greater than we are able to express in a usual manner, people turn to art. Some people go to the canvas and paint, some stand up and dance. But we all go beyond our normal means of communicating, and this is the common human experience for all people on this planet.'

Murry Sidlin, orchestra conductor.

