

## Boys in Education

- **Along with other singular issues based inquiries this inquiry takes the focus and energy of individuals and organisations away from the appropriateness of the overarching direction of our current education system, the philosophy driving it, and the methodologies used to implement it.**
- **An inquiry about the direction and impetus driving our Australian education philosophies and policies is required before outcomes of singular issue inquiries such as ‘Boys in Education’ are implemented.**

This inquiry focuses on an isolated conceptual item of measurement. The success or failure of boys in education is neither the root cause, nor the most significant of the concerns we face in educating our children in the year 2000 and beyond. It is but one issue amongst many of equal importance.

A singular issue dynamic is reactive. It does not engender nor support the establishment of positive, proactive, high quality educational outcomes for all children.

In addressing educational concerns in this manner, we adopt an approach similar to a doctor continuously resetting a patient’s broken arm every time they present in this condition, without finding out why the arm is being broken in the first place.

- **Educational outcomes as a result of either the private or public system, must support the reality of current and future socio-cultural parameters of Australian society.**
- **The underlying weakness of the current education system is a direct result of the lack of money, support, resourcing and above all the socio-political will to deliver high quality education to all children across Australia.**

In continuing to underfund our public education system, through the application of economic rationalist principles we drain the social capital of this country. For those who are below, on, or just over the poverty line, it is imperative that the public education system provide the equality required in education to support and further develop democracy in our society.

Current social policy fails to recognise or understand that in order to have a healthy and productive country the majority of the population must have the energy and resources to raise themselves (and thereby the country) higher, rather than simply struggling to survive.

In continuing to marginalise the greater percentage of the population, a struggle is created. The more difficult it is made for this sector of the population to be well fed, housed and educated, the more anger, resentment and angst is created. This results in a negative victim mentality, which does not serve the country well in either the long or short term.

- **Current retrograde social policies drawn from the Menzies era, fail to recognise and address life as it really is in the year 2000 and beyond. Acting on the premise of mindsets of the 50’s and 60’s, does not support Australia’s move into the future, let alone deal with the present.**

The two are mutually exclusive. Bandyng politically palatable language of the day, whilst not recognising and dealing with current and future realities engenders stagnant and decaying systems, which exist only in support of themselves and not those whom they are meant to serve.

- **We must clearly define what we are educating for and towards. Once the overarching goal is defined, we will then be able to design and implement appropriate and constructive education systems in support of the whole child/family/community of 2000 and beyond.**

Children, families and communities as part of the broader socio-cultural construct, no longer exist, nor operate, as they did 20 or 30 years ago. Today's children are no longer 'children' in the same sense the word previously implied. They are far less tolerant of hierarchical relationships based on authoritarianism and continuously throw our own actions before us if we seek to 'pull the wool over their eyes'. They cannot be taught in the same manner as they have been for the past fifty or more years.

In Singapore and Great Britain, the curriculum focuses on skills acquisition, based on the broader construct of creative development and how to trouble shoot and problem solve. The curriculum is designed to support the child's ability to develop skills which enable them to respond appropriately and immediately to change and challenge, rather than simply regurgitate facts and figures. Memorising facts and figures, and other 'traditional' curriculum subject areas are considered as supporting skills to these overarching abilities, not an end within themselves.

- **Many of today's secondary children bored than any generation than ever before.** The gap between school and home/social life is wider than at any other time in our history. Children return home after spending six hours in school and get on with what they consider to be 'real life'. What a waste of those six hours.

A simple case in point which clearly demonstrates the inadequacy of our system's philosophy and practices is that of information technology. School based programs are often slow and inadequate in terms of challenge and output for today's children. These children utilise technology far more creatively, efficiently and effectively as they grasp the concepts and mechanics of its' use, faster than the adults employed to teach it.

The business world they will participate in, is not based on the parameters of the local environment, but on a global network of e-commerce. Information/knowledge is instantly accessible to all who have the means to access it.

### **Recommendation**

**In reference to the above, NTCOGSO believes that it is mandatory for the Federal Government to immediately establish a Royal Commission into -**

***Australian Education – Meeting the Global Socio-Cultural Requirements of the Australian Community in the Year 2000 and Beyond.***

## **Addendum**

In conjunction with the above, NTCOGSO wishes it to be noted that specifically, in relation to the 'Boys in Education' inquiry, they support and endorse the following 12 of 13 recommendations made by ACSSO (Australian Council of State School Organisations), to the inquiry. It should be noted that in relation to recommendation number 13, NTCOGSO believes that the funding is required at a level more than commensurate with the current real costs of designing, delivering and maintaining high quality education for all Australian children. It should never be assumed that a return to funding levels of over 15 years ago is anywhere near adequate enough.

### General Issues

1. ACSSO recommends the establishment of a Commonwealth of Australian Governments Taskforce, with significant representation from representative parent organisations, to make continuing recommendations to MCEETYA and COAG on integrated approaches to the general youth issues rising out of this inquiry.
2. ACSSO recommends the establishment of the Commonwealth-State joint working party of officials from the education, health and welfare areas to work in close liaison with the COAG Taskforce on implementation issues arising from any recommendations.
3. ACSSO recommends that educational and other authorities make greater use of school and parent networks for targeting information and programs on youth issues, and other educational, health and welfare issues, to young people, parents and the general community.

### General school issues

4. ACSSO recommends that the Commonwealth Government, through MCEETYA, take national leadership in coordinating with State and Territory Governments a national program for the development of full-service schools which provide integrated welfare support and career counseling for all students.
5. ACSSO recommends that specific Commonwealth funding be directed to schools in which students from the high risk categories of low socio-economic status, rural and remote location and Indigenous origin are concentrated, for the provision of additional school counselors, community development and liaison officers, early literacy and numeracy development and remedial teachers.
6. ACSSO recommends that funding be allocated to a national program of professional development for teachers and other school staff in the use of community conferencing, so that the techniques can be used extensively within schools for dealing with bullying, sexual and racial harassment, and other forms of anti-social behaviour.
7. ACSSO recommends an immediate national review of suspension and expulsion policies in schools, and of the adequacy of provision of alternative educational settings for students removed from mainstream schooling.
8. ACSSO recommends that funding be allocated to a national program of professional development for teachers and other school staff involved in health education to enable them to more adequately address their responsibilities for education in areas of drugs, sexuality and relationships
9. ACSSO recommends the development of a national plan for the recruitment of males into the teaching profession at all levels. This will require a serious response to the previous inquiry into the status of teachers, and serious attempts to make teaching a more attractive profession, both by addressing salary issues, and by addressing issues around the quality of work environment.
10. ACSSO recommends a thorough review of curriculum documents at all levels to ensure that there is appropriate emphasis on the interests of both boys and girls.
11. ACSSO recommends that MCEETYA commission further research into what works in the education of boys, with an emphasis on assessing longer term outcomes, and bearing in mind the significant effects of aspects of socio-economic disadvantage on outcomes for boys.
12. ACSSO recommends that Commonwealth and State and Territory Governments work together to ensure that all young Australians are guaranteed a place in a fully funded preschool, that all young Australians complete secondary schooling with a broad general education, which covers both the academic and the vocational, and are guaranteed free post-secondary education.

### Funding implications

13. ACSSO believes the implementation of these recommendations will require significant funding increases, and recommends that COAG and MCEETYA develop a national plan for increasing the percentage of Australia's GDP committed to government spending on schooling to, at least, the levels of 1975-1983.