

The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia

# The Literacy Challenge

A Report on Strategies for Early Intervention for Literacy  
and Learning for Australian Children

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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House of Representatives Standing Committee  
on Employment, Education and Training

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HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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## MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE

### 36th Parliament

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<b>Members</b>	Mr Rod Atkinson, MP Mr Arch Bevis, MP Mr John Bradford, MP Mr Ray Braithwaite*, MP Mr Paul Elliott, MP Mr Garrie Gibson, MP Mrs Carolyn Jakobsen, MP Hon Barry Jones, MP Mr John Riggall*, MP Mr Rod Sawford, MP
<b>Secretariat</b>	Mr John Cummins Ms Susan Cardell Ms Kerry Warner

### TERMS OF REFERENCE

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training inquire into and report on:

- . the range and effectiveness of current methods to identify children "at risk" of developing literacy problems at an early age;
- . the range and availability of intervention strategies to address the literacy needs of children "at risk" in the early years of schooling; and
- . the role of the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) and the Country Areas Program (CAP) in promoting literacy development at the primary school level.

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\* On 6 May 1992 Mr Braithwaite and on 3 June 1992 Mr Riggall replaced Mr Anderson and Mr Scott, resigned.

## OVERVIEW AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The acquisition of literacy begins in infancy and is a developmental process. The Committee acknowledges that home and parents are the important first educators of children. While the backgrounds of the children can influence the ease with which they become literate, most children, in the first year of school, can learn to read irrespective of home background and the location, type or size of school. Schools clearly are responsible to provide all students with effective literacy instruction.

The Committee's earlier report on workplace literacy concluded that all students have the right to be literate when they leave school regardless of their economic or social backgrounds. The Committee re-enforces this contention and advocates that the school is responsible for ensuring positive literacy outcomes for all students. It is unacceptable that ten to twenty percent of children finish primary school with literacy problems. It is also unacceptable that the actual numbers of children with such problems are not known. It is crucial that children at risk of developing literacy problems are identified during the early years of schooling and that appropriate strategies are implemented. For some schools, the majority of the school population may be in need of special support.

There is no firm evidence that standards of achievement have either declined or increased over time. As the student population today is markedly different from previous years, constant standards in fact could be interpreted as a gain. It is clear, however, that the changes in the way in which reading and writing are taught have not achieved the "universal" literacy outcome for children which is required if all are to later participate effectively in society as adults. Many children struggle and some educators believe that these children are falling further behind those most able. While there may have been no decline in the performance of the lower achievers, there has been no increase either.

Essentially, the fundamental structure and organisation of the early years of schooling are the same as they were fifty years ago. Primary school teachers cannot be expected to be expert in all the curriculum areas. Individual teachers are more skilled and interested in teaching in some areas of the curriculum than in others. *It is time that the whole structure within primary schools was reviewed.*

A basic grounding in literacy skills is an absolute prerequisite for later learning and hence early education must be better resourced. The Committee does not accept that high school students should be funded differently from primary school students.

It is essential that teachers know which methods and approaches are likely to work with certain children. *These teaching skills can only be acquired if teachers are exposed to them in preservice and inservice training.* Current preservice education may not fully equip students for their role as effective classroom teachers. They must be able to use a multiplicity of strategies to assist the range of students they will encounter in their classes. Sound foundations in language and literacy are essential to all aspects of a child's learning. Teachers must be trained to the highest

level of competence in these disciplines. This is only likely to be achieved by the extension of preservice training to four years, with a minimum component of that course devoted to language and literacy. No education system in Australia requires teachers of the youngest children in schools to have specific training to work with this age group. Teachers of children in the early years must be specifically trained for that responsibility.

System wide inservice training programs must be developed to provide teachers with the necessary skills to meet the needs of those children who are experiencing difficulty in learning to read and write. There is a general expectation by employing authorities that teachers do inservice training in their own time. For too long the system has relied on the goodwill of teachers. The less motivated and often the poorer teachers do not improve their skills to meet the changing demands of their profession. Reading Recovery and First Steps provide ideal models for inservice training in terms of supporting documents, methodology, release time and teacher support.

In essence the Committee believes that we need:

- . a Nation dedicated to universal literacy - every Australian must be able to read and write in English;
- . a national commitment to effective literacy education from the beginning years;
- . appropriate resources for education in the early primary years;
- . highly trained and motivated teachers;
- . teacher training and practice that embraces a range of strategies including structured skill acquisition;
- . effective strategies for remediation where necessary; and
- . assessment and reporting of literacy outcomes.

The Committee recommends that:

1. a. the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the Australian Education Council to revise funding arrangements for the school sectors, and
- b. Commonwealth and State Government funding to the primary sector be increased, over the next three financial years, to the equivalent general per student levels of the secondary sector (Paragraph 2.45).
2. a. the Commonwealth Government finance a three year pilot research program in Australian Primary Schools to investigate and assess the effects of enhanced staffing arrangements, which do not reduce class size, but allow for specialisation and the provision of non-teaching time, and

- b. the program include a sample of schools of varying enrolments and locations from each State and Territory (Paragraph 2.66).
3. the Australian Council for Educational Research investigate the effects of the use of teacher aides on literacy outcomes (Paragraph 2.76).
4. the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the Australian Education Council to require -
  - a. a minimum of four years training for new teachers including a significant compulsory component devoted to language and literacy,
  - b. all new teachers to undertake a unit of special education,
  - c. all new teachers of Years K to 3 to be trained in early education, and
  - d. all literacy training include specific instruction in the range of teaching strategies (Paragraph 3.39).
5. the Commonwealth Government increase funding to tertiary institutions to enable all preservice teacher education to be extended to four years (Paragraph 3.40).
6. the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the teacher training institutions to -
  - a. require entrants to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching , and
  - b. establish a minimum level of Mathematics and English for entrants to teaching faculties (Paragraph 3.49).
7.
  - a. as part of the development of the National English Profile, standard assessment tasks be developed which will integrate standardised pencil and paper tests with performance measures undertaken by teachers as part of normal day-to-day classroom practice, and
  - b. the prime purpose of the assessments be to improve the education outcomes for children (Paragraph 4.66).
8.
  - a. the Minister for Employment, Education and Training together with the Western Australian Minister for Education encourage all States and Territories which are reviewing their curricula, to adopt the First Steps program, and
  - b. the Minister for Employment, Education and Training ensure that the concepts of First Steps are included in the National English Curriculum (Paragraph 5.24).
9. the Commonwealth Government fund the establishment of a national Reading Recovery Tutor training program at appropriate tertiary institutions (Paragraph 5.46).
10. the guidelines to the Commonwealth Government's school based equity program be revised to ensure that funds are directed to the introduction of First Steps or Reading Recovery (Paragraph 5.72).





## CHAPTER 1

### THE NEED FOR EARLY INTERVENTION

1.1 Every child has the right to be competent in language and literacy skills by the completion of primary school, regardless of social or economic background. Primary schools have the responsibility to ensure that this is achieved. It is the obligation of Governments to ensure that this goal is met.

1.2 It is generally accepted that unless children learn the basics of reading and writing, listening and using spoken language by the end of Year 3, they will probably be disadvantaged for the rest of their lives<sup>1</sup>. Many adults with literacy problems were once children with literacy problems - problems which should have been identified and remedied at least a decade earlier.

1.3 The development of English skills is fundamental to the quality of life and opportunities for members of our society. The Australian Language and Literacy Policy states that apart from its obvious importance to the individual Australian's personal, social and cultural development, proficiency in English is central to the education, training and skill formation necessary to produce a more dynamic and internationally competitive Australian economy. If Australia is to provide a more flexible and highly skilled workforce, capable of maximising its productivity and innovation, then it is essential for the literacy, numeracy and English language skills of adults and youth to be improved. There is a strong relationship between low levels of literacy and high levels of unemployment and social disadvantage<sup>2</sup>.

1.4 The Australian Language and Literacy Policy states that while it is necessary to continue to improve the quality of learning for all children, school is not the biggest influence on their lives nor on their learning. The lives of some children are so disrupted that the best schooling system and the best teachers cannot ensure their literacy progress. The Policy states that:

No amount of rhetorical insistence will make it otherwise.<sup>3</sup>

1.5 It is inevitable that for a small number, this is true. However, fatalistic statements such as these should not be part of a national policy relating to literacy. The Committee finds more acceptable the positive view of the South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association which stated that:

Views suggesting that literacy failure is inevitable, can't be prevented, and shouldn't be bothered about, CANNOT BE ALLOWED to remain in our Australian community.<sup>4</sup>

1.6 The International Literacy Year and studies over the last decade have focussed attention on the low levels of literacy of the Australian population. Alarming low adult literacy skills have been reported. Many adults experience literacy difficulties which disadvantage their functioning as effective members of

society. During its previous inquiry into workplace literacy, the Committee was provided with evidence which suggested that it is probable that between ten and twenty percent of the adult population is functionally illiterate<sup>5</sup>. Literacy problems in adults do not only relate to those from non-English speaking backgrounds. It is estimated that as many as 700,000 English speaking background Australians have difficulty in carrying out everyday literacy tasks<sup>6</sup>.

1.7 It is unacceptable that ten to twenty percent of children are finishing primary school with literacy problems. It is also unacceptable that the actual numbers of children involved are not known. The importance of properly focussed language and literacy programs during the early primary school years needs to be stressed. It is crucial that children at risk of developing literacy problems are identified during the early years of schooling and that appropriate strategies are implemented.

1.8 No state has data on a system-wide basis which enables sound judgements to be made about the number of children in the Years K to 3 who are at risk of not gaining adequate literacy skills. While some states undertake standardised testing, the tests do not provide data on the first two years. State education departments generally accept that about ten to twenty percent of children may need special support.

1.9 The Australian Language and Literacy policy notes that evidence suggests that if children are not making appropriate literacy progress by the end of the third year of primary school, it is likely that they may not make up the gap through the rest of their schooling. Surprisingly the Policy then states that all children in need of additional literacy assistance should be identified by assessment at *the end of primary school*. The Committee considers that it is essential that these children be identified much earlier than this. Children in need of special assistance must be identified at the end of Year 3 at the latest.

1.10 The NSW Basic Skills test assesses students at Years 3 and 6. The Committee was told that the results showed that twenty percent of the children required "some intervention"<sup>7</sup>.

1.11 The South Australian Writing and Reading Assessment program (WRAP) focused on students at Years 6 and 10. Whilst results differed markedly from task to task, WRAP found that one in five Year 6 students across the school population was having difficulty with the demands of school reading and writing. This figure increased to one in three for government assisted students and two in three Aboriginal students<sup>8</sup>.

1.12 The ACT Government operates a system-wide intervention program (Reading Recovery). That program targets eleven percent of the lowest achieving students following one year of formal education. It is estimated that nineteen percent of the Year 1 population need access to Reading Recovery<sup>9</sup>.

1.13 Queensland education officials advised that the central office was unaware of the numbers of students at risk, although the figures may be available at the school and district level<sup>10</sup>.

1.14 Other State and Territory governments did not provide their estimates of the number of children considered to be at risk, but the Committee has no reason to believe that if estimates were provided that they would differ significantly from those of the other systems.

1.15 The average figures referred to above do not necessarily provide a clear picture of the extent of the problem which exists at the district and school level. From the Committee's discussions and submissions, it seems that a figure of twenty five percent of students at risk may be a more accurate figure for many education districts. For some schools, the majority of the school population may be in need of special support. The Committee also received some evidence which suggests that while average levels of literacy are constant or even increasing for some groups, the numbers of the poorest achievers are increasing.

1.16 For example, one association told the Committee that for one education district in Adelaide, children were entering school at least two years below the norm of what a five year old should "look like, be like and talk like". The Association stated that:

For one school it was 75 percent of their reception intake. For a kindergarten that I have at [name of suburb] where we have 119 children enrolled, at least 80 percent of those - nearly 90 children - we would consider children with special needs.<sup>11</sup>

1.17 Another example of the extent of the problem at the local level is provided by a 1991 research project conducted in an education district in Perth. The survey was of twenty five primary schools and involved nearly 9 000 children. It was found that more than twenty-five percent of these students were perceived to be at risk in reading and language. The proportion of at risk students within individual schools varied considerably. At one school, only about ten percent of students were considered to be at risk, while at another, more than forty percent were rated at risk in reading and language<sup>12</sup>.

1.18 In its discussions throughout Australia, the Committee was told that the numbers of students considered to be in need of remedial support, were in excess of the commonly cited numbers for the state or national level as a whole. One education department stated that the wide range of different estimates suggested that:

- interpretations of what constitutes 'difficulty in reading and writing' vary considerably - a consistent definition is required,
- proportions of students at risk are higher in particular groups, e.g. students in poverty, Aboriginal students and those from non-English-speaking backgrounds, and

schools and/or teachers who reported high percentages of students in difficulty may need to look more closely at whether it is the students or the classroom methodology which is failing<sup>13</sup>.

1.19 The Committee agrees that children from some socio-economic groups are at higher risk of not gaining adequate literacy skills than those from other groups, and these children tend to be concentrated in particular schools. However, it is also true that at risk children come from all socio-economic groups. The definitional problem, however, does not concern the Committee. All students referred to were those who were at risk of not developing adequate basic reading and writing skills by the end of Year 3.

1.20 It is clear from what the Committee was told during the inquiry, that while current classroom practices are serving the majority of the children well, many are struggling. All good teaching requires a range of strategies. It appears, however, that some preservice and inservice education fails to fully equip teachers to use the multiplicity of strategies required to meet the needs of all children.

1.21 The use of average figures by central education bureaucracies is of little help in determining the special needs of some schools. While the Committee has incomplete information on the manner in which resources are allocated to schools, the use of standardised formulas seriously disadvantage some. The Queensland Primary Principals Association, for instance, told the Committee that staff are allocated on a formula basis irrespective of special needs and disadvantage<sup>14</sup>. Any further assistance does not fully reflect the needs of the schools. Other school systems are provided with resources on a similar basis.

1.22 The Committee believes that programs which are available to improve the learning outcomes in the first years are pitifully resourced. In many cases there are no or few resources made available by central education authorities. It is too often the case that individual schools are required to re-allocate existing resources to assist children with special needs. In many cases schools have opted for larger class sizes to enable staff to be released for special education.

1.23 One inescapable conclusion which must be drawn from the Committee's inquiry is, that in addition to the focus on higher education, TAFE and the senior secondary years, a higher priority must be given to the early years of schooling. Current recurrent expenditure on primary schools is in the order of \$3 300 per child, for high schools \$4 100 and for higher education, something like three to four times these levels. These differences in allocations have been justified on the grounds of differential costs. The Committee finds it unacceptable that the greatest resources are directed towards high schools and higher education. The Committee notes the views of one of Australia's most respected educators who asked:

Why, when we know, that early failure escalates and is rarely turned round into success, do we not intervene early, with every resource at our disposal, to prevent failure?<sup>15</sup>

1.24 It is the Committee's view that there must be revision of the funding of the primary and secondary school sectors. The allocation of funding per child in primary school must be no less than that for secondary students. The attainment of basic skills in the early years is an essential foundation upon which to build the more diverse learning of the later years.

## Chapter 1 - Endnotes

- 1 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Words at Work*, AGPS, March 1991, p. 28.
- 2 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Australia's Language - The Australian Language and Literacy Policy*, AGPS, Canberra, 1991, p. xiv.
- 3 *ibid.*, p. 39.
- 4 South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association and The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of South Australian Catholic Schools, Submission.
- 5 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *op.cit.*, p. 7.
- 6 Department of Employment, Education and Training, *op.cit.*, p. xiv.
- 7 NSW Department of School Education, *Transcript*, p. 693.
- 8 Education Department of South Australia, Submission.
- 9 ACT Department of Education, Submission.
- 10 Queensland Department of Education, *Transcript*, p. 64.
- 11 Australian Early Childhood Association, *Transcript*, p. 564.
- 12 Evans, D., Edith Cowan University, Submission.
- 13 Education Department of South Australia, Submission.
- 14 Australian Primary Principals Association, *Transcript*, p. 219.
- 15 Boomer, G., 'Organising the Nation for Literacy', *13th Australian Reading Association Conference*, Sydney, July 1987, p. 5.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE SCHOOL AND FAMILY

#### **The Family**

2.1 While the home plays such an important role in literacy learning for young children, the home should not be blamed or used as an excuse for a child not learning. Some parents can do all the right things and their children do not enter literacy learning easily. The Committee agrees with one witness who stated:

I think schools have got to be responsible for what schools can do, that is, teach the children ... some parents are coping with all they can cope with, especially at this time. We are not going to put further blame on them by making them responsible for their children's literacy learning. Involve them yes, but do not blame them.<sup>1</sup>

2.2 It is acknowledged that the home and parents are important first educators of children. The acquisition of literacy begins in infancy and is a developmental process founded on the events and interactions which occur within the child's family.

2.3 The various early childhood and parents groups who wrote to the Committee and appeared before it emphasised the importance of the home to successful learning outcomes for children. They asserted that literacy acquisition begins well before entry to school. The key factors in the development of literacy are early exposure to print, especially stories, and a supportive family environment. In homes where there are low levels of adult literacy combined with limited family resources children are most likely to be at risk. Many parents recycle the poor literacy patterns they experienced as children<sup>2</sup>. It was argued that funding is required to support families in developing children's literacy skills prior to entry to school<sup>3</sup>.

2.4 Programs devised to involve parents in their children's learning are of three types:

- . awareness raising campaigns,
- . simple programs for use in the home to assist parents when their children commence school, and
- . more complex training of parents as tutors for use in the home and in the classroom.

2.5 If the home background is not conducive to literacy, then the children will start school relatively disadvantaged without the book knowledge and the concepts about print that children from advantaged homes will have already acquired prior

to starting school. One submission commented:

Parents are able to seek expert medical advice when their children are sick, but who do they turn to for help if they want advice about preparing their children for school? There is no-one in the community charged with this responsibility of assisting parents to acquire the knowledge base that they need in order to lay a foundation for literacy.<sup>4</sup>

2.6 Some early childhood centres have conducted information campaigns to raise public awareness of the importance of the literacy of children. Centres publish pamphlets to distribute to parents. The pamphlets give the parents an understanding of the ways to approach literacy and to encourage them to form a parallel with the school. The pamphlets are run off at the school and the message contained in them is a simple one, for all parents to understand<sup>5</sup>. Some early childhood centres provide home visitors who go to the homes of children who are not showing competent literacy skills to discuss with parents the appropriate intervention strategies to employ.

2.7 The Harringey Reading Project in the UK in the late 1980s, showed that parents who could barely read themselves could contribute in a very meaningful way to their children's education once they have commenced school. The Australian Institute of Family Studies funded a study by La Trobe University which replicated the Harringey reading project. The study was undertaken in Heidelberg, Victoria.

2.8 The findings of the project demonstrated that many parents wish to help in their children's school progress, but do not receive the help they need because of problems of home-school communication. The study showed that schools work with enthusiastic parents and tend to ignore the less involved parents. The largest group of families was categorised as 'unsophisticated yet supportive' - families willing and capable of helping, but unsure about their role and in need of some support and a regular supply of books during the early stages.

2.9 An important aspect of the project was that the parents were not required to attend meetings at the school. Rather, the project concentrated on 'getting the teachers out of the school and into the home'<sup>6</sup> and showing parents how to read to their children and how to listen to their children read.

2.10 The study concluded that it is important that parents read to children in order to make a bridge between the child's command of spoken language and the distinctive written language the child will confront in school. The results showed that at the beginning of the program only three percent of the project children's readings were classified as written language oriented, whereas at the end, fifty-eight percent were classified in this way<sup>7</sup>.

2.11 The School, Home and Reading Enjoyment (SHARE) Program is another successful parent program which operates in some school clusters in Victoria. The program encourages parents and teachers to support each other as they create a



literate environment at school and at home in which the child learns to read. SHARE was developed by the Doveton Cluster of schools and brings children and parents together to share books. Doveton is a residential suburb near the Dandenong Industrial area, south east of Melbourne.

2.12 Each night the child chooses a book from the SHARE library to take home and the parent is invited to share ten minutes a day reading time with their child to support the classroom reading program. Parents are encouraged to talk to their child about the book and complete a comment sheet. Teachers collect the comment sheets each week, summarise the information and then file it with the child's continuous record. Parents and teachers also send messages on the comments sheets to each other.

2.13 Twice each year teachers visit parents at home to discuss how the program is progressing. At each new school a newsletter informs the parents about the introduction of the program and invites them to attend meetings outlining the program. Parents receive booklets on SHARE and discussions are held on the practical details of the parents' task, especially on the concept of being an 'audience' for the child.

2.14 The Committee believes that findings such as these indicate that regardless of their socio-economic levels, parents are generally highly motivated to see their own children do well. It is important that families are aware that they can greatly assist their children's learning outcomes. Parents need to be educated in their vital role in assisting their child's development in early years. They need to be convinced of the importance of their influences on the learning outcomes of their children.

2.15 The State and Territory education departments are aware of the importance of the home to learning and produce material such as the 'Parents as Partners in Education' pack developed as part of the Western Australian new curriculum, First Steps. The First Steps program provides detailed, but easily understood advice to parents. No training is required to use these materials, which is its advantage over other programs. However, the parents must themselves be literate in English.

2.16 It is the Committee's view that the West Heidelberg approach, the 'Parents as Partners in Education' pack and SHARE could serve as models for parent involvement throughout all education systems.

2.17 Some other successful parent programs require higher parent motivation and involve the training of parents as tutors. One such program is the Talk to a Literacy Learner (TTALL).

2.18 The TTALL project was funded by the NSW Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs from a competitive grants scheme made available as part of the State's contribution to the International Year of Literacy. The program was developed by a committee of university, school, preschool and community representatives.

2.19 The project was developed in an area of Sydney. The purpose of the program was to help parents to more effectively stimulate their children's literacy development within the home.

2.20 The project involved identifying and training parents to interact more effectively with their own children (1-12 years of age) as they engaged in literacy. Parents were encouraged to make greater use of literacy resources within the community. It involved the training of an initial group of parents to acquire more advanced skills as literacy tutors who were deployed in the school to work with other children. Selected parents were trained to use a specially designed package of six one hour sessions, designed to introduce another parent and child to some of the TTALL strategies.

2.21 In 1992 the TTALL program is operating in 10 schools in NSW. The project director stated that:

Of our first batch of 25 at Lethbridge Park, one parent who had never gone beyond Year 10 is now in teacher education, three went back to TAFE to undertake some type of course, a couple went into adult literacy courses themselves because their own literacy standards were not high, and another two have gone back to do the HSC in their children's schools. . . We found that parents do end up doing different things with their children in the home, they do organise their homes differently, they do spend different amounts of time with their children with literacy, and they do use different strategies from those they used before.<sup>8</sup>

2.22 Improvements and changes in attitudes to literacy of children on the TTALL program included increased interest in literacy and increased reading and borrowing rates in libraries, and increased vocabularies and comprehension scores relative to children whose parents were not in the program<sup>9</sup>.

2.23 Another successful program is the Parents as Tutors program. The Schools and Community Centre, a joint project of the ACT Department of Education and the Faculty of Education, University of Canberra, has been provided funding for the development of the training of parents as tutors of their own children. The grant was given for the establishment of a model program so others may adapt a similar program to suit to their own school and community needs.

2.24 The aim of the Parents as Tutors program is to show parents how to listen to their children reading and assist their children in making sense of their reading and to develop independence as readers and writers. If the parent or parents have low literacy levels a different program is offered to help them improve their own literacy skills to that they can help their children<sup>10</sup>.

2.25 Ten seminars are designed to give parents an understanding of how learning is affected by different conditions and methods of teaching. The emphasis

is on assisting parents to give skilled help at home in reading, writing, spelling, information gathering and time organisation. The participants are referred through the ACT Department of Education and other counselling and guidance services. The age of the children ranges from 7 to 15 years.

2.26 The general trend of post-program assessments shows successful learning by both the parents as tutors and the children as readers and writers. According to recorded results, most children are effectively guided towards a degree of self-responsibility for their own learning and behaviour, most parents acquire self-confidence to persevere with their more skilled tutoring, and the family begins to believe that depressed learning circumstances can be changed<sup>11</sup>.

2.27 It is unrealistic and unfair to expect that all families will be able to provide the assistance at home to prepare children for formal education. One school which wrote to the Committee advised that forty-five percent of their students fell in the bottom ten percent in the Basic Skills Test<sup>12</sup>. Over ninety percent of the children in the school are of non-English speaking background and seventy percent come from homes where neither parent goes to work. The prime concerns of the parents of these children were survival and the basic necessities of life.

## **Preschools**

2.28 Preschool education is an important part of a child's early education in social development, literacy acquisition and linkage to the primary sector yet it receives no national policy support.

2.29 In 1985 the Commonwealth Government ceased funding any preschool education. This made it diverse, competing and disparate. Every State and Territory runs its early childhood sector in a different way. Each state has a preschool sector which is separate from primary schooling. With the exception of New South Wales and Western Australia, all States and Territories currently have policies entitling four year old children to twelve months of preschool education in the year before they commence primary school.

2.30 Preschool is not compulsory so some States have difficulties with attendance. Approximately eighteen percent of three-year olds and sixty percent of four-year olds attend preschool, with a further twenty-one percent at age three and seventeen percent at age four attending some form of day care program<sup>13</sup>. A Brisbane witness claimed that seventy-five percent of children do not attend preschool, although the parents of most children in the metropolitan area have the opportunity to send their children to preschool.

2.31 Research has clearly shown that quality child-care and preschool education have a positive effect on the development of children and their success at school. Witnesses have stated that the linking of preschool and primary school can help keep track of children and not let them escape if there are problems that need to be addressed.

2.32 It is a common belief, however, that children most in need of preschool are the ones least likely to attend. The Committee believes it is important to encourage parents to send their children to preschool. Submissions were received that argued for free preschool education to be made available for all children twelve months prior to commencement of formal schooling. The Committee believes that it is essential that preschools become accepted as a necessary part of education. There must be proper and effective programs of early childhood education, with neither an abrupt break between preschool and infant school, nor a duplication of learning experiences<sup>14</sup>.

### **Age of School Entry**

2.33 The age of entry to school varies between states. In addition, when during the year children are admitted to school varies. The Schools Council noted that the various options were single entry at the beginning of the year, dual entry, often at the beginning and mid-point of the year, and continuous entry on the fifth birthday or at the beginning of the term following the fifth birthday. Continuous entry policies frequently have a mid-year cut-off<sup>15</sup>.

2.34 The Schools Council also noted that for the sake of those families who move interstate while their children are in school, there seemed to be good arguments for introducing uniformity between States in the ages at which children start school. The Council believed that because the most common pattern was a standard thirteen years of education, beginning with kindergarten for five year olds, it should be adopted by all States and Territories<sup>16</sup>.

2.35 The Committee agrees that there should be a uniform policy adopted for each system. It considers that this matter should be considered by the Australian Education Council.

### **Role of Schools**

2.36 While the backgrounds of the children can influence the ease with which they become literate, most children in the first year of school can learn to read irrespective of their home background and the location, type or size of school. Schools have a vital responsibility in providing all students with effective literacy instruction. Most successful schools have robust leadership and clearly defined reading policies, stated responsibilities and accountabilities, and effective classrooms of teaching and learning.

2.37 A basic conclusion of the Committee's report on workplace literacy was that all students have the right to be literate when they leave school regardless of their economic or social backgrounds. The Committee re-enforces this position and advocates that the school is responsible for ensuring positive literacy outcomes for all students. The majority of students must be taught within their own school to be literate.

## Resources

2.38 It is essential that the beginnings of education, the years which provide the foundations for further learning, receive increased resourcing. The Committee does not accept the assumptions implied as a justification for the differential funding of the various education sectors.

2.39 There has been an increasing focus by government on the requirements of the senior secondary, vocational and tertiary sectors of education. Reports such as *Young People's Participation in Post-Compulsory Education and Training* by the AEC Review Committee in 1991, correctly pointed to the need for proper resourcing of these sectors if Australia is to prosper in the twenty-first century.

2.40 The Committee's report, *Skills Training in the 21st Century*, saw a need for widespread reform of Australia's education and training system for Australia to be internationally prosperous and competitive. As technology impacts on the workplace and changes to work structures are developed, workers have needed to be trained in a new complex mix of skills. The Committee endorsed funding for the public sector component of technical and vocational training and saw TAFE as ideally suited to meet the role in the training of students or workers. However, employers advised the Committee, during the course its Skills Inquiry, of the difficulties they faced in training young trainees and apprentices because of inadequate literacy and numeracy skills. They argued for greater resources to be provided for remedial teaching in the early years of schooling<sup>17</sup>.

2.41 The number of students in each system in 1990 was as follows:  
Primary, 1 763 494; Secondary, 1 278 163; Tertiary, 485 075<sup>18</sup>.

2.42 Resources of primary, secondary and higher education sectors are shown in the following table.

	\$ million	\$/student
Primary	4 995	3 329
Secondary	5 165	4 064
Higher Education	4 855	10 000

Note 1 Figures on \$/student for schools relate to Government sector only.

Note 2 Figures are approximations only and are not strictly comparable.

Sources Australian Education Council, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 1990*. DEET, *Selected Higher Education Statistics 1991*.

2.43 The reason that there is such a difference in funding between the sectors is largely historical. The focus in the Australian community has been very much directed towards the upper levels of schooling. Also, the curriculum in secondary education is split into discrete elements requiring a more costly specialist approach

which leads to greater costs. Some of these curriculum elements are constrained by health, safety and other physical requirements which have finite limits of twelve to fifteen per class<sup>19</sup>. It is also apparent that secondary students are more visible and vocal and therefore attract more attention. It is easier to recognise when the older students are "out of step". It appears to the Committee that our youngest school children are almost invisible.

2.44 It was also argued that the teachers of primary schools do not have the power or influence of their colleagues in other parts of the system. Traditionally, positions in the primary sector have been the domain of women and have been viewed as positions of caring or a second job. As with all organisations consisting primarily of women, junior primary schools are marginalised when it comes to the allocation of resources. The Committee was told that the power and bureaucracy appears to be dominated by people who are not in the K-6 areas.

2.45 The Committee recommends that:

- . **the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the Australian Education Council to revise funding arrangements for the school sectors, and**
- . **Commonwealth and State government funding to the primary sector be increased, over the next three financial years, to the equivalent general per student levels of the secondary sector.**

## **Class Sizes**

2.46 Average student/teacher ratio in 1990 are as follows:  
primary 18:1; secondary 12:1<sup>20</sup>.

2.47 Individual state figures vary markedly from these averages. In the ACT, for instance, the student/teacher ratio for Years K to 2 was 26:1<sup>21</sup>.

2.48 The Committee was warned that official ratios should be interpreted with caution. One principal noted that, included in these, figures are non-teaching positions such as, in NSW, Assistant Regional Directors, Cluster Directors, Curriculum Development Team, Curriculum Support Teachers and non-teaching principals. In NSW, the ratio is generally one teacher to thirty students<sup>22</sup>.

2.49 Many schools which made submissions to the Committee expressed their concern over the large class sizes in primary schools. The scope of teachers' work has expanded because of the requirements of students with special needs. With large class sizes teachers believe that it is impossible to adequately meet the instructional needs of all students.

2.50 Some researchers have claimed that class sizes make a difference in student achievement, with smaller classes resulting in higher performance. One study in the 1970s found that there was a clear relationship between class size and achievement<sup>23</sup>. In 1984, the state of Indiana budgeted to reduce class sizes in

infant grades. A pilot project initiated to assess effects of the reduction in Year 1 to eighteen students per class, showed that there were increases in reading and mathematics achievement and improved attitudes towards self and school<sup>24</sup>. In 1981, a Queensland University study of naturally occurring classroom settings and class sizes suggested that in larger classes less will be learnt by students and students would be handicapped in the areas of personal and social development<sup>25</sup>.

2.51 It was argued that a major obstacle to effective monitoring of early literacy skills and to the provision of individual assistance for students, was class size. If classes remain large in the crucial early years of schooling, the task of identifying and assisting children at risk is made extremely difficult<sup>26</sup>.

2.52 On the other hand, some witnesses informed the Committee that resources allocated to reduce class sizes could be better spent on alternative programs. One academic claimed that research suggests that small changes in class size do not improve educational outcomes. He would only expect marked changes if classes were reduced by nearly half, for example, from thirty-seven to twenty-two<sup>27</sup>. Another academic agreed that class size was not really closely related to performance gains by children. He claimed that there were clearly maximum levels he would not want to see, but the difference between thirty-two children and twenty-six children in a class was not viewed as a huge improvement<sup>28</sup>. Another witness stated that dealing with twenty or thirty children is different from dealing with five or six. However, he believed that there are good teaching processes that can be applied with large numbers of children<sup>29</sup>.

2.53 A NSW Education Department official stated that there is nothing substantial in the literature and research which shows that smaller class sizes improve student outcomes but:

there is a hell of a lot in the literature that says that good teacher preparation, a high competence profile and good instruction improve what happens in class.<sup>30</sup>

2.54 The composition of classes has changed dramatically in recent years. Children from non-English speaking backgrounds and the integration of children with special needs has placed greater burdens on teachers rather than class sizes per se.

2.55 The Australian Council of State School Organisations claimed that Governments around Australia are working hard to convince the community that the class size issue is somehow not of current concern. The Organisation stated however that parents know that the size of classes has an impact on learning, socialisation and individual attention. They claim that:

Politicians have used selected 'research' studies to attack this common-sense view held by parents and teachers.<sup>31</sup>

2.56 In 1984 the Commonwealth Schools Commission in its report *Commonwealth Standards for Australian Schools* determined the ideal class sizes as fifteen for Years 1-2, twenty for Years 3-4, and twenty-four for Years 6-7. These figures were generally accepted by those who argued for reduced class sizes. The Committee believes that although these ideal class sizes are not in the short term attainable, they are reasonable aspirations for the longer term. In the short term the Committee believes that resources would be better allocated to enable access to specialist staff and para-medical services and to implement flexible school structures.

## School Structure

2.57 Almost all other areas of human endeavour have changed but schools have remained much the same as they were a century ago. There is a widely held belief that the traditional structures of primary schools may have outlived their usefulness. Structural adjustment and micro-economic reform, increases in family dislocation, the changed nature of the school population, rapid advances in information and other technologies seem to have had little impact on the way primary schools function<sup>32</sup>.

2.58 Primary schools and related agencies have neither moved sufficiently quickly, nor significantly far down the track, in response to the social, economic and technological changes that have taken place in Australia and elsewhere in the past decade or two. Essentially, they see the fundamental structure and organisation of the early years of schooling as being the same as it was fifty years ago. Schools are seen by many as operating on a model that was designed for different times and purposes - one related to the needs of an industrial society<sup>33</sup>. It was argued that expectations placed upon primary teachers for being responsible for all the curriculum with limited non-contact time was unrealistic and not practical. It was generally recognised that individual teachers are more skilled and interested in teaching in some areas of the curriculum than in others. One submission suggested that it was 'past time for the generalist primary teacher to become the specialist teacher'.

2.59 The concept of specialisation met with a mixed response. One principal agreed that teachers have different strengths and interests but he expected all his staff to perform at high levels in the core areas of literacy and mathematics. He believed that instructional principles were transferable to any topic area. He stated that:

I would hate to see primary schools become like secondary schools, because one of the glories of the primary school is the home class, the home teacher, the home room where you can do so many things, liberated from the tyranny of the 40-minute period.<sup>34</sup>

2.60 One teacher saw danger in specialisation in that teachers could know their subject matter but could not make the students literate in their subject area. She believed that the current structure enabled effective monitoring of children's



learning across the curriculum, which was 'one of the wonderful things about primary education'<sup>36</sup>. A single teacher can also provide pastoral care which is necessary in the transition from home to school.

2.61 With the devolution of decision making to the schools, there appears to be a greater degree of flexibility in teaching structures. Many schools now have specialist librarians, music, arts and physical education teachers. The Schools Council referred to innovative strategies operating in some schools such as team teaching, integrated classes for part of the day and the use of part time staff with specialist expertise. These changes, however, rely on the decisions and dedication of each school community and are not systemic.

2.62 A principal of a private school in Melbourne explained to the Committee how her school allocated staff.

We have specialist teachers for music, drama, physical education, library, computer and art. . . Because of the free time available, teachers engage in a lot of voluntary extra things. We have drawing clubs, brainteasers clubs, debating clubs, problem solving - a huge range of things.<sup>36</sup>

2.63 In an environment of large class sizes, the employment of specialist staff for some learning areas enables a reduction of class sizes for at least part of the day. One submission referred to an approach in the US called "back to back" teaching. For two classes of twenty-four pupils each, a specialist teacher would take half a class and combine it with half of a second class for a lesson. This arrangement meant that the two class teachers only had twelve pupils each for a core language lesson. As the school had specialist teachers in art, library, music, physical education plus a school counsellor, for about one-third of each day, the classroom teacher had only twelve pupils. If such a system were to operate in Australia, particularly in the lower grades, teachers would have the time needed to address the needs of individual children in those core areas of reading, writing and mathematics<sup>37</sup>.

2.64 Schools themselves sometimes decide to employ specialist staff rather than attempt to reduce class sizes. Some schools, however, claimed that they did not have the resources for specialist teachers. To have specialist teachers meant they would have to increase the class sizes to unacceptable levels. A principal from Tasmania claimed that in order to get three specialists - a librarian, a physical education specialist and a music specialist - class sizes rose to well over thirty. If she wanted to put more specialist teachers in the school, class sizes would rise even further<sup>38</sup>.

2.65 While the Committee accepts the Schools Commission's observation relating to the archaic manner in which some schools operate, schools themselves are not necessarily to blame. Innovative structures and teaching strategies can only be achieved with adequate resources. Resources, both human and financial, to meet specific learning needs are pitifully small. Very often, the decision must be made between smaller class sizes or increasing class sizes to enable additional specialist

staff to be employed. The ability of schools to develop staffing strategies to reflect the needs of their children, is essential if the highest possible learning outcomes are to be achieved. The Committee has no doubt that if schools had access to teachers with a range of specialist skills, the need for special teachers to address learning difficulties would be reduced.

2.66 The Committee recommends that:

- the Commonwealth Government finance a three year pilot research program in Australian Primary Schools to investigate and assess the effects of enhanced staffing arrangements, which do not reduce class size, but allow for specialisation and the provision of non-teaching time, and
- the program include a sample of schools of varying enrolments and locations from each State and Territory.

2.67 Whatever the class structures, there will continue to be a need for special support staff for those children who do not make satisfactory progress.

2.68 The Committee received many examples where support staff provided by Education Departments were inadequate, particularly when they were shared between schools. One submission stated that because support staff were 'itinerant', face-to-face contact was rare, as was the time needed for informed discussion. Teachers wait for long periods of time for advice of immediate urgency<sup>39</sup>. Another referred to visits by support staff four times a year with no benefit to the school<sup>40</sup>. One school referred to 0.6 of a resource teacher for a school of over 500 students<sup>41</sup>. There is only one speech therapist in Queensland for every 1 200 students<sup>42</sup>.

2.69 The Committee considers that there is little value in specialist teachers to be constantly on the move when a child may need ongoing attention. A Queensland witness, for instance, said that a school used a communications teacher and a speech therapist in a multi-disciplinary team approach. The communications teacher worked with the classroom teachers for a term, but then moved to another part of the State and did not return for two years. The result was that there was a huge loss and children slipped back to where they had started<sup>43</sup>.

2.70 Many other submissions referred to delays in accessing special resource centres. It is essential that children with learning difficulties are identified early, and when identified, given access to specialist support.

## **Teacher Aides**

2.71 Most witnesses saw the need for more human resources within the classroom. The in-class support roles of teacher aides was seen to be a most effective way to use resources. It was believed that there was a need for teachers aides with training in literacy support to work with and assist the classroom teacher.

2.72 It is totally unrealistic to expect one adult to meet all the needs of thirty children. The use of teacher aides has been suggested as a way of providing greater assistance for children and the classroom teacher. Children should stay in their own classrooms or in smaller groups to be taught learning skills. Teacher aides can work in the classroom alongside the classroom teacher with limited disruptions to the classroom setup.

2.73 Projects using teacher aides have been trialled in a number of areas. In one education district in Queensland, teacher aides were trained to support the reading and writing program. Their use enabled teachers to give more individual attention to children experiencing difficulty and to engage all children more consistently in learning to read and write. The use of the teacher aide halved the adult-child ratio and provided greater opportunities to assist children to succeed. An unexpected outcome of the teacher aides' involvement, was that children settled quickly into school and fewer behaviour problems were experienced. The results of the project showed that the provision of trained paraprofessionals in the first years of schooling undoubtedly made a difference to children's success in learning to read<sup>44</sup>.

2.74 Teacher aides are already an important part of some classrooms. They can be people who help with integration programs, who help ESL children or students with other special needs. They should be seen as an integral part of the school structure and they have, and do play, an important role in the creation of a positive learning environment.

2.75 The extensive use of teacher aides will result in considerable increases in cost to education systems. To provide one aide in each Year 1 classroom in Queensland, for instance, would cost \$29 million. The Committee believes, however, that if the positive outcomes achieved in one small district in Queensland can be achieved throughout Australia, then the costs may be justified.

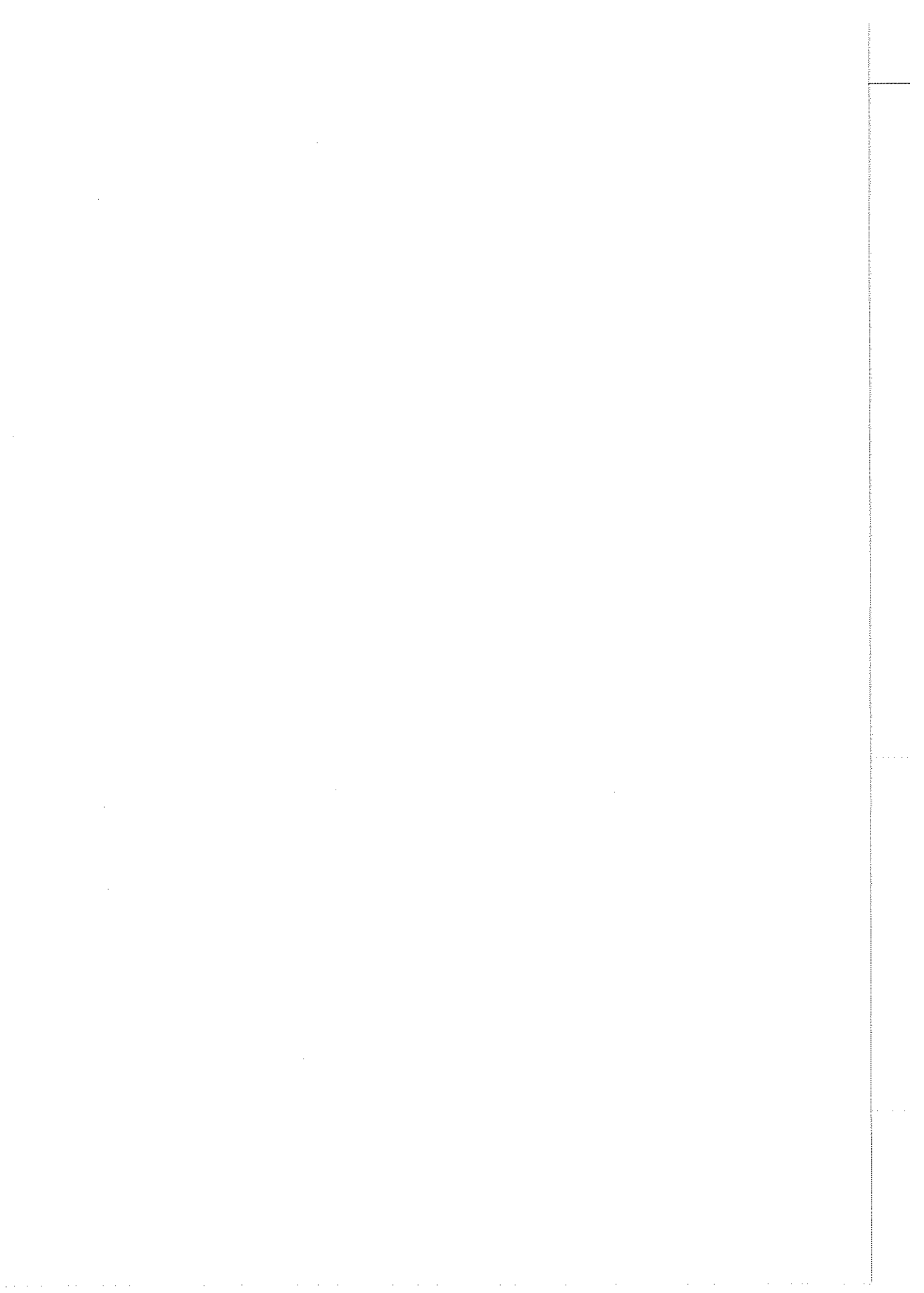
2.76 The Committee recommends that:

**the Australian Council for Educational Research investigate the effects of the use of teacher aides on literacy outcomes.**

## Chapter 2 - Endnotes

- 1 Australian Association of Special Education, *Transcript*, p. 688.
- 2 Gibbs Street Primary School, Submission.
- 3 Australian Early Childhood Association, South Australian Branch, Submission.
- 4 Larking, L., University of Central Queensland, Submission.
- 5 Foster, S., Australian Early Childhood Association, *Transcript*, p. 434.
- 6 Edgar, Dr. D., Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Transcript*, p. 321.
- 7 Toomey, D., La Trobe University, Submission.
- 8 Cairney, T., *Transcript*, p. 900.
- 9 *ibid.*, p. 902.
- 10 ACT Department of Education, Submission.
- 11 Kemp, M., University of Canberra, Submission.
- 12 Confidential School Submission.
- 13 Schools Council, *A Snapshot of the Early Years of Schooling*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 9.
- 14 Australian Council of State School Organisations, Submission.
- 15 Schools Council, *A Stitch in Time - Strengthening the First Years of School*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 15.
- 16 *ibid.*, p. 16.
- 17 House of Representatives Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training, *Skills Training for the 21st Century*, AGPS, December 1991, p. 58.
- 18 Australian Education Council, *National Report on Schooling in Australia 1990*, Curriculum Corporation, Victoria, 1990, p. 9 and Department of Employment, Education and Training, *Selected Higher Education Statistics 1991*, AGPS, Canberra, 1991, p. 2.
- 19 Tasmanian Department of Education and the Arts, *Transcript*, p. 468.
- 20 Australian Education Council, *op.cit.*, p. 55.
- 21 ACT Department of Education, Submission.
- 22 Tighes Hill Public School, Submission.
- 23 Cavenagh, R. & Simpson, P., *Class Sizes: Crowding our Future*, NSW Teachers Federation, Sydney, 1992, p. 6.
- 24 *ibid.*, p. 8.
- 25 *ibid.*, p. 10.
- 26 Hancock, J. & Westwood, P., The Flinders University of South Australia, Submission.
- 27 Wheldall, K., Macquarie University, *Transcript*, p. 861.
- 28 Cairney, T., *op.cit.*, p. 901.
- 29 Edgar, D., Australian Institute of Family Studies, *Transcript*, p. 333.
- 30 Department of School Education, *Transcript*, p. 710.
- 31 Australian Council of State School Organisations, Submission.
- 32 Schools Council, *A Snapshot of the Early Years of Schooling*, *op.cit.*, p. 41.
- 33 Schools Council, *Developing Flexible Strategies in The Early Years of Schooling: Purposes and Possibilities*, AGPS, Canberra, 1992, p. 7.
- 34 Australian Association of Special Education Inc., *Transcript*, p. 678.
- 35 *ibid.*, p. 678.
- 36 Norsworthy, S., *Transcript*, p. 378.
- 37 Larking, L., University of Central Queensland, Submission.
- 38 Daly, E., *Transcript*, p. 472.
- 39 Australian Primary Principals' Associations Inc., Submission.

- 40 Kirk, J., Submission.
- 41 Independent Schools' Staff Association ACT, Submission.
- 42 Queensland Association of State School Principals, *Transcript*, p. 229.
- 43 *ibid.*, p. 232.
- 44 Beenleigh Area School Support Centre, Submission.



## CHAPTER 3

### THE TEACHING OF LITERACY

#### Introduction

3.1 There is a vast and growing body of research on how children learn to read and write. By far the greatest amount of research indicates that reading requires the use of three cueing systems, namely semantic, syntactic and grapho-phonetic. Many of the studies point to phonemic awareness as a prediction of a child's success in reading. It is not always clear from the research whether or not these skills need to be explicitly taught in isolation.

3.2 It seems from the evidence, that the methods used to teach reading and writing over the past ten to fifteen years have served most students well. Importantly, more than ever children are enjoying reading. They know a great deal about the purpose of books and the purpose of writing and their language development has improved<sup>1</sup>.

3.3 A number of witnesses pointed to the success of current approaches. The Committee was told by one teacher educator in Tasmania that the top students are far better than those of twenty years ago<sup>2</sup>. Another from South Australia advised that many children have been successful and there have been excellent results with the whole language approach. She advised of one school where at the end of Year 2, eighty percent of children were reading at Year 4 level at least<sup>3</sup>.

3.4 On the other hand, the Committee was provided with information which is disturbing. It appears that a number of children, particularly those from homes with weak literacy backgrounds, are not succeeding and some children have not been able to benefit from the instruction as much as others. The Catholic Education Office (Adelaide), for instance, advised that while certain strategies have been successful in upgrading teaching and learning in the field of literacy, there was evidence that the curriculum and professional development has widened the gap between the best performers and those students whose development was impeded in some way<sup>4</sup>.

3.5 All education authorities and teacher educators commented that a single teaching strategy will not suit all children. However, the Committee has no doubt that good teachers are using a range of strategies to meet the needs of their students. While this may be the case, the Committee has some misgivings about the actual practice in some classrooms.

3.6 The debate on how to best teach beginning reading has continued for decades. One researcher stated that the question may be the most politicised topic in the field of education<sup>5</sup>. On the one hand, many hold the view that learning to read is a natural process which is acquired through exposure to and immersion in language and print. On the other hand, many believe that there is the need to

explicitly teach reading sub-skills, or decoding skills (such as phonics) spelling and other components of language.

3.7 A reviewer of over 600 papers on learning to read, concluded:

Isn't it time for us to stop bickering about which is more important? Isn't it time we recognise that written text has both form and function? To read, children must learn to deal with both, and we must help them.<sup>6</sup>

3.8 If anything has been learned from the research on teaching literacy skills, it should be that it would be arrogant to assume that all of the answers are known. It would also be misguided to assume that the evidence points to a single model of learning or teaching, or that one model will necessarily be appropriate at all developmental levels or for all children.<sup>7</sup>

### **Teaching Methodologies**

3.9 The proponents of the whole language or natural approach to learning argue that the written form of language and the spoken form are parallel modes of the same thing, and therefore, except for the differences between eye and ear, the same machinery and skills are used. The same principles hold for both learning to talk and learning to read<sup>8</sup>. Children learn to talk and listen by being immersed in the meanings of the language by the medium of sounds. Children also have a very strong motivation to talk and be understood. In learning to talk meaning and not individual sounds is what is important. The teaching practices which flow from this approach emphasise meaning. Words and letters are not drilled in isolation. Visual phonetic analysis gets only limited emphasis. The emphasis is on teaching children how to anticipate, sample and confirm or correct on the basis of knowledge of the topic and the feel for the flow of the language. Emphasis is also on building up knowledge of topics and language power. Some proponents of the approach have actively discouraged teachers from using any phonic instruction techniques<sup>9</sup>.

3.10 The whole language approach contrasts with previous approaches where children have been solemnly taught letters, phonics, words and word attack, while failing to take seriously their constantly demonstrated competence in using and learning functional language. One researcher stated:

Our research has convinced us that the skills displayed by the proficient reader derive from the meaningful use of written language and that sequential instruction in those skills is as pointless and fruitless as instruction in the skills of a proficient listener would be to teach infants to comprehend speech.<sup>10</sup>

3.11 Proponents of the need to directly teach the components of language argue that there is nothing natural about reading and writing. The alphabet is a human invention. While the alphabetic symbols are easy to reproduce and interpret, it is necessary to learn an abstract and conceptually complex code. The invention of



writing represents an attempt to supplement natural learning processes and it is highly likely that the learning of writing and reading also requires that they be supplemented<sup>11</sup>.

3.12 From the beginning children need to be taught to remember the shapes and letters, and how to form them correctly. Children must be taught to remember the sounds represented by each letter, as well as the sounds made by combinations of letters and strings of letters, from the simple to the complex. They must be taught to remember the exceptions (which are memorable by their oddity), and the less phonetic, high-frequency words which make up a large proportion of what they read and write. The only way for these concepts to become memorised is by repetition and practice. It is not always possible to teach them in context, so the teacher must also teach the children to use and see them in many contexts.

3.13 The Committee accepts that there is difficulty in drawing conclusions from the research data relating to learning theory because:

- . it is easy to read research selectively to support a particular point of view,
- . the research is plagued with methodological problems,
- . competent readers can do many things when it is experimentally required of them, but they may not actually use these processes when they are reading naturally, and
- . performance on any task is the result of the simultaneous or successive operations of many different processes<sup>12</sup>.

3.14 The current approach to literacy learning in Australian schools focuses on the whole language or natural learning approach. It has gained Australia wide support and virtually all curriculum guidelines on primary school literacy teaching produced are based on this approach. Two major Australian professional associations for primary teachers of reading and writing have also supported this approach in their conferences and publications. Virtually all teachers have undertaken the inservice training course, Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC), which is also based on a whole language approach to learning and literacy<sup>13</sup>.

3.15 The direct teaching of reading sub-skills is not excluded in whole language curricula. Various departments of education told the Committee that the teaching of the conventions of language is an integral part of classroom practice language guidelines. A representative from the New South Wales Board of Studies stated that:

learning word skills, learning sounds, learning to make the connection between the symbol and sound are things that are very much part of the syllabus.<sup>14</sup>

3.16 The ACT Department of Education considers that the teaching of phonics is an essential element of the reading program along with semantic and syntactic cueing systems. South Australia documents advise teachers to provide phonics instruction as part of a balanced range of strategies. The Tasmanian Department of Education stated that its guidelines are very clear about the fact that the three

cueing systems, graphonics, semantic and syntactic, must be taught<sup>15</sup>. The Western Australian program states that it is known that there is a link between children's knowledge of graphonics and their reading ability and therefore the question is "not whether we should teach graphonics, but how we should teach it"<sup>16</sup>.

3.17 It was argued that some teachers have adopted the view that all that is necessary for good learning is to immerse children in a rich 'soup' of experiences, the osmosis view<sup>17</sup>. The Dean of Education, University of Western Sydney told the Committee that one teaching method does not dominate the schools. Schools use a variety of methods that have not changed greatly over the last twenty years. He described the methods issue or argument as 'nonsense'<sup>18</sup>.

3.18 Some education authorities accept that the literacy guidelines may not have been explicit enough. The Tasmanian Education Department advised of teachers who "misunderstood the message"<sup>19</sup>. The former Chair of the Commonwealth Schools Commission and Associate Director of Education, South Australia, thought that many of the teachers of junior primary age children, although highly committed, caring and skilled had been:

'seduced by the literature; by certain 'sweet' visions of childhood (by Rousseanian - like conceptions of the child as 'flower') into a kind of complacency'<sup>20</sup>.

3.19 The Committee was told that education departments do not give very strong guidelines for explicit direct teaching. In terms of the South Australian guidelines one witness stated that:

you will be hard put to find the words teach, instruct, demonstrate, show. It uses words such as facilitate, enable, encourage, support. It has taken [away] in many ways the skill aspects of being an efficient, skilled teacher. I think many teachers who look to those as guidelines do not really get enough direction.<sup>21</sup>

3.20 The absence of clear guidelines has led to classroom practices which have not served the needs of all children. A lecturer in education who held this view stated:

Of course the difference now between those competent children and the least able is just standing out like a beacon and this must have an enormously negative effect on the esteem of the lowest achievers.<sup>22</sup>

3.21 The Committee was told that there are children who need explicit, systematic, structured instruction in order to move into reading; to be able to actually read and write the words. Many witnesses thought that this element has been missing from the total package for some children. Some even argued that the

teaching of some skills like phonics was actively discouraged. Even many of those with a commitment to the whole language or meaning based approach, are concerned about the manner in which it is implemented.

3.22 On the other hand, the Committee was told that some children are not succeeding because of the use of teaching strategies which involve the inappropriate and over reliance on methodologies such as phonics. A reliance on phonics as the only method of teaching reading actively works against many students, and research has shown that many people with reading difficulties over-relied on the graphonic aspects of print. If children fail to grasp a concept or skill when it is initially taught by direct instruction, the likelihood that they will fail second time round is extremely high. More of the same, i.e. a re-teaching of small sequential steps will meet with no greater success.

3.23 The Committee accepts the arguments that there is no single correct method which will suit all children. It is essential, therefore, that teachers know which methods and approaches are likely to work with certain children. These teaching skills can only be acquired if teachers are exposed to them in preservice and inservice training. State education departments and others consider that this range of skills is employed in most classrooms. Given the ageing teacher population, many teachers were initially trained in the "old" methods. These teachers have also been exposed to inservice courses which offered training in the latest techniques and methodologies. It is clear that all good teachers use a blend of "old" and "new" and adapt teaching styles to meet the differing needs of individual children. The Committee was told however that:

people who were trained, say, 20 years ago, do not easily let go of their initial training, and would be using a lot of those techniques they were taught to use in their initial training. People who have trained in the last 10 or 15 years probably would not be instructing in those areas very much, because they would not have been taught to do it.<sup>23</sup>

3.24 The Committee accepts the evidence that some teachers may not have had training in the range of skills required.

### **Preservice Education**

3.25 The Committee is concerned that current preservice education may not fully equip students for their role as effective classroom teachers, able to use a multiplicity of strategies to assist the range of students they will encounter in their classes. Sound foundations in language and literacy are essential to all aspects of a child's learning. Teachers must be trained to the highest level of competence in these disciplines. It appears that this can only be achieved with the extension of preservice training to four years, with a minimum component of that course devoted to language and literacy.

3.26 The Committee is particularly concerned about the nature of training which is provided in preservice teacher education courses in the areas of language and literacy, early childhood education and special education.

3.27 The Committee was told that the actual content of some teacher education courses are essentially driven by the curriculum of the state in which the students are studying. One teacher educator believed that this could lead to an imbalance in teacher preparation, particularly if curriculum documents do not emphasise the importance of teaching word identification strategies. She believed that this was not a deliberate attempt to ignore these strategies, but an assumption that students were already aware of these strategies. She suggested that students can emerge from their preservice education unaware of some areas of literacy development particularly decoding techniques<sup>24</sup>.

3.28 In typical diploma and degree courses, English language and literacy studies currently constitute about one-seventh (sometimes one-eighth) of the total program. Academic staff and departments of education are in favour of increasing the proportion of preservice programs devoted to English language and literacy and of making the study of language and literacy compulsory<sup>25</sup>.

3.29 Some institutions place a great deal of emphasis on the teaching of language arts and literacy. The School of Education of the University of Tasmania, for instance, requires students to undertake a minimum of 130 hours of compulsory units in literature and literacy, reading and language development. A number of witnesses commented on the difficulties of devoting more time to language arts and reading because of the competing interests for time in a teacher education course. While staff who teach language arts and reading feel that they should have a greater share of the curriculum, there are staff who teach mathematics, science, social studies and other units who hold similar views for their courses.

3.30 It was also stated that because teachers in primary schools are required to teach across the curriculum, it will not be possible to devote a greater proportion of time to language arts and reading. Such problems are particularly acute where the program is a three year qualification. It was argued that the minimum qualification for teaching should be extended to a four year degree. It was also suggested that the language arts and literacy component of the course be a minimum of twenty percent and compulsory<sup>26</sup>.

3.31 The broader education courses within colleges of advanced education have led to a general dilution of the specific early childhood component in many institutions<sup>27</sup>. Teacher training institutions continue to offer courses in early education but these are generally not compulsory.

3.32 Most school systems in Australia have abandoned the concept of early childhood classes in primary schools in favour of a K to 6 continuum. Far from recognising the need for expertise in early childhood, contemporary school systems encourage mobility in the teacher workforce within a K to 6 or K to 12 range.

3.33 The failure to understand the essence of early childhood teaching has increased the likelihood of a mismatch between children's learning needs and teacher response in the crucial first years of school, when children must begin to learn to read, or face certain failure in later grades. Young children under the age of eight require learning that is concrete and located in a context meaningful to them. As they are still developing in many of the cognitive areas critical for formal learning, *and developing at widely varying rates, children in the age group 5 to 8 require teachers who understand how young children learn.* These teachers must be able to devise appropriate learning experiences for individual children among groups of children with a wide range of developing competencies<sup>28</sup>.

3.34 No education system in Australia any longer requires teachers of the youngest children in schools to have specific training to work with this age group. Teachers and teacher educators believed that teachers of children in the early years should be specifically trained for that area and should be recognised as valued specialists. The Committee was told of the value that specifically trained early childhood teachers were to the schools. One principal advised that the early childhood training should not be restricted to teachers of K to 3 because:

those people have such a deep understanding of child development that they are a real asset through the rest of the school as well, and can bring a lot to the rest of the school, from Year 4 to 7.<sup>29</sup>

3.35 A number of witnesses were concerned that often specific training was not recognised when appointments to schools were made. Generalist trained primary teachers were given equal preference to early childhood teachers in all State and Territory systems. The Faculty of Education at the University of Tasmania, for instance, offers specialist training for those who wish to teach Years K to 3 and those who wish to teach Years 4 to 6. It is of concern however that:

when they actually go out teaching that is not necessarily taken note of. So you could get a primary teacher who ends up with an early childhood class, or vice versa.<sup>30</sup>

3.36 Special education components in preservice training are not compulsory. It appears that in some institutions, it is only in these courses that teachers are given the specific skills to directly intervene and assist the children who are experiencing difficulties. The training of teachers in special education has become more essential with the practice of states integrating, in normal classrooms, students *with various learning difficulties.* It is now even more essential that teachers gain skills in this area, as withdrawal of the students from class for special tuition is seen to be philosophically and educationally inappropriate. It is the Committee's view that all teachers need training in special education to enable them to address special learning difficulties in a whole class situation.

3.37 The New South Wales Government advised that from 1994 no new teacher will be employed unless at least 13 weeks or one unit of special education has been

undertaken, as part of preservice training. That is prescribed as training in literacy, training in dealing with students who are failing and training in behaviour management.

3.38 A New South Wales Education Department official advised that the purpose is to equip regular classroom teachers with some of the skills of special education teachers so that:

no student is taken out [of class] and given specific skill training in either phonemic awareness or concepts about print or ability to understand teacher instruction or retention of whole word meaning, but rather that the acquisition of those splinter skills, which are extremely important and which are often encapsulated in the debate about learning or teaching phonics, is going on at the same time as the very defensible whole language activities of experiences with print, immersion in literature, et cetera are going on in the classroom. So I do not think the debate is rooted in dichotomy, but rather in giving our teachers the skills to blend both of those areas of competence.<sup>31</sup>

3.39 The Committee recommends that:

- . the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the Australian Education Council to require -
  - . a minimum of four years training for new teachers including a significant compulsory component devoted to language and literacy,
  - . all new teachers to undertake a unit of special education,
  - . all new teachers of Years K to 3 to be trained in early education, and
  - . all literacy training include specific instruction in the range of teaching strategies.

3.40 The Committee further recommends that:

- . the Commonwealth Government increase funding to tertiary institutions to enable all preservice teacher education to be extended to four years.

## Practice Teaching

3.41 An important part of teacher education is practice teaching. The Committee agrees with the views of the Schools Council that practice teaching is a vital part of preservice education and that closer cooperation between systems and teacher education institutions is necessary to improve the links between theory and practice<sup>32</sup>. The Primary Principals Association, however, referred to "the dangerous trend" of universities downgrading the importance of practice teaching<sup>33</sup>.

3.42 All teacher educators considered practice teaching to be essential in the development of a competent teacher. Many expressed concern, however, about the quality of supervision in the schools. One lecturer commented that some supervising teachers find it difficult to be critical of student teachers. A principal of a junior school stated that there was inconsistency of quality control of teacher-supervisors who have trainee teachers in their classes and in consistency of standards and expectations<sup>34</sup>.

3.43 *The Committee was told of different views of different faculties relating to the responsibility of the university in practice teaching. Some argued that that aspect of teacher training was the responsibility of the school. Others argued that the university had a continuing responsibility to ensure that the practice teaching period was effective. The Committee supports the concept of continuing close relationships between the university and the student when practice teaching.*

3.44 Some institutions have this close relationship. Workshops are held for supervisory teachers to explain exactly what their students are doing, what they expect the students to be doing in the school and how the school staff should support the students. Detailed information is provided on the students' courses and the tasks students have to do while on teaching practice. Staff visit the schools, talk to students, talk to teachers and take demonstration lessons<sup>35</sup>.

3.45 The Committee agrees with the Schools Council's suggestion that an advanced skills classification for teachers with nine or more years experience be established. Teachers with this classification would be responsible for trainees.

## **Entry Standards**

3.46 There is no uniform policy concerning the literacy competence of students entering teacher training. Institutions vary in their demands regarding entry qualifications in English and mathematics. Some have specific entry requirements for passes in English and Year 12 mathematics. Others only require the student to have matriculated. Some make catch-up provisions mandatory for students who, during their first (or subsequent) semesters, demonstrate the need for assistance.

3.47 Until recently, students wishing to enter teaching were likely to be achieving within or near the top third of tertiary entrance scores across a range of subjects in their various states. There has been a dramatic fall in tertiary entrance scores of those admitted to teacher education. The number of students applying for entry to teaching as a first preference fell from 16.9 percent of tertiary applicants in 1985 to 10.3 percent in 1989. Many who would have once applied to enter education courses are entering other courses which have recently begun to provide tertiary training<sup>36</sup>. Others enter education courses because jobs are scarce. These courses are now carrying a large number of second-choice students. Some witnesses expressed concern about the poor attitude and aptitude of student teachers<sup>37</sup>.

3.48 Representatives from universities were concerned about the personal low literacy skills of student teachers. Some students had poor literacy skills ranging from speech, enunciation and grammar, spelling and general writing ability. One lecturer stated that approximately five to ten percent of students have poor literacy skills. Another stated that twenty-four percent of her student teachers failed a language arts and reading course, partly because of poor spelling and grammar<sup>38</sup>.

3.49 The Committee considers that students entering teacher education courses should have a demonstrated proficiency in English and mathematics and have demonstrated an aptitude for teaching. The Committee recommends that:

- the Minister for Employment, Education and Training seek the agreement of the teacher training institutions to -**
  - require entrants to demonstrate an aptitude for teaching, and**
  - establish a minimum level of Mathematics and English for entrants to teaching faculties.**

### **Inservice Training**

3.50 The Committee believes that it is essential that system wide inservice training programs be developed which will provide teachers with the necessary skills to meet the needs of those children who are experiencing difficulty in learning to read and write. There has been a general expectation by employing authorities that teachers would do inservice training in their own time. For too long the system has relied on the goodwill of teachers. The consequence of this policy results in skilled, dedicated teachers availing themselves of the training. The less motivated and often the poorer teachers do not improve their skills to meet the changing demands of their profession. State Education Departments are responsible to ensure that inservice training is systemic and inherent in professional development.

3.51 The major inservice training offered to teachers in the areas of language arts and reading has been the Early Literacy Inservice Course (ELIC). ELIC was the major literacy inservice course and professional development project for teachers of Years K to 3. The majority of early childhood teachers would have undertaken the course and it has been most influential in the teaching of language and literacy in Australian schools.

3.52 ELIC is based on the whole language or natural learning philosophy which is that young children will learn to talk naturally at home no matter their background so teachers need to model their classrooms as far as possible on this rich learning environment. Perhaps the most successful aspect of ELIC was that it focussed attention on the need for literacy and language development in the first years. Through its emphasis on close observation of children by teachers, ELIC provided effective methods to identify children at risk of developing literacy problems.



3.53 While ELIC was seen as of fundamental importance in developing the skills of teachers, it appears to have its limitations. The Catholic Education Office, Adelaide, believed that it gave many teachers the idea that they were not to worry too much if development was not obvious. It would come naturally, as did oral language. ELIC did not actually say this, but it did not positively emphasize enough that teaching action should follow the identification of children at risk. ELIC was also criticised in that it did not deal closely with children whose first language was not English. It assumed that all students from all backgrounds would come to school with school like behaviours<sup>39</sup>.

3.54 While ELIC was extremely valuable in changing views about literacy, it was described to the Committee as now dated.

3.55 Systems are developing more recent and more innovative professional development programs which reflect a better understanding of the development of language and literacy. Reading Recovery and First Steps provide ideal models for inservice training in terms of supporting documents, release time and teacher support.

3.56 The First Steps professional development package consists of Developmental Continua booklets in Reading, Writing, Spelling and Oral Language together with supporting modules which describe the practical classroom activities mentioned in the Continua documents. Eight days of inservice training are spaced over a year. The sessions include time spent on school development planning to ensure that implementation is undertaken systematically.

3.57 Schools are encouraged to undertake implementation slowly and in a highly focussed manner to ensure that real change in teaching practice occurs.

3.58 A system of support has been initiated which enables teachers to see innovative strategies being modelled in their own classrooms and gives them time and opportunity to experiment with new ideas while working with an experienced colleague. A team of teachers have been trained not only in content areas but also in working with peers. These teachers join the staffs of schools which cater for the most needy children for a semester in order to work collaboratively with fellow teachers.

3.59 Training is given to two teachers chosen by their colleagues from school staff. These teachers are designated Focus Teachers. Their task is to provide ongoing support in the years after the Project has moved on, conducting workshops, inducting new teachers and assisting colleagues as the need arises.

3.60 Reading Recovery is a major inservice and professional development course which aims to provide a "second wave" of teaching effort to help children who have not responded to early classroom instruction. It seeks to get such children underway.

3.61 The training of teachers is essential to the implementation of Reading Recovery. Experienced early childhood teachers undergo a year's on-the-job training which involves the daily teaching of 'at risk' children in their own school and attending fortnightly inservice sessions. Teachers become sensitive observers of children's reading and writing behaviour and acutely aware of the effects of teaching decisions. They are carefully guided in the use of the specific Reading Recovery teaching procedures.

3.62 The highly-trained Reading Recovery tutors who train the teachers are key people in the smooth running of the program. They have a different level of training. It is at a higher professional level and involves a full-time year of academic study, seminars, inservice sessions and daily teaching of individual children.

3.63 The role of the Reading Recovery tutor is to train the teachers selected at the school level to work on this program. Monitoring of the teachers' programming and their pupils' progress to ensure quality teaching and learning is a key feature of a tutor's work.

3.64 The school staffing schedules are arranged to enable the Reading Recovery teacher to be released to carry out his/her tutoring duties. Once the course is begun, its continuance takes precedence over all other possible claims on the teacher concerned.

3.65 The Committee accepts that teachers use a range of strategies to meet the needs of individual students. It is concerned, however, that the less experienced teachers may in fact acquire narrow instruction strategies from their inservice training. While the Committee does not wish to be prescriptive, as a starting point, it believes that those teachers who have not had training in special education should be given access to that training.

3.66 Inservice training must also be seen as a building exercise. The Committee fully supports the views of the Schools Council in this regard. The Schools Council commented that approaches that build on, or extend, teachers' knowledge and experience are far more likely to succeed than those that mandate the replacing of old methods with new ones. 'Throwing the baby out with the bathwater' is a phrase coined regularly by teachers when they reflect upon the efforts of many reformers to implement change in the early years of schooling. Teachers need to feel re-skilled and not de-skilled when changes are introduced<sup>40</sup>.

### Chapter 3 - Endnotes

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- 34 Norsworthy, S., Submission.
- 35 Ward, J., University of South Australia, *Transcript*, p. 653.

- 36 Schools Council, *Teacher Quality: An Issues Paper*, AGPS, Canberra, 1989, p. 16.
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- 38 Ward, J., University of South Australia, *Transcript*, p. 651.
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## CHAPTER 4

### STANDARDS AND ASSESSMENT

#### Literacy Standards

4.1 Most submissions accepted that the majority of students were achieving a satisfactory level of literacy. Only a few submissions were received which argued that there had been a decline in overall literacy standards. The concerns of the submissions centred on the need for intervention strategies to assist the twenty percent or so of students who were not coping. A number of submissions did, however, comment on declining standards in spelling and grammar and the failure of the school system to specifically teach these skills.

4.2 There is no firm evidence that standards of achievement have declined or improved over time. The evidence which exists is limited to particular parts of the country and to very narrow levels of achievement and suggests both marginal declines and marginal improvements in literacy levels<sup>1</sup>. As the student population now is markedly different from previous years, constant standards in fact could be interpreted as a gain. It is clear, however, that the changes in the way in which reading and writing are taught have not achieved the "universal" literacy which is required if all children are to participate effectively in society as adults. Many children continue to struggle and some educators believe that these children are falling further behind those most able. Some evidence suggests, however, that while there has been no decline in the performance of the lower achievers there has been no increase either<sup>2</sup>.

4.3 Many people argue for the introduction of standardised testing either on a system or national basis in Australia. The call for testing is often based on the premise that literacy standards are declining because of the teaching methodologies used in schools. They argue that judgements cannot be made on the effectiveness of these methods on a school or even a classroom basis because assessments are based on observation by classroom teachers.

4.4 The various curriculum documents make it clear that spelling and grammar are important. The Victorian guidelines, for instance, state that young children should be encouraged to invent spelling where necessary rather than disrupt the flow of ideas with a search for the correct spelling. A laissez-faire approach to spelling, however, is not encouraged. Inaccurate spelling in a finished product may obscure meaning and will certainly be a distraction to the reader expecting conventional written language. Students must become highly conscious of the need to spell accurately and be able to use various means of checking that their spelling is accurate. They should be taught to use dictionaries, pocket spellers, glossaries, wordcheck and topic-based word lists.

4.5 The guidelines also state that published spelling lists are of limited use. Lists of words generated in the classroom, relating directly to the needs of children, are more appropriate.

4.6 A number of witnesses expressed concern about the approaches adopted in current curriculum documents.

4.7 One teacher advised the Committee that children are told that spelling and handwriting do not matter for the initial draft. Errors can be fixed later. In most children's minds this becomes the low expectation for all writing, so they proceed with no attempt at accuracy and the results show a high degree of carelessness even with words they have learnt. The mistakes are inconsistent, with several different versions of any given word being common. This indicates a careless attitude, not creative talent, especially when it occurs in upper grades<sup>3</sup>.

4.8 If teachers accept this, then the burden of correction becomes so great that conferencing, modelling and re-drafting cannot cope with it. Many errors appear in the supposedly perfect final draft and these errors have been reinforced in children's memories by repetition through several drafts. This then appears as a learning difficulty in the child, when it could have been prevented by higher expectations, better teaching and correction by the teacher.

4.9 She also stated that with the advent of the whole language approach, grammar texts, like spelling programs, were discarded as old-fashioned, unnecessary and out of place in this approach to teaching literacy<sup>4</sup>.

4.10 The current approach to teaching appears to have support from some of those who believe in a more structured approach to teaching reading and writing. One stated that classroom encouragement of invented spelling is a promising approach toward the development of phonemic awareness and knowledge of spelling patterns<sup>5</sup>.

4.11 A lecturer in reading and language development told the Committee that she supported 'temporary' spelling, because, like other aspects of learning in its earliest form, it is temporary but later gets refined. She stated that:

you start children with temporary or invented spelling but you do not let that last very long. The task of the teacher is then to intervene and teach the specific spelling skills that children need.<sup>6</sup>

4.12 Education authorities reject the notion that spelling and grammar are not taught. One Queensland Department of Education official stated that:

When looking at specific areas of spelling or grammar we look at vocab, we look at grammar, we look at cohesion, we look at generic structure, we look at spelling, we look at handwriting, we look at intonation and rhythm, pronunciation, paragraphing, punctuation, keyboarding the list is nearly endless.<sup>7</sup>

4.13 Another stated that his children's spelling was tested on a weekly basis on the traditional lists of spelling but in addition to words set by the teachers, 'the children then have to add five or 10 words of their own'<sup>8</sup>.

4.14 While no data was provided to support the view of generally declining standards, there are instances of where poor skills in grammar and spelling are obvious. In a previous report, the Committee gave examples where literacy skills were inadequate, particularly in respect of TAFE entrants<sup>9</sup>. During the current inquiry, the Committee was warned about generalising from these figures as they seem to be very unreliable, tiny samples and are in no way representative of school leavers and to 'depend and lean on this information is really dangerous'<sup>10</sup>.

4.15 The Committee has referred earlier to the decline of literacy standards of teacher trainees. It noted, however, that this decline was the result of the changing backgrounds of the participants rather than a general decline in standards of school leavers.

4.16 The Head of the Department of Speech and Hearing, University of Queensland advised that even though her course attracted the top ten percent of students, she was appalled by the spelling of her students. She added however, that standards had not dropped because spelling had always been poor<sup>11</sup>.

4.17 Only NSW, Tasmania and Queensland have system wide testing. In Tasmania there has been testing since 1975 in literacy, particularly in the area of reading. Since the early 1980s the Department has been testing on a four-year cycle. The tests are not identical but a substantial number of common items are maintained which makes comparisons over the years possible. All children from government schools at the age of ten and fourteen years old are tested, involving five to six thousand children on each occasion. The tests show that average levels of reading comprehension of ten year olds have been maintained at a consistent level, while standards achieved by fourteen year olds increased steadily from 1975 to 1983 and have been maintained at that level. It was suggested that while these average figures showed no decline, in fact the gap between the highest and lowest achievers had increased. The Committee commissioned an analysis of the data to test this view. The results of the analysis generally showed that this was not the case and the two groups reflected average results<sup>12</sup>.

4.18 The Committee received no evidence to suggest that the data is used for any purpose other than to monitor standards in a narrow range of skills. The Tasmanian Department is reviewing the scope and application of the testing program in order to extend the ambit well beyond basic skills. It will adopt an outcomes based approach from which it will be possible to obtain clear and unambiguous information about student performance and attainment.

4.19 NSW has a State-wide assessment procedure in Years 3 and 6 in the Basic Skills testing program. These tests have only been conducted since 1989. The tests indicate that more than half the students scored in the top two skills bands. Approximately twenty percent of students scored in the lowest band and would

require some intervention. There is some indication that there has been an upward trend in standards since 1989<sup>13</sup>. It appears that the data has been used to identify socio-economic groups who achieve the lowest scores. The data has not been used, on a systemic basis, to allocate resources to intervene and assist those in need of additional help.

4.20 In Queensland, a State wide assessment program began in 1990 where a sample of children in Years 5, 7 and 9 was tested for reading, writing and mathematics skills. The majority of students over all year levels demonstrated middle to higher level reading performance and produced first draft text whose meaning was not impeded by errors in either spelling or punctuation. The results showed children being able to:

- . deploy appropriate punctuation in a meaningful manner,
- . spell commonly used words, and
- . apply general awareness of sound-symbol relationships and spelling patterns when attempting to spell less common words.

4.21 The Queensland program also compared the 1990 results with earlier testing programs. There was virtually no difference between 1980 and 1990 writing tasks, but stronger performance was demonstrated in 1980 for reading. While the prime purpose of the program appears to be the measurement of performance over time, it has resulted in the development of criterion based benchmarks and other features which can contribute to effective teaching and assessment techniques in the classroom.

4.22 In the absence of data supporting (or even refuting) a decline in standards, a number of witnesses referred to data relating to the United Kingdom. It was argued that similar whole language techniques are used in the UK and that test results indicate a decline in literacy standards. Most refer to the analysis and writings of Martin Turner.

4.23 Turner argued that the introduction of "real books" and associated teaching methodologies has lead to a national decline in reading standards. He stated that the downward trend in infants' reading attainment has shown up on every instrument in all parts of the country. This loss in ability was perhaps equivalent to the loss of six months progress for the average seven to eight year old. Some Local Education Authorities (LEAs) have been collecting data over the last decade but the results were never published. He claimed that LEAs had been sitting secretly on 'desperately unfavourable downward trends in reading attainment'<sup>14</sup>. When results were published, their significance was not made clear and comment was kept to a minimum. Turner's analysis of the LEA's indicated a decline in standards of all but one LEA. The lack of decline in that one LEA, according to Turner, was because "it is geographically isolated and curriculum trends arrived late"<sup>15</sup>.

4.24 To test Turner's claims, the National Foundation for Education Research sought test data from the one hundred and sixteen LEA's in England and Wales. Of the one hundred and sixteen LEAs, only twenty six of these provided data which



enabled a judgement to be made. Of these LEA's there was evidence of a decline in standards in some form in the 1980's in nineteen, three LEAs reported a rise and a further three considered standards remained stable and in one, fluctuations made it impossible to determine a pattern. Where some decline in performance had been found, it occurred most commonly since 1985, and usually expressed itself as an increase in the percentage of children in the lowest-scoring bands. The rate of decline appeared to have increased in 1988-89.

4.25 The researchers concluded that it was impossible from this survey to draw a conclusion of a national decline in standards. Nor was there any evidence that the decline was attributable to the 'real books' approach or any other classroom methodology.

4.26 The reasons offered by LEAs for the decline included:

- . teacher shortages causing discontinuity,
- . an increase in rolls, and thus class sizes, and
- . lack of parental involvement, and the need for parents to supplement allowances so as to be able to provide a range of reading resources.

4.27 Other factors associated with falls in performance around 1984-85 and 1988-90 seemed to be, respectively, teachers' industrial action and the introduction of the National Curriculum, which has necessitated teachers losing contact time in order to prepare for its many and swift changes<sup>16</sup>.

4.28 Other reviewers of Turner's work suggest it is methodologically unsound and in fact Turner's own data shows that fifty percent of his sample points to causes other than "real books"<sup>17</sup>.

4.29 Extrapolating data from one country to another is difficult. In this instance, the Committee is satisfied that the UK data shows little more than an increase in the number of lowest achievers. This is consistent with the Committee's own findings for Australia. As public education now extends to children who, in the past would not have been placed in a normal classroom, it is not surprising to observe larger numbers in the lowest achieving groups. The challenge is to develop programs to assist these children to achieve to their maximum potential.

4.30 One state director of education wrote that whilst today's claims about poor student attainment and low standards of literacy and numeracy may be as accurate or as inaccurate as they were in the past, education systems which rely upon largely non-examination or test based approaches to student assessment seem less well able to defend themselves, and thus appear to lack credibility when responding to allegations of poor relative performance. This may be in part due to a simple lack of information, to having the information but not in a form which is comprehensible to non-educators, or to a mistrust of teachers who appear to possess clearly vested interests in maintaining the status quo<sup>18</sup>.

## Student Assessment

4.31 The hope of any new teaching methodology is that it will be more successful than existing practices. There have, however, been problems in trying to make comparisons between methodologies, particularly in the area of language. One problem has been a reluctance to gather hard data of any kind about students particularly in the area of language. This often leads to a situation where the only 'evidence' readily available has been the opinions of teachers and others. Another problem has been the perceived inadequacies of available test instruments. These tests are often seen as lacking validity in that they do not seem to be measuring what the curriculum experts believe the teaching is trying to achieve. This second problem has been advanced as a reason for the existence of the first<sup>19</sup>.

4.32 Primary schools are not usually subject to any requirement to mark a student's completion of this phase of education and can therefore employ whichever assessment tools and strategies they wish. In practice, this leaves judgement about internal assessment in the hands of classroom teachers and school administrators, who can adopt approaches which they feel are relevant for particular groups of students, including complete dependence upon teacher-based assessment.

4.33 The normal form of assessment is teacher observation, often against a checklist of attainments. The Committee received no arguments against the concept that student assessment is an essential part of the teaching of literacy. The argument concentrated on the form that that assessment should take and the action taken on the results of those assessments in terms of additional support for those who needed help.

4.34 Curriculum documents commonly point to three components of student assessment, namely record keeping, assessment and reporting. The principal function of assessment is to improve and/or describe learning. It is an integral part of the learning and teaching process, planned from the beginning of a course, unit or activity. It is not appropriate to rely simply on test scores or other "one-off" judgements of student performance.

4.35 The teacher's responsibility for promoting literacy and language competence involves the accurate recording and monitoring of what students can do and what further action is needed to help them develop. Continuous assessment of individual students' development in language and thought must be supported by easily managed systems of record keeping.

4.36 The evidence that teachers use as records of progress should include the following:

- . samples of students' work-in-progress,
- . writing folders which include records of work planned and completed, together with samples of work from first draft to finished product, and a self-chosen selection of the student's best work,
- . students' journals and logbooks, such as a logbook kept throughout a series of workshops on a dramatic text, or a logbook of experiences on a school camp,

- . tape-recordings or oral presentations and small-group discussions, and
- . checklists indicating successful completion of work.

4.37 The final component is reporting. Reporting is an important outcome of evaluation and assessment and serves a number of functions for a variety of audiences. Reporting involves descriptions, in oral and/or written form, of the:

- . aims and scope of the program,
- . learners' progress and development in terms of their knowledge of and achievements in learning language, learning through language and learning about language, and
- . learners' attitudes to learning.

4.38 Most educators considered that this form of assessment provides far richer information as to a child's total development. One witness described the assessment process as a honourable system which:

instead of spending a lot of time comparing this child with that child and this school with that school it says 'this is what we are aiming for every child, and that is where we want to get, and that is where we hope to get'.<sup>20</sup>

4.39 Many witnesses however warned about some of the limitations of an assessment system based on a single teacher's observation. The Committee was told by a number of witnesses that it is not always clear from language guidelines what should be achieved at a particular stage of development. Many of the skills required for reading might not be recognised as successes or failures in the first two years but appear in later years.

4.40 In addition, where teachers expectations are low, the full potential of the children may not be achieved. One teacher told the Committee of the problem of teachers who leave teacher training institutions and teach all their careers in regions where, historically, student achievement is low<sup>21</sup>.

4.41 A lecturer in education commented that teachers need benchmarks against which to assess children. She stated that while there were broad goals in literacy guidelines, there was no real guidance about what a child should be able to do at a particular stage<sup>22</sup>. The value of the Western Australian First Steps program is that it provides a map or profile of a wide range of student achievements in reading and writing.

4.42 A Tasmanian Education Department official advised that for more than a decade teachers have been receiving two main messages in regard to the assessment of reading. These were that traditional reading tests are not appropriate and that (instead) they should be placing heavy reliance upon observation. He believed that these messages have suffered the same fate as many of those on the teaching of reading: that is, they have almost always been oversimplified and/or distorted. He asserted that there has been little really effective, efficient, systematic assessment of children's reading development taking place. Curriculum documents

tend to be very strong on what to assess and the ways in which this information is recorded. Advice on how to assess is usually of a very general nature and provides little assistance to teachers<sup>23</sup>.

4.43 One submission pointed to the diverse range of assessment methods used in schools. These included: interviews, questionnaires, surveys, diaries and logs, rating scales, systematic classroom observation, anecdotal records, pencil & paper ability tests, interest inventories, analysis of student's work, discussion, unstructured observation, contrived observation, private records, checklists, teacher and student annotation of materials, parental concerns<sup>24</sup>.

4.44 Frequently, the type and style of instrument used was unfamiliar to anyone other than the administering teacher and the results were unable to be understood or interpreted by other teachers. This lack of a uniform and comprehensive process has permitted a highly fragmented, inconsistent and confusing approach to detecting and dealing with children at risk of developing literacy problems, resulting in an often ineffective approach to this serious problem in schools.

### **Standardised Testing**

4.45 There are many who argue for standardised testing for reasons other than to test the hypothesis of falling or rising standards in literacy. Tests can be of great diagnostic assistance to teachers.

4.46 A paper from the Australian Council for Educational Research examined some of the common criticisms relating to testing<sup>25</sup>. The first of these was that testing can narrow the curriculum by giving undue prominence to a range of narrow, readily tested goals. In other words teachers teach for the test.

4.47 ACER agreed that every test assesses only some of the learning goals that schools set for students. If an assessment program is limited to a single test or even a small set of tests that cover only some areas of learning, then there is a possibility that important learning goals will be ignored and undervalued in the assessment process. In general, it is easier to assess students' factual and procedural knowledge than it is to assess their conceptual understanding, problem solving, or other higher-order thinking.

4.48 Assessment tasks for this broader range of student learning present their own developmental challenges. There is less experience and accumulated wisdom in developing alternative forms of assessment than in developing paper and pencil tests and examinations. ACER advised that these challenges are being taken up in an increasing number of assessment programs. There is reason for optimism that many of the narrowing and distorting effects of past testing practices can be addressed through assessment tasks which are more inclusive of the broad range of goals that we now have for students in our schools.

4.49 Also there are some that argue that standardised testing provides no real assistance to the teaching and learning process.

4.50 ACER believed that there is no greater assistance to the teaching/learning process than feedback on the current state of student learning. Information about students' current understandings, knowledge, skills, and areas of strength and weakness is required by teachers for the management of day-to-day learning. Feedback to parents is essential if they are to become active partners in their children's school learning. Principals and school communities require feedback on achievement levels in a school if they are to make informed decisions in relation to school curriculum content and delivery. The government, community and education systems require feedback on levels of achievement and system-wide trends over time as a basis for *setting priorities for resource allocation and for the introduction and evaluation of special educational programs*. Quality feedback to each of these audiences is essential to the improvement of teaching and learning.

4.51 ACER stated that in modern educational measurement, the ranking of students and the concepts of passing and failing are much less important than the intention to mark out a growth continuum and to map and describe individual progress. Numerical scores, if they are used at all, are used simply as place markers along this continuum. Tests still allow students' achievements to be compared with the achievements of other students (something that may be important to parents, principals, and beginning teachers), but their main purpose is to estimate and describe an individual's level of attainment on some described strand of their learning.

4.52 Tests are also criticised on the grounds that they simply tell teachers what they already know. ACER agreed, but also stated that tests can be useful in informing teachers of the variety of responses given by students of a particular age and can alert them to common misconceptions and errors. Tests can also draw teachers' attention to individual students' strengths and weaknesses that may go undetected in the course of day-to-day teaching.

4.53 There are documented reports from teachers who have discovered previously unidentified features of individual students' learning as a result of the recently-introduced Basic Skills Testing Program in New South Wales, for example. Day-to-day classroom observation is incapable of providing teachers with a sense of how well students are achieving in relation to other students of the same age. The Committee received some evidence of testing in the classroom which revealed problems of which the teachers had been unaware<sup>26</sup>. The diagnostic tests used to identify children for reading recovery seem to avoid the problems of invalid and *unreliable tests, of inappropriate labelling and of attributing lack of progress to a limited group of indicators and causes*<sup>27</sup>.

4.54 The final concern is that testing leads to invalid and unfair comparisons between schools and regions with different intake policies and different characteristics.

4.55 ACER advised that with the Basic Skills Testing Program in New South Wales, average results are calculated for individual schools and these are made available to principals and teachers at each school for comparison with state-wide results. There is no public reporting or comparison of results from different schools. To date, there is no evidence that this testing program has led to invalid or unfair comparisons between schools or regions. The Committee notes however that there is little evidence to show that the testing has been used to influence any positive educational outcomes.

4.56 There can be no argument that testing can lead to invalid and unfair comparisons. According to ACER, experience with the NSW Basic Skills Testing Program shows that invalid and unfair comparisons of schools are not inevitable consequences of the introduction of a testing program.

4.57 ACER states that two steps can be taken to minimise the likelihood of school results being misinterpreted:

- . limiting access to a school's results to persons best placed to interpret those results, and
- . avoiding reporting a school's results in isolation from information about that school.

## **National English Curriculum**

4.58 The Australian Education Council (AEC) has agreed to the development of Statements and Profiles for eight areas of learning, including English. The National English Statement provides a definition of the area of learning, a summary of its intended outcomes and an account of its curriculum scope. The Statement is being developed currently. It recognises that beginning students have different skills and levels of achievement when they start school. The curriculum framework will also facilitate the development of special literacy programs where necessary.

4.59 The Statement sets out an agreed basis for curriculum in English in Australian States and Territories. It promotes a consistent approach to the development of English curricula throughout Australia. It helps achieve a better coordinated and integrated system of literacy provision for all children.

4.60 The National English Profile. The Profile describes the achievements of students in English in eight levels. It provides a framework to which teachers, schools and systems can refer when assembling detailed information about student achievement in English learning. The Profile is scheduled for completion by the end of 1992.

4.61 Profiles are intended to:

- . show achievements and progress in all aspects of learning,
- . be compiled over extended periods of time,
- . allow the use of a variety of assessment methods ranging from teacher judgements to standardised tests,
- . record the contexts in which learning occurs,

- . report progress in key competencies,
- . show next steps in learning,
- . relate closely to the curriculum, and
- . be used as part of ongoing classroom teaching and learning.

4.62 It is expected that the profiles will provide a powerful catalyst for improving the quality of assessment and reporting in Australian schools, and one which would receive widespread acceptance among teachers as well as among the clients of schools. Their chief advantages are consistency, comprehensiveness and clarity about what aspects of student learning will be monitored and reported, together with flexibility to determine the most appropriate methods of assessment for different outcomes<sup>28</sup>.

## Conclusions

4.63 The most effective means of assessing children is close objective and subjective observation by the teacher. The Committee believes, however, that standardised tests do have a place in the education process provided that they have a strong diagnostic emphasis. The Committee also has no objection to systemic testing. It was clear from the Committee's discussions with state officials, that the lack of data has made it difficult to equitably allocate resources and identify the need for intervention strategies. If there is standardised testing, it must be used to produce positive outcomes for students and provide feed-back for parents and the community.

4.64 The Committee is disturbed that while NSW has system-wide testing, this data has not been used effectively. Test results should not be used to unfairly identify successful and unsuccessful schools. However, an analysis of the data could be used to identify if there are aspects of teaching methodologies or school structures which are effecting outcomes, and assist in the dissemination of information on best practice.

4.65 The Committee agrees with one writer that the debate about student assessment, measurement of performance and attainment and about the effectiveness of certain educational practices has been clouded by unsubstantiated opinion, unsupported assertion, political expediency and elements of personal and professional vitriol. Thus, the 'general public', and indeed many educators, have formed views on various models and methods of assessment which are based more on untested assertion than upon documented evidence<sup>29</sup>.

4.66 The Committee recommends that:

- . **as part of the development of the National English Profile, standard assessment tasks be developed which will integrate standardised pencil and paper tests with performance measures undertaken by teachers as part of normal day-to-day classroom practice, and**
- . **the prime purpose of the assessments be to improve the education outcomes for children.**

## Chapter 4 - Endnotes

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## CHAPTER 5

### EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGIES

#### Introduction

5.1 It is essential that all children be screened for potential difficulties, ideally on entry to preschool, and certainly on entry to primary school. Classroom strategies must be ones which recognise that different children respond to different approaches. In addition, teachers need support to enable them to respond to children who require special assistance including the gifted and talented. No matter how effective classroom strategies are, it may be necessary to withdraw a child from the classroom for individual or small group assistance.

#### Screening

5.2 Medical, social and educational services for the years birth to four year old are generally conducted in isolation from each other. Parents may be aware of some services but not of others<sup>1</sup>. Ideally, all children need to be screened for difficulties in literacy learning prior to, or at the time of entry to primary school, by not only teachers, but also health professionals, such as physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, medical officers and social workers. Children who have potential learning problems could then be placed on appropriate intervention programs. Speech pathologists need to work closely with preschools or teachers to identify those at risk of later literacy problems<sup>2</sup>.

5.3 The services operated in the States and Territories varies. In some areas, however, the opportunities at present to have children screened is negligible. In some systems it can take up to twelve months to have a child screened at a public centre and private screening for children is expensive. Changes in some systems have resulted in the withdrawal of assistance to all but the most severely disabled.

#### First Steps Program

5.4 The Western Australian government has developed a language and mathematics program - First Steps - to provide effective classroom strategies, and reduce the need for often ineffective intervention programs. It is an example of a system focussing on children's needs, developing and testing a program and providing the training and resources which directs attention to literacy and language development.

5.5 The Committee is convinced that many children at risk of reading failure can be assisted by a modification of classroom practices. Good teachers use a range of teaching strategies. It is of concern however, that many rely on only one which may be successful for the majority of their students, but do not meet the needs of all.

5.6 First Steps is a literacy and learning program targeted to support language development, especially, but not exclusively, in the early years of schooling. The program is based on a continuum of student development in writing, reading, oral language and spelling. The continuum helps teachers to identify student performance and link this to teaching strategies that are supported by a comprehensive set of teaching modules. The program provides school-based, in-class support to a child experiencing literacy difficulties.

5.7 Developmental Continua or maps of literacy development, have been constructed which map the territory of children's development in reading, writing, spelling and oral language. A child's development is monitored by indicators, presented in the Continua, on the basis of the child's behaviours as they develop language and literacy understanding and skills. They are descriptions of what children do at each phase of development, not statements of standards which should be reached. The Development Continua enables teachers to:

- . evaluate children's levels of understandings and skills,
- . report systematically and accurately on children's current understandings and skills,
- . select strategies which are directly linked to a child's level of skills and understandings, as mapped on the Continua, to ensure that satisfactory progress is maintained,
- . monitor children's progress, and
- . provide continuity of teaching and learning throughout a school and from year to year<sup>3</sup>.

5.8 Children are placed on the Developmental Continua as soon as possible after entry to pre-primary classrooms. Their progress is monitored throughout the year and from year to year. Records of a child's performance are maintained on a central computer so schools can access information immediately after a child arrives at a school. The continuity provided by First Steps means that children's development can be tracked from year to year. Computerised data provides profiles of individual students, whole classes, whole schools, and special groups.

5.9 The teachers spend eight days of in-service training spaced over one year. Also, the First Steps professional development package consists of Developmental Continua booklets which describe the practical classroom activities. The four Developmental Continua - Oral Language, Spelling, Writing, Reading - have supporting teaching modules on topics such as *Modelled Writing*, *Teaching Grammar*, *Teaching Children How to Write Informational Texts*, *A problem-solving Approach to Teaching Writing*, *Teaching Graphophonics*, *Word Study*, *Using a Spelling Journal*, *Contexts for Reading*, *Reading Comprehension*, *Helping Children who have Reading Difficulties*, *Language of Social Interaction*, *Literacy-Related Skills*, *Language and Thinking*.

5.10 The inservice training and support provided has been discussed in a previous chapter.

5.11 One submission which was critical of the lack of explicit phonic instruction in First Steps commented that it has many excellent features including:

- . clearly stated developmental continua, covering writing, spelling, reading and oral language - these continua have been designed to help teachers assess each child's status in terms of specific indicators of literacy development,
- . printed materials which are of a very high standard, both in terms of their *content and presentation*,
- . an inservice model, including adequate teacher release to attend inservice sessions over an extended period, and provision of support for the teacher in the class, and
- . a wide range of practical teaching strategies which teachers are encouraged to trial in their own classrooms<sup>4</sup>.

5.12 A great deal of data has been collected regarding the success of children at risk whose teachers have participated in the First Steps project in Western Australian primary schools over the last three years. Some of these children come from non-English speaking backgrounds, some are Aboriginal students, some are living in poverty, some live in remote locations, and some fit into more than one of these groups.

5.13 Much anecdotal evidence forwarded to the Committee showed the significant improvements of childrens' literacy standards after First Steps was introduced in their school. The material was obtained by random selection of actual *student samples and test results drawn from the bottom five percent of students in First Steps schools*. Students from the samples have shown marked improvements in literacy skills such as:

- . an ability to use phonics and make rules which are meaningful to them,
- . an ability to develop language conventions such as spelling, punctuation and grammar appropriate for purpose and audience,
- . an ability to read for meaning rather than only word identification,
- . displaying effective strategies for dealing with reading and writing problems,
- . greater facility for writing for different purposes,
- . a developed sense of themselves as readers and writers.

5.14 The First Steps framework assists teachers to use open-ended, problem-solving activities which enable all children to engage in tasks at their own level of competence. It is not recommended that children be withdrawn from their classrooms for remediation.

5.15 Staff of Western Australian primary schools are enthusiastic about the First Steps program and have reported on its progress. They say that there is more parent participation particularly by Aboriginal or disadvantaged families. Many report a drop in classroom misbehaviour and absenteeism, due to more positive attitudes. The Committee was impressed by the enthusiasm of teachers and parents. Children were encouraged to be adventurous and "have a go". First Steps has created greater literacy expectations for the whole school community.

5.16 Some aspects of the program have been criticised. A senior lecturer in education from the Edith Cowan University judged First Steps as having many positive features, yet she had some criticisms relating to the Teaching Graphophonics module. She claimed that it was a great pity that the vast research literature relating to phonics and the role of phonics in learning to read had not been used to develop the graphophonics module of First Steps. There was an urgent need, at both preservice and inservice levels, for teachers to be made aware of the implications of the body of research into phonics instruction, and procedures for teaching phonics explicitly and early in reading instruction<sup>5</sup>.

5.17 A remedial teacher in Tasmania was critical of First Steps because, in her view, it contained all the failings of the whole language approach in 'its senseless disregard for direct structured, sequenced teaching of the code'<sup>6</sup>. Assessment relied on observation and the program did not offer solutions to specific difficulties.

5.18 In response, a paper from the Western Australian Department of Education stated that if the subject matter being taught does not make sense to a child, the child can learn by rote, but will not be able to apply the learning in different contexts. The ability of a child to score full marks on test items does not necessarily mean that that child will be able to generalise knowledge acquired in such a way. If children fail to grasp a concept or skill when it is initially taught by direct instruction, the likelihood that they will fail second time round is extremely high. More of the same, i.e. a re-teaching of small sequential steps will meet with no greater success.

5.19 First Steps endorses the need to teach specific reading, writing and spelling strategies and does not believe that these will develop naturally without appropriate support. It is stressed, however, that children must 'see the whole picture' before they focus on one small part of it. Teachers are encouraged to put children in situations where they have the need to exercise a specific skill in order to achieve a desired outcome. In this way they understand the purpose or use of what they will learn in a context which makes sense. Children are then able to see how a specific skill or understanding relates to the 'big picture' and so they learn to apply it in a range of contexts.

5.20 If the sort of structure and guidance provided by First Steps is employed, then records show that young children, whatever their background, learn effectively. If the sort of structure and guidance is related to the filling of empty vessels with sequences of content, then experience shows that they will fail. The commonsense approach and three years' experience of First Steps in every disadvantaged school in the State demonstrates that literacy levels have improved steadily and, in some cases, dramatically.

5.21 The Committee sees First Steps as an exciting development in the teaching of reading and writing to all young children, particularly those experiencing difficulties. A number of States and Territories are reviewing their curricula. As one witness noted, curricula review is a time consuming and expensive process. It is the Committee's view that scarce education resources are better directed to the purchase of a proven existing system, such as First Steps, than to the development of new programs.

5.22 The Committee has one reservation. It cannot accept the concept that direct instruction in phonics will not be required in some instances. The Committee agrees with a lecturer in Education from the University of Tasmania that the overpredictive reader who has not learned to carefully analyse text, could benefit from systematic instruction in the use of phonic analysis. The strategy dependent reader, however, who depends heavily on phonics may need to be taught a range of other strategies in order to become a proficient reader.

5.23 The Committee believes that the effective teacher will adapt the strategies outlined in First Steps, as required, to meet individual needs.

5.24 The Committee recommends that:

- . **the Minister for Employment, Education and Training together with the Western Australian Minister for Education encourage all States and Territories which are reviewing their curricula, to adopt the First Steps program, and**
- . **the Minister for Employment, Education and Training ensure that the concepts of First Steps are included in the National English Curriculum.**

## Reading Recovery

5.25 Nearly six hundred submissions from primary schools were received by the Committee, the majority of which sought Commonwealth support for the systemic introduction of the Reading Recovery program. In addition over one thousand letters were received from enthusiastic parents of the children who had benefited from the Reading Recovery program.

5.26 Reading Recovery was developed by New Zealand educator and psychologist Dr Marie M. Clay who researched the reading difficulties of children during the 1960s. The success of a pilot program in 1978 led to the nationwide adoption of Reading Recovery in New Zealand in the 1983.

5.27 The Reading Recovery program is currently used by the ACT Schools Authority. It has also been implemented in some education districts in Victoria and New South Wales.

5.28 Reading Recovery is an effective early intervention program designed to reduce the number of children with literacy difficulties in schools. It is a second chance or prevention program delivered after the first year of school. Young, low achieving children have intensive daily instruction in addition to classroom instruction. This brings them to at least average classroom levels within a short time. Reading Recovery is designed for children who are the lowest literacy performers in their class.

5.29 A Diagnostic Survey is given to each child after one year of formal instruction. The Diagnostic Survey includes measures of a child's capabilities in letter identification, a word test, concepts about print, writing vocabulary, dictation, and text reading level.

5.30 Children entering the program are placed on an individually designed program for their competencies. Daily records of lessons and reading logs are maintained. The teaching is in a one-to-one setting for thirty minutes a day. The daily content is additional to the regular class literacy activities.

5.31 A typical lesson begins with re-reading of two or more familiar books. The previous day's new book is then read and the Reading Recovery teacher takes a running record of the child's oral reading to gain information on the development of strategies and sight vocabulary. This is followed by letter identification or word study. Then the child is helped to write one or two sentences, based on a topic in the books. The sentences are re-written by the Reading Recovery teacher and cut up for the child to re-assemble. A new book is introduced to the child who attempts to read it independently. The story is re-read with the child to develop fluency. Lessons begin with what a pupil can do already, and adds cumulatively other successes.

5.32 A child will usually be able to successfully reach average classroom levels after twelve to fifteen weeks. Some children may continue on the program for a longer period of up to twenty weeks.

5.33 The few children who do not reach a satisfactory level of independence as, assessed by the Discontinuing Test, are referred for further specialist training and recommendations are made for further instruction. The National Director Reading Recovery in New Zealand told the Committee that:

The total cohort is all the six-year-olds in your school. Twenty per cent go to Reading Recovery. Of that total cohort, less than one per cent require long term specialist help.<sup>7</sup>

5.34 The ACT Department of Education stated that about ninety percent of the lowest achieving children who enter the program successfully reach average class reading levels. The Department described this as a consistently excellent result and 'recovers' children who would otherwise go on to become reading failures, necessitating expensive long term remedial programs.

5.35 Generally, studies have shown that Reading Recovery is an early intervention program that works well. There are, however, some who have expressed concern. The concerns have included:

- . reading Recovery is expensive compared with other early intervention programs
- equivalent funding for an alternative program has not been achievable or tested,
- . one-to-one instruction is the reason for success, rather than the program itself,
- . the withdrawal model actively works against a more systematic attempt to improve teaching methods in schools generally,
- . there is a need for more liaison between the Reading Recovery teacher and the classroom teacher, and
- . the success of Reading Recovery in New Zealand may not necessarily succeed as a national program in Australia.

5.36 One of the major criticisms of the program is that it is expensive. One full time Reading Recovery teacher works with twelve to fifteen children a year. The cost of the program per child in Queensland was estimated at between \$1984 and \$2517 in teaching salaries alone.

5.37 The South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association however pointed to the fact that Reading Recovery is cost effective even though on their figures, the cost per student was in the vicinity of \$2 000 per child. Under existing programs many children require special support throughout their schooling. The overall cost per student therefore is a much cheaper and far more effective alternative than current primary and secondary special education programs.

5.38 Supporters of Reading Recovery claim that costs are offset by benefits such as:

- . a reduction in the numbers of children experiencing difficulties in literacy learning,
- . reduced costs of providing remediation programs in later years,
- . reduced range of reading and writing achievement for classroom teachers to deal with,
- . a heightened awareness in the school community of theory and instructional processes relating to early literacy learning through the sharing of insights gained through the intensive training course for Reading Recovery teachers.

5.39 A number of researchers noted a 'work-out' effect when the children left the program. The New Zealand Reading Recovery Director explained that the program's aim is to accelerate progress of the child to average levels. Children are then expected to continue at average levels rather than continue to accelerate. The research shows that this is happening<sup>8</sup>.

5.40 The Committee notes the concerns relating to the limitations of the research data relating to the effectiveness of the program. The Committee also notes that millions of dollars are spent each year on other programs which have been subject to even less evaluation. The Committee is satisfied with the evidence that shows that students who have been exposed to the Reading Recovery program, make impressive gains in their reading and writing skills and are able to move back into the classroom at average levels.

5.41 The arguments in favour of introducing Reading Recovery are compelling. The Committee agrees with one submission which stated that:

Whether or not Reading Recovery is provided at a school is no longer a matter of resource allocation or a financial decision, it is a moral obligation to provide the most certain entry to the world of reading and literacy, and a productive life, which we have been able to locate.<sup>9</sup>

5.42 The Committee is concerned, however, that the target group in some instances is too large. A target group of nineteen percent in a system like the ACT suggests that a re-examination of classroom practice may be required. The adoption of some of the principles of First Steps is likely to reduce the numbers of children

in need of Reading Recovery. In addition the Committee is not satisfied with the present practice in some systems of allocating Reading Recovery teachers on the basis of total Year 1 student numbers. Staff must be allocated on the basis of need.

5.43 The expansion of Reading Recovery in Australia has been slow because Australia has no national Tutor training. Tutors are the staff who train the Reading Recovery teachers. The Committee has been requested to support a training program for Australia. The Committee was advised that a national Tutor training program would require:

- . the services of a trained and accredited Reading Recovery Trainer, to train the tutors,
- . a university offering theoretical courses in literacy acquisition and literacy learning difficulties willing to take students for one year of study in these areas,
- . a local Reading Recovery program of at least four Tutors training Reading Recovery teachers to provide a practicum for the trainee Tutors, and
- . a training centre with suitable office and seminar space, and purpose-built one-way viewing screen and rooms to observe and discuss live Reading Recovery teaching.

5.44 One submission suggested that it would seem sensible to establish a Tutor-training centre in each capital city.

5.45 Reading Recovery will only have significant impacts on literacy levels if it is introduced in a system-wide basis as in the ACT. The attitudes of some state education departments and the financial situation of many schools will make system-wide introduction difficult without financial support by the Commonwealth Government. It is therefore essential that the Commonwealth Government assist in the costs incurred by schools through increases in existing school equity programs and targeted funding for those schools which at present do not qualify for grants under existing programs.

5.46 The Committee recommends that:

- . **the Commonwealth Government fund the establishment of a national Reading Recovery Tutor training program at appropriate tertiary institutions.**

## **School Equity Programs**

5.47 The majority of submissions and evidence welcomed DSP, CAP and other programs as valuable and important programs, invaluable in assisting the establishment of language and literacy programs.

5.48 There was concern, however, about many aspects of the programs' administration. These concerns included:

- . the proportion of funds used for administrative costs,
- . method of selection of DSP schools, and
- . the need for proper focus and evaluation of literacy programs.



5.49 No witness was able to tell the Committee the percentage of DSP funds which actually reach schools. Many commented on the circuitous manner in which funding reached the schools. It was argued that up to forty percent of funds can be absorbed in administration costs.

5.50 Another concern was the methods of determining eligible schools. Many borderline disadvantaged schools do not receive support and become doubly disadvantaged because their clientele find it impossible to raise sufficient funds to address literacy problems effectively<sup>10</sup>. The method of identification has been questioned. Schools which are disadvantaged but situated in middle-class suburbs are not on the DSP list.

5.51 Some evidence received by the Committee has expressed concern that some programs funded by DSP, CAP and other programs need to be continuing programs. Funding can be withdrawn in the middle of a successful program<sup>11</sup>. It is important that resources are stabilised. If schools were funded on the basis of a rolling triennium, with annual adjustments and provisions for supplementation, then successful literacy programs could continue to address the needs of children with difficulties.

5.52 The existing programs may not provide the necessary literacy focus. It is also of concern that the strategies used by individual schools have never been assessed for their cost effectiveness. While it is recognised that schools can often better assess their requirements than can a central bureaucracy, limited funds must be spent effectively and not spent on projects which some witnesses described as wasteful and ineffectual.

5.53 The Committee has found during the course of its inquiry, that DSP and CAP are valued sources of funding which have enabled disadvantaged schools to tackle the literacy and learning difficulties of their students. Other Commonwealth programs, such as the English as a Second Language Program (ESL) and the Literacy and Learning Program, are also assisting in providing funds for research and the teaching of language and literacy skills during the crucial early years of schooling.

5.54 Current financing of school based equity programs for 1992 is as follows:

. Special Education (disabilities)	\$65.3m
. Disadvantaged Schools (DSP)	\$58.04m
. Country Areas (CAP)	\$16.0m
. English as a Second Language (ESL)	\$97.7m
. Hostels for Rural Students	\$1.4m
. Students at Risk (STAR)	\$5.0m

5.55 Under DSP, funds are provided for schools and their communities to develop and implement whole-school change in school practice and curriculum, especially in literacy and numeracy, school-community interaction and parent participation, and professional development. Funds meet salaries, teaching and administrative expenses and minor capital costs.

5.56 DSP funding is provided by the Commonwealth and distributed through the State education departments and Catholic education authorities who are also responsible for the administration of the Program. Schools are declared disadvantaged by the Commonwealth Minister for Employment, Education and Training on the advice of the State education ministers and non-government DSP committees in consultation with Catholic Education Commissions.

5.57 State and regional committees provide support for and advice to participating schools and other relevant authorities on the program generally. There are also school level committees which include parent and community members, which are responsible for reviewing school objectives and drawing up proposals for improving learning outcomes in their schools.

5.58 DSP funding is allocated to States and Territories and government and non-government sectors according to a National Index of Disadvantage which identifies the most seriously socio-economically disadvantaged communities in Australia. It is based on variables of occupation, unemployment, education, family income, accommodation and crowding. Within States and systems, local formulae generally consistent with the principles underpinning the national index are used to identify schools to be assisted by the program.

5.59 The program is school based. Projects can be based in a single school or be jointly developed by a group or cluster of schools sharing resources or facilities. The amount of funds allocated to declared disadvantaged schools is based on an assessment of the proposals submitted by these schools and relevant committees.

5.60 The objective of the CAP is to assist primary and secondary schools and community groups to improve the educational participation, learning outcomes and personal development of students disadvantaged by restricted access to social, cultural and educational activities and services, as a result of their geographical isolation.

5.61 The distribution of funds is based on a funding index which takes account of remoteness and the proportion of the population living in small settlements. Funding for schools is generally submission based and is determined by State and regional committees. Local and area committees oversee local activities and provide advice and assistance in planning, implementing and evaluating projects.

5.62 Activities supported by CAP to date include extending curriculum offerings through the shared use of local resources and facilities and distance education technology; developing curriculum programs to suit the experience and interests of country students; supporting students' social, cultural and recreational life through community programs, including contemporary and traditional arts; and assisting secondary students to broaden their career options.

5.63 There was concern over the process of primary schools providing submissions in order to justify Commonwealth funds. One witness stated that primary schools do not have enough resources or time to write effective submissions. He said that High Schools are able to submit valuable and researched submissions for Commonwealth funds because of the schools' resources<sup>12</sup>.

5.64 Another submission received by the Committee was also opposed to the current submission process and would rather the use of a per student formula<sup>13</sup>. A State Department also stated that it would welcome changes to the submission writing process. Submission based funding arrangements are inherently inequitable.

5.65 The Schools Council Taskforce considering the broadbanding of Commonwealth equity programs for schools reported in June 1992. Following consultation with his colleagues in the AEC, and with peak interest groups, the Minister for Employment, Education and Training announced the outcome in September 1992.

5.66 Major features of the decision were:

- a commitment to broad consultation in 1993, and the development of a collaborative National Equity Strategy which would underpin schools' equity program at both Commonwealth and State level, and which would also involve the non-government sectors, and peak parent and teacher interest groups,
- a framework (the National Equity Program for Schools) for the Commonwealth's equity programs,
- funding for Commonwealth equity programs on a rolling triennium,
- improved reporting on educational outcomes for the groups targeted under schools' equity programs,
- a comprehensive evaluation program, as part of the national strategy.

5.67 This strategy will identify broad objectives, priorities and targets for the equity effort of both the Commonwealth and State and non-government education sectors. In the Commonwealth's view, literacy ought to be a major priority of the strategy; it is arguably the most critical factor underpinning achievement and is therefore of major significance for the disadvantaged students whose needs are addressed by the equity programs.

5.68 An emphasis on literacy as a priority, coupled with the intention, already agreed by the parties, to report more comprehensively on educational outcomes for the target groups, should produce over time a clearer picture of improvements in literacy standards. This would be true, not only of those target groups currently addressed by the DSP and CAP programs, but also of the broader range of disadvantaged students.

5.69 Further assessment will be possible as profiles of the student population as a whole begin to produce national information about standards.

5.70 Taken together, these developments offer an encouraging opportunity for a much more rigorous look at what is being achieved by programs (including literacy programs) addressing the needs of disadvantaged students.

5.71 Reporting on outcomes of the combined national equity effort will occur the Annual National Report on Schooling in Australia. This educational accountability will be complemented by a national evaluation strategy to be developed within the context of the national equity strategy.

5.72 The Committee believes that effective programs are First Steps and Reading Recovery. The guidelines for the Commonwealth's equity programs for schools must state that these programs can be funded under the equity strategies. The Committee recommends that:

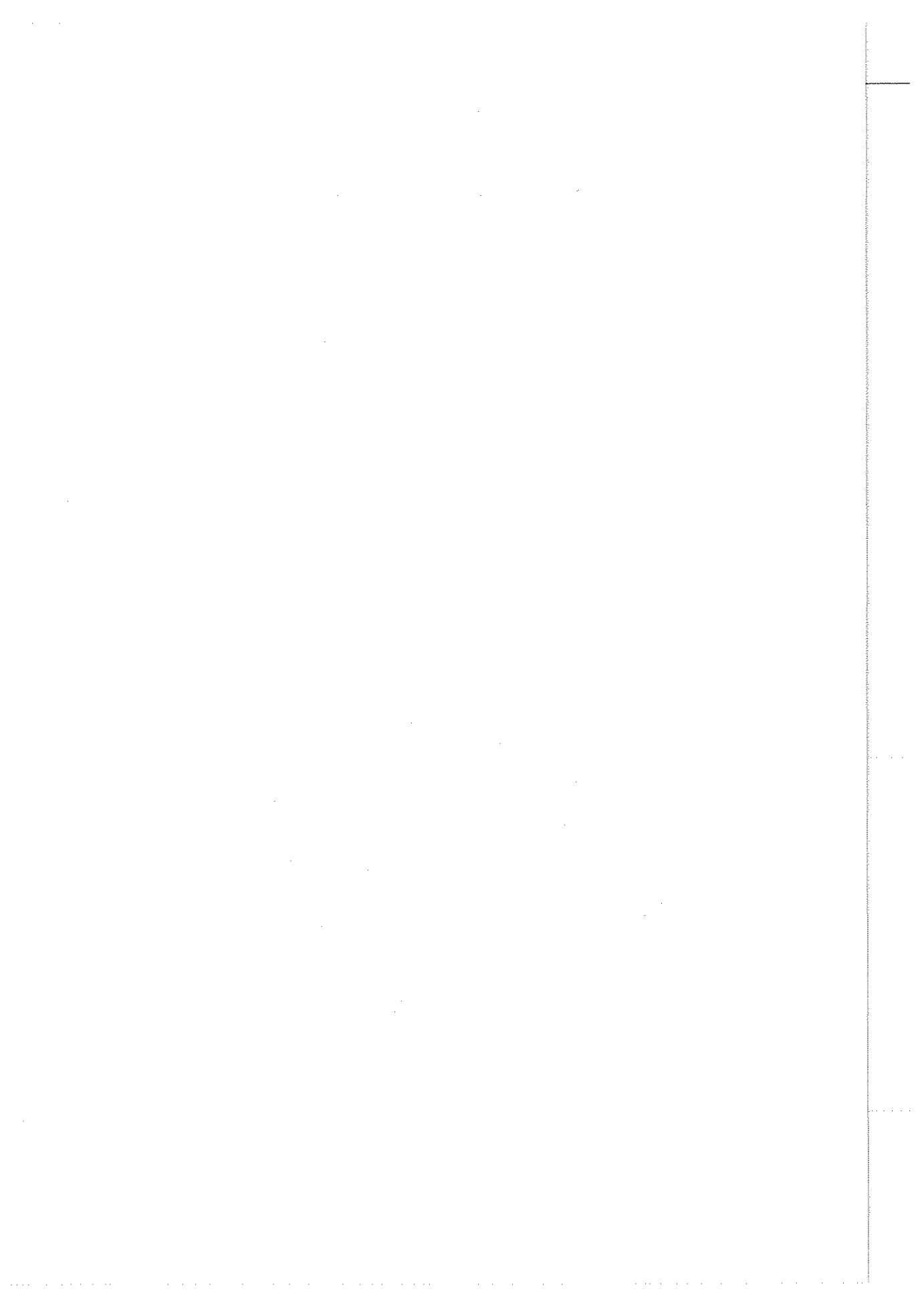
- **the guidelines to the Commonwealth Government's school based equity program be revised to ensure that funds are directed to the introduction of First Steps or Reading Recovery.**

Mary Crawford  
Chair

December 1992

## Chapter 5 - Endnotes

- 1 Sunshine Coast Literacy Reference Group, Submission.
- 2 Dodd, Prof. B., University of Queensland, *Transcript*, p. 118.
- 3 Ministry of Education, Submission.
- 4 Formentin, P., Edith Cowan University, Submission.
- 5 *ibid.*
- 6 Zollner, J., Submission.
- 7 Frances, B., *Transcript*, p. 21.
- 8 *ibid.*, p. 16.
- 9 Diocesan Catholic Education Commission, Wagga Wagga, Submission.
- 10 Australian Primary Principals' Association Inc., Submission.
- 11 Wyong Public School, Submission.
- 12 Australian Primary Principals Associations, *Transcript*, p. 235.
- 13 Moomba Park Primary School, Submission.



## APPENDIX 1

### DISSENT BY MR CHARLES, MR ATKINSON, MR BRADFORD, MR BRAITHWAITE AND MR RIGGALL

Pursuant to Standing Order 343 we add this dissent to the Committee's report.

The Committee's report is most likely the most significant contribution to the debate on literacy in the history of Australia. We fully support the conclusions and recommendations contained in this report. We disagree however with the majority of the Committee in its reluctance to support standardised national skills assessment of reading, writing and mathematics of children prior to the end of Year 3.

Most educators agree that unless children learn the basics of reading and writing, listening and using spoken language by the end of Year 3 they can be disadvantaged for the rest of their lives. It is unlikely that they will make up the gap through the rest of their schooling.

We were appalled that during the inquiry State, Territory and Commonwealth education authorities were unable to tell the Committee, with any degree of accuracy, the extent of the problem as it exists in primary schools because most systems do not test basic skills on a systematic basis. It appears, however, that the numbers could be as high as 25 per cent of students and may represent the majority of the school population in some education districts.

There have been significant changes in curricula over the last two decades. Some consider that these changes have resulted in a decline in literacy skills. Some believe that there has been an overall improvement in standards. Others believe that these changes have benefited the most able but have seriously disadvantaged the bottom group of students and the gap between the two groups is increasing. The limited data available to the Committee seems to suggest that despite the radical changes in teaching literacy, a significant number of students continue to struggle. Without hard data we are unlikely to convince the Australian public that more expenditure is necessary.

It was argued that modern methodologies provide a rich learning environment for students. We agree. We were advised, however, that many students in order to become proficient readers and writers need direct instruction in decoding skills, spelling and grammar. This is not happening in many cases and in some instances such instruction is actively discouraged.

It was apparent from talking to teacher educators that many teachers are not taught these specific skills in their preservice and inservice training.

Current assessment techniques are based primarily on teacher observation. Proficiency in oral language development sometimes disguises difficulties which some children experience in reading and writing. These skills can only be assessed by testing.

We recognise that literacy is more than a knowledge of the basic skills. We are convinced, however, that without these basic skills students cannot be described as literate. Accordingly we recommend that Recommendation 4 be amended to include:

- . **all literacy training include specific instruction in decoding, skill acquisition and spelling.**

We further recommend that:

- . **the Commonwealth Government finance through the Australian Education Council national assessment of reading, writing and mathematics skills attainment of all primary school students prior to completion of Year 3; and**
- . **results of the national assessment be reported.**

Bob Charles  
Deputy Chairman

Rod Atkinson

John Bradford

Ray Braithwaite

John Riggall



## APPENDIX 2

### CONDUCT OF THE INQUIRY

On 28 April 1992, the Federal Minister for Employment, Education and Training, Mr Kim Beazley, MP, wrote to the Committee referring an inquiry on the strategies for early intervention for literacy and learning for Australian children.

In his referral, the Minister stated that every child has a right to develop fundamental literacy and numeracy skills through participation in our education and training system. He further asserted that a child who fails to grasp basic literacy concepts in the first three years of schooling is likely to have literacy difficulties later on and that it is vital that children "at risk" at this crucial stage of schooling receive adequate assistance to overcome their difficulties.

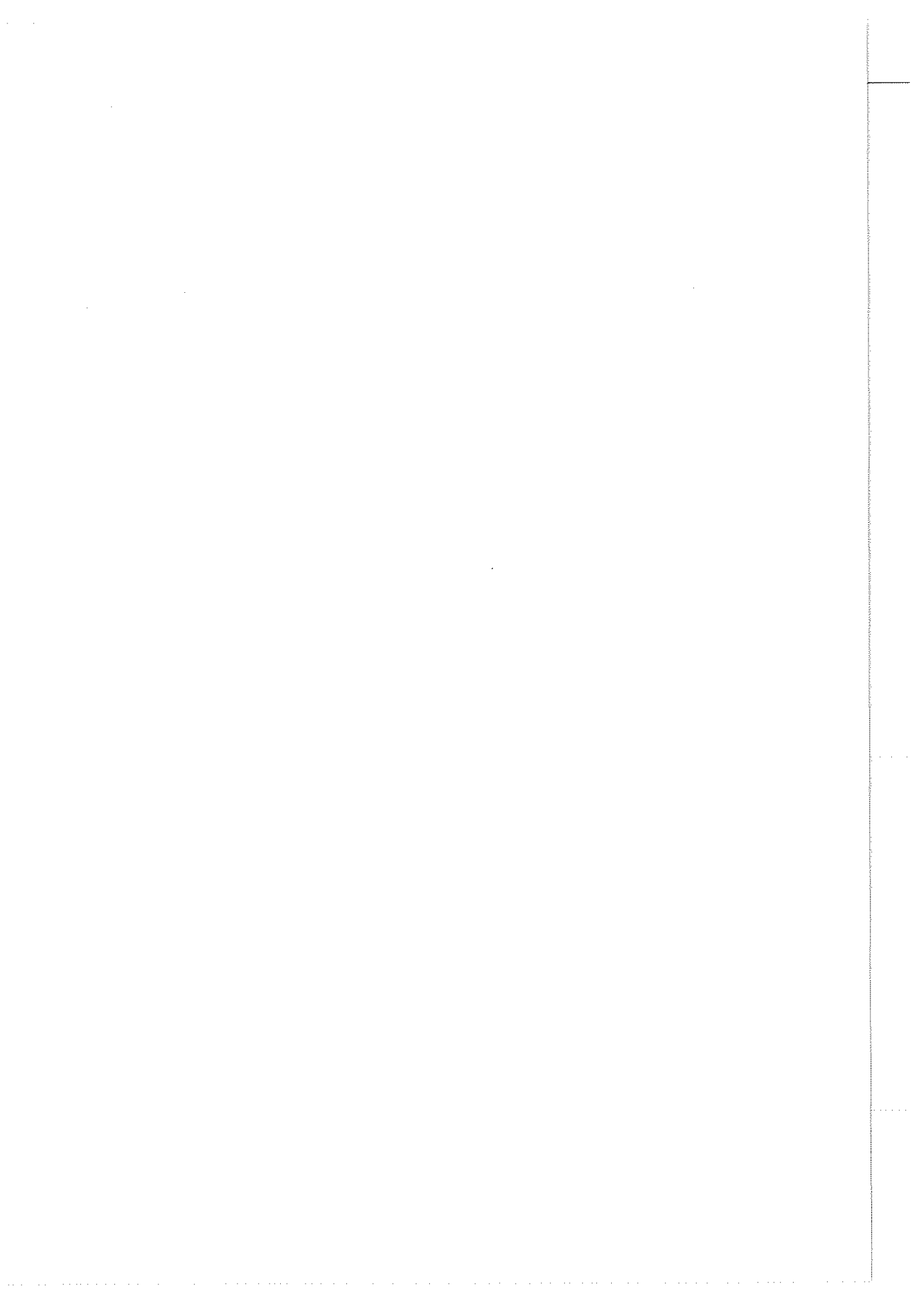
The Committee agreed on 30 April 1992 to inquire into and report on the following terms of reference:

- . the range and effectiveness of current methods to identify children "at risk" of developing literacy problems at an early age;
- . the range and availability of intervention strategies to address the literacy needs of children "at risk" in the early years of schooling; and
- . the role of the Commonwealth Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP) and the Country Areas Program (CAP) in promoting literacy development at the primary school level.

The inquiry was advertised in *The Australian* newspaper and fifteen national and state education and teacher journals. A press release was released to all relevant education journals and the daily media and forwarded directly to education writers in the media. The Committee wrote to the Principals and Co-ordinating Teachers (Years K-3) of every primary school in Australia to seek submissions regarding literacy development in schools. Letters seeking submissions were also sent to the education departments of the Commonwealth, State and Territory Governments, professional and industrial associations, parents councils and organisations, educational research organisations, teacher training facilities, adult and migrant education councils and interested individuals, who were invited to make submissions.

The Committee received over 570 submissions. A list of these is included at Appendix 4. Over 350 of the submissions were received from primary schools.

The Committee undertook a program of public hearings and visits around Australia. Hearings were held in Canberra, Brisbane, Melbourne, Hobart, Adelaide and Sydney. Witnesses included teachers, principals, parents, researchers, education specialists, teachers trainers, optometrists and government officials. A list of witnesses is included at Appendix 3. The Committee also held inspections and informal meetings at primary schools. These visits gave the Committee the opportunity to hold discussions with principals, teachers and parents within the school community.



## APPENDIX 3

### LIST OF WITNESSES

#### **Canberra, 28 May 1992**

ACT Department of Education and Training

Ms Rosemary Walsh  
Acting Executive Director  
Public Education Services Branch

Mr Trevor Walsh  
Executive Director  
Finance and Planning

#### **Canberra, 4 June 1992**

Department of Employment, Education and Training

Ms Helen Allnutt  
Assistant Secretary  
Schools and Curriculum Policy Branch

Ms Alison Weeks  
Assistant Secretary  
Targeted Programs Branch  
Schools and Curriculum Division

Ms Vanessa Elwell-Gavins  
Acting Director  
Literacy and ESL Section  
Language and Literacy Branch

#### **Brisbane, 9 June 1992**

Queensland Department of Education

Ms Maureen Baillie  
Senior Policy Officer (Special Needs)

Ms Jherrard Blemings  
Senior Policy Officer: Early Childhood

Ms Glenda Slingsby  
Senior Policy Officer

Mr Joseph Keith Paul Loney  
Principal Policy Officer

Mr Brian Francis Rout  
Assistant Director  
Key Learning Areas  
Studies Directorate

University of Queensland  
Mrs Margaret Elizabeth Farrell  
Specialist Tutor

Dr Carolyn Baker  
Associate Professor

Dr Carol Christensen  
Lecturer

Associate Professor Fazal A Rizvi  
Associate Professor

Dr Peter Renshaw  
Senior Lecturer in Education

Professor John Elkins  
Professor of Special Education

University of Queensland, Department of Speech and Hearing  
Professor Barbara Dodd  
Professor of Speech Pathology

SPELD QLD Inc.  
Dr Norm Pyle  
President

**Brisbane, 10 June 1992**

Private Individuals  
Dr Denis Condon

Mrs Judith Deborah Blaney

Private Individual  
Mrs Joan Lane

Queensland Teachers Union  
Ms Lesley McFarlane  
Assistant Secretary - Research

Australian Primary Principals' Association  
Mr Stanley Robert Plath  
President

Mr Thomas Hardy  
Member of Management Committee

Mr James Cedric Litzour  
Treasurer

Mr Robert Cecil Fitz-Walter  
Member

Mrs Yvonne J Handran  
Secretary

Ms Lynne Alice Hais  
Member

**Melbourne, 16 June 1992**

- . Private Individual  
Mr Christopher Nugent
- . Catholic Education Office  
Miss Julia Chamberlin  
Deputy Chairperson Primary
- . Ms Elina Raso  
Teacher Adviser ESL/LOTE

**Melbourne, 17 June 1992**

- . Federated Teachers Union of Victoria  
Ms Anne Davies  
Policy and Research Officer
- . Ms Celia Meehan  
Executive Member
- . Australian Institute of Family Studies  
Dr Donald Ernest Edgar  
Director
- . Private Individual  
Mr Kevin Donnelly  
English Teacher
- . Presbyterian Ladies College  
Mrs Sallie Norsworthy  
Headmistress of Junior School

Australian Council for Educational Research  
Dr Marion M De Lemos  
Senior Research Fellow

Mrs Margaret Forster  
Research Fellow

Mr John Frederick King  
Education Consultant

**Hobart, 18 June 1992**

Private Individuals  
Mr Byron Gary Harrison

Mrs Jeanie Clyde Zollner

Australian Early Childhood Association (Tasmania)  
Mrs Shirley Margaret Foster  
President

Tasmanian Council of State School Parents and Friends Association  
Mrs Mavis Beattie  
Southern Region President - State Executive Member

Department of Education and the Arts (Tasmania)  
Mrs Rosemary Frances Clayton  
Principal Curriculum Officer - English Language

Mr Malcolm Kays  
Senior Research Officer  
Educational Planning Branch

Mrs Elizabeth Mary Daly  
Senior Superintendent (K-4)

Mrs Jennifer L Connor  
Manager  
Curriculum Services, Curriculum Implementation  
Curriculum Services Branch

Dr Richard Watkins  
Director (Educational Planning)

University of Tasmania, Centre for Education  
Ms Penelope Anne Andersen  
Program Co-ordinator - Early Childhood  
Education Lecturer in Reading and Language Development

Adelaide, 21 July 1992

- . South Australian Institute of Teachers  
Ms Janet Giles  
Vice President
  
- . The South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association and  
The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of South Australian  
Catholic Schools  
Mrs Nicola Mary Mullins  
Executive Officer  
Federation of Parents and Friends Association of South Australian Catholic  
Schools  
  
Ms Carol Pearce  
Principal  
Direk Junior Primary School  
  
Mr Tim Ryan  
Literacy Education Representative  
South Australian Catholic Primary Principals Association
  
- . Australian Early Childhood Association  
Ms Ewa Swiecicka  
President (SA Branch)  
  
Ms Andrea Ruth McGuffeg  
Committee Member  
  
Ms Elizabeth Hampson Pritchard  
Member
  
- . SPELD, South Australia  
Mr Kevin Rooney  
Councillor and Optometrist  
  
Ms Annette Joy Brock  
Coordinator of Educational Programs  
Psychologist
  
- . The Flinders University of South Australia  
Ms Joeline Hancock  
Senior Lecturer  
Education  
  
Mr Peter Stuart Westwood  
Senior Lecturer  
Special Education

**Adelaide, 22 July 1992**

South Australian Government  
Ms Margaret Wallace  
Acting Associate Director  
General of Education (Curriculum)

Ms Helen Campagna  
Project Officer

Ms Susan Sweetman  
Principal Curriculum Officer  
Target Populations Unit

Ms Betty Weeks  
Project Officer  
English Language R-7

Ms Julie Bishop  
Project Officer  
English Language Acquisition in Aboriginal Schools.

Ms Jenny Short  
Principal

Ms Antonietta Cocchiaro  
Principal

University of South Australia  
Mr Bill Wood  
Lecturer in Education

Ms June Ward  
Head of School (STE: Magill Campus)

**Sydney, 4 August 1992**

Australian Association of Special Education  
Mrs Susan Dallas  
Committee Member

Mr Tony Tenney  
Vice-President  
NSW Chapter

Ms Jennifer Whipp  
State Executive



New South Wales Government  
Mr John Gore  
Manager  
Key Learning Areas Unit  
Department of School Education

Ms Rosalie Nott  
Senior Curriculum Adviser, Literacy  
Department of School Education

Dr Donna Gibbs  
English Inspector  
Board of Studies

Ms Bernadette Maher  
Policy Officer  
Board of Studies

Dr Loretta Giorcelli  
Director of Special Education  
Department of School Education

Ms Michelle Wheeler  
Policy Manager  
NSW Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs

Ms Anna Stefaniuk  
Manager  
Multicultural Education Unit  
Curriculum Directorate  
Department of School Education

University of Technology Sydney  
Dr Joan Jardine  
Lecturer  
School of Teacher Education

University of New England  
Dr Brian John Byrne  
Associate Professor of Psychology

University of NSW  
Professor Charles McMonnies  
School of Optometry

University of Western Sydney, Nepean  
Ms Kaye Lowe  
Lecturer

Australian Parents Council  
Mrs Josephine Lonergan  
Executive Director

Mr Duncan McInnes  
Secretary and Executive Officer

Early Childhood Education Council of NSW  
Miss Barbara Raczynski  
Committee Member

Ms Glenda Stone  
Committee Member

Mrs Suzanne Margaret Yates  
Treasurer

**Sydney, 5 August 1992**

Macquarie University  
Professor Kevin Wheldall  
Director  
Special Education Centre  
School of Education

Ms Coral Rae Kemp  
Deputy Principal, Special School  
Lecturer in Special Education  
Special Education Centre

Mrs Meree Reynolds  
Master Teacher  
AIM Program  
Special Education Centre

NSW Teachers Federation  
Mr Raymond Hugh Cavenagh  
Acting President

Ms Pat Simpson  
Research Officer

Ms Cris Treneman  
Welfare Officer

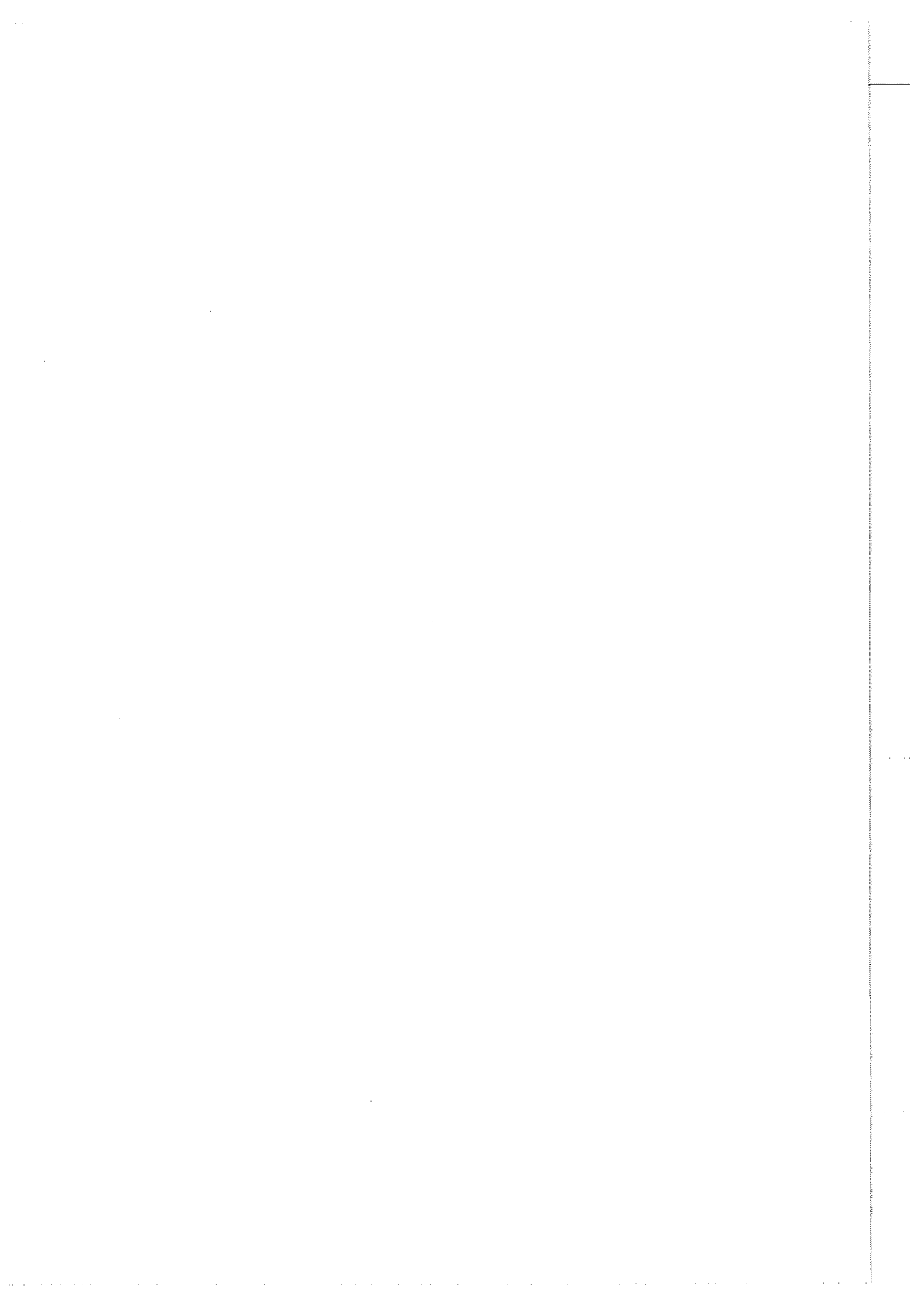
University of Western Sydney  
Assistant Professor Trevor Cairney  
Dean of Education  
President Elect of the Australian Reading Association

. Primary English Teachers Association  
Mrs Patricia Anne Browning  
Director

Mrs Mandy Tunica  
Consultant

**Canberra, 14 September 1992 (IN CAMERA)**

. Ms Barbara Frances Watson  
National Director (New Zealand)  
Reading Recovery



## APPENDIX 4

### SUBMISSIONS RECEIVED

#### Schools

- . Albury West Public School, ALBURY, NSW
- . Aldinga School, ALDINGA, SA
- . Allansford Primary School, ALLANSFORD, VIC
- . Andergrove State School, ANDERGROVE, QLD
- . Anzac Terrace Primary School, BASSENDEAN, WA
- . Arawang Primary School, WARAMANGA, ACT
- . Ariah Park Central School, ARIAH PARK, NSW
- . Ascot Vale Primary School, ASCOT VALE, VIC
- . Ashbury Public School, ASHFIELD, NSW
- . Ashfield Primary School, ASHFIELD, NSW
- . Ashmont Public School, WAGGA WAGGA, NSW
- . Australia Street Infants' School, NEWTON, NSW
  
- . Balaklava Primary School, BALAKLAVA, SA
- . Balga Senior High School, BALGA, WA
- . Balgowlah Heights Primary School, BALGOWLAH, NSW
- . Bangalow Public School, BANGALOW, NSW
- . Bankstown North Primary School, BANKSTOWN, NSW
- . Bannockburn Primary School, BANNOCKBURN, VIC
- . Barat-Burn, Convent of the Sacred Heart, ROSE BAY, NSW
- . Barrack Heights Public School, BARRACK HEIGHTS, NSW
- . Bealiba Primary School, BEALIBA, VIC
- . Beenleigh State School, BEENLEIGH, QLD
- . Beerwah State School, BEERWAH, QLD
- . Bemboka and Candelo Primary Schools, BEMBOKA, NSW
- . Bidwill Primary School, MT DRUITT, NSW
- . Bimbadeen Heights, MOOROOLBARK, VIC
- . Binnu Primary School, BINNU, WA
- . Birkdale State School, BIRKDALE, QLD
- . Birrong Public School, BIRRONG, NSW
- . Blacktown West Primary School, BLACKTOWN, NSW
- . Blackwood School, EDEN HILLS, SA
- . Bogan Gate Public School, BOGAN GATE, NSW
- . Boorowa Central School, BOOROWA, NSW
- . Boronia Park Public School, GLADESVILLE, NSW
- . Boroondara Park Primary School, NORTH BALWYN, VIC
- . Bucasia State School, BUCASIA, QLD
- . Buddina State School, BUDDINA, QLD
- . Bundarra Primary School, PORTLAND, VIC
- . Bylong Upper Primary School, BYLONG, NSW

- . Calista Primary School, CALISTA, WA
- . Camdenville Public School, NEWTOWN, NSW
- . Campbellfield Heights Primary School, CAMPBELLFIELD, VIC
- . Campbellfield Public School, MINTO, NSW
- . Campmeadows Primary School, BROADMEADOWS, VIC
- . Canberra Grammar School, RED HILL, ACT
- . Carmel School, DIANELLA, WA
- . Carrington Public School, CARRINGTON, NSW
- . Challa Gardens Primary School, KILKENNY, SA
- . Charlestown East Public School, CHARLESTOWN, NSW
- . Chertsey Public School, SPRINGFIELD, NSW
- . Chester Hill North Public School, CHESTER HILL, NSW
- . Coffs Harbour Public School, COFFS HARBOUR, NSW
- . Colbinabbin Primary School, COLBINABBIN, VIC
- . Coolnwynpin State School, CAPALABA, QLD
- . Coomboona Primary School, VIA MOOROPNA, VIC
- . Coromandel Valley Primary School, COROMANDEL VALLEY, SA
- . Cranbourne South Primary School, CRANBOURNE SOUTH, VIC
- . Cranbrook State Primary School, TOWNSVILLE, QLD
- . Crescent Lagoon State School, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
- . Croydon North Primary School, CROYDON NORTH, VIC
- . Curl Curl North Public School, DEE WHY, NSW
- . Currimundi Primary School, CALOUNDRA, QLD
- . Currumbin State School, CURRUMBIN, QLD
  
- . Daceyville Public School, KINGSFORD, NSW
- . Davidson Park Public School, ST IVES, NSW
- . Dederang Primary School, WODONGA, VIC
- . Deer Park North Primary School, DEER PARK, VIC
- . Dee Why Public School, DEE WHY, NSW
- . Deniliquin North Public School, DENILIQUN, NSW
- . Deniliquin South Public School, DENILIQUN, NSW
- . Devon North Primary School, YARRAM, VIC
- . Don Bosco Catholic Primary School, NARRE WARREN, VIC
- . Drouin West Primary School, DROUIN, VIC
- . Dubbo West Public School, DUBBO, NSW
- . Dudley Park Primary School, MANDURAH, WA
- . Duffy Primary School, DUFFY, ACT
- . Duncraig Primary School, DUNCRAIG, WA
- . Dundas Public School, DUNDAS, NSW
- . Dutton Park State School, DUTTON PARK, QLD
  
- . Eaglehawk North Primary School, EAGLEHAWK, VIC
- . Eagle Junction State School, CLAYFIELD, QLD
- . East Narrogin Primary School, NARROGIN, WA
- . Echunga Primary School, ECHUNGA, SA
- . Elizabeth Downs Junior Primary School, ELIZABETH DOWNS, SA
- . Emu Heights Public School, EMU PLAINS, NSW

- . Epping North Public School, EPPING, NSW
- . Ethelton Primary School, ETHELTON, SA
- . Eukarima School, BOWRAL, NSW
  
- . Fairhills Primary School, FERNTREE GULLY, VIC
- . Fairview Park Primary School, FAIRVIEW PARK, SA
- . Fairview Primary School, NEW NORFOLK, TAS
- . Ferryden Park Primary School and Child Parent Centre, FERRYDEN PARK, SA
- . Finley Public School, FINLEY, NSW
- . Flinders View Primary School, PORT AUGUSTA WEST, SA
- . Floraville Public School, BELMONT, NSW
- . Forest Hill School, FOREST HILL, NSW
- . Forrest School (The), FORREST, ACT
- . Franklin Public School, TUMUT, NSW
- . Frederick Irwin Anglican Community School, MANDURAH, WA
  
- . Geilston Bay High School, GEILSTON BAY, TAS
- . Gibbs Street Primary School, EAST CANNINGTON, WA
- . Glaymore Public School, CLAYMORE, NSW
- . Glebe Public School, GLEBE, NSW
- . Glen Devon Primary School, WERRIBEE, VIC
- . Glenroy Public School, ALBURY, NSW
- . Golden Beach State School, CALOUNDRA, QLD
- . Good Shepherd Lutheran Primary School (The), CROYDON, VIC
- . Goondi State School, INNISFAIL, QLD
- . Gowrie Park Primary School, GLENROY, VIC
- . Greenacre Public School, GREENACRE, NSW
- . Grovedale Primary School, GROVEDALE, VIC
- . Guthrie Street Primary School, SHEPPARTON, VIC
- . Gwynne Park Primary School, ARMADALE, WA
  
- . Hainsworth Primary School, GIRRAWHEEN, WA
- . Hallett Cove South Primary School, HALLETT COVE, SA
- . Harlaxton State School, TOOWOOMBA, QLD
- . Harris Fields State School, WOODRIDGE, QLD
- . Healesville Primary School, HEALESVILLE, VIC
- . Heathcote Public School, HEATHCOTE, NSW
- . Herdsmans Cove Primary School, GAGEBROOK, TAS
- . Heyson School, ABERFOYLE PARK, SA
- . Hillsborough Primary School, CHARLESTOWN, NSW
- . Hills Christian Community School Inc. (The), VERDUN, SA
- . Holt Primary School, HOLT, ACT
- . Holy Family School, DOVETON, VIC
- . Holy Innocents' School, CROYDON, NSW
- . Holy Spirit School, CRANBROOK, QLD
- . Holy Spirit School, LAVINGTON, NSW
- . Holy Trinity Primary School, WAGGA WAGGA, NSW
- . Holy Trinity School, GRANVILLE, NSW

- . Illaroo Road Public School, NOWRA, NSW
- . Injune State School, INJUNE, QLD
- . Invermay Primary School, LAUNCESTON, TAS
- . Ivanhoe Girls' Grammar School, IVANHOE, VIC
  
- . Jewells Public School, BELMONT NORTH, NSW
- . Junee North Public School, JUNEE, NSW
- . Junee Public School, JUNEE, NSW
  
- . Kaleen Primary School, KALEEN, ACT
- . Kallangur State School, KALLANGUR, QLD
- . Kananook Primary School, SEAFORD, VIC
- . Karrendi Primary School, PARAFIELD GARDENS, SA
- . Kawungan State School, KAWUNGAN, QLD
- . Kegworth Public School, LEICHHARDT, NSW
- . Kennington Primary School, BENDIGO, VIC
- . Kingston State School, KINGSTON, QLD
- . Kirrawee Public School, KIRRAWEE, NSW
- . Knox Gardens Primary School, WANTIRNA SOUTH, VIC
  
- . Laggan Public School, LAGGAN, NSW
- . Lakes Creek State School, NORTH ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
- . Lalor East Primary School, LALOR, VIC
- . Largs Bay Schools, LARGS BAY, SA
- . Lavington East Public School, LAVINGTON EAST, NSW
- . Lavington Public School, LAVINGTON, NSW
- . Le Fevre Peninsula Primary School, BIRKENHEAD, SA
- . Lethbridge Park Public School, LETHBRIDGE PARK, NSW
- . Lindisfarne Anglican Parish School, UNLEY, SA
- . Lindisfarne North Primary School, LINDISFARNE, TAS
- . Lismore Heights Primary School, LISMORE HEIGHTS, NSW
- . Loveday Primary School, LOVEDAY, SA
- . Lyons Primary School, LYONS, ACT
  
- . Macquarie Primary School, MACQUARIE, ACT
- . Maleny State School, MALENY, QLD
- . Mandurama Public School, MANDURAMA, NSW
- . Mansfield Park School, MANSFIELD PARK, SA
- . Margate Primary School, MARGATE, TAS
- . Maria Regina Primary School, AVALON, NSW
- . Maroochydore State Primary School, MAROOCHYDORE, QLD
- . Marsden State High School, WATERFORD WEST, QLD
- . Marymount Primary School, BURLEIGH WATERS, QLD
- . Medlow Public School, TAYLORS ARM, NSW
- . Mel Maria Catholic Primary School, ATTADALE, WA
- . Mentone Grammar School, MENTONE, VIC
- . Merbein Primary School, MERBEIN, VIC
- . Merbein South Primary School, MERBEIN SOUTH, VIC



- . Mercy Primary School, KOONDOOLA, WA
- . Mildura West Primary School, MILDURA, VIC
- . Miles State Primary School, MILES, QLD
- . Modbury South Primary School, HOPE VALLEY, SA
- . Monash Primary School, MONASH, ACT
- . Montagu Bay Primary School Community Centre, MONTAGU BAY, TAS
- . Moomba Park Primary School, FAWKNER, VIC
- . Moonbi Public School, MOONBI, NSW
- . Morayfield East State Primary School, MORAYFIELD, QLD
- . Morningside State School, MORNINGSIDE, QLD
- . Mortdale Public School, MORTDALE, NSW
- . Mount Barker Primary School, MOUNT BARKER, WA
- . Mount Rogers Community School (The), SPENCE, ACT
- . Movelle Primary School, ST ALBANS, VIC
- . Mt Neighbour Primary School, KAMBAH, ACT
- . Mulwala Public School, MULWALA, NSW
- . Myrtleford Consolidated School, MYRTLEFORD, VIC
  
- . Nambour State Primary School, NAMBOUR, QLD
- . Narellan Public School, NARELLAN, NSW
- . Narooma Public School, NAROOMA, NSW
- . Neerim South Primary School, NEERIM SOUTH, VIC
- . Nhill College, NHILL, VIC
- . Norris Road State School, BRACKEN RIDGE, QLD
- . North Ainslie School, AINSLIE, ACT
- . North Cottesloe Primary School, COTTESLOE, WA
- . North Lake Primary School, COOLBELLUP, WA
  
- . Oakey Primary School, OAKEY, QLD
- . Oaks Public School (The), THE OAKS, NSW
- . Oberon South Primary School, BELMONT, VIC
- . O'Connor Co-operative School, O'CONNOR, ACT
- . Orange Grove Public School, LEICHHARDT, NSW
- . Our Lady Help of Christians School, WHYALLA STUART, SA
- . Our Lady of Grace School, GLENGOWRIE, SA
- . Our Lady of Mount Carmel School, WATERLOO, NSW
- . Our Lady Queen of Peace School, GREYSTANES, NSW
- . Our Saviour Lutheran School, ABERFOYLE PARK, SA
  
- . Pacific Palms Public School, BOOMERANG BEACH, NSW
- . Pambula Public School, PAMBULA, NSW
- . Para Hills East Primary School, PARA HILLS, SA
- . Parkerville Primary School, PARKERVILLE, WA
- . Parkes Public School, PARKES, NSW
- . Parkmore Primary School, FOREST HILL, VIC
- . Paterson Public School, PATERSON, NSW
- . Pennant Hills Public School, PENNANT HILLS, NSW
- . Penrith South Primary School, PENRITH, NSW

- . Pitt Town Public School, PITT TOWN, NSW
- . Poowong Consolidated School, POOWONG, VIC
- . Puckapunyal Primary School, PUCKAPUNYAL, VIC
- . Pulteney Grammar School, ADELAIDE, SA
- . Punchbowl Public School, PUNCHBOWL, NSW
  
- . Quakers Hill Primary School, QUAKERS HILL, NSW
- . Queanbeyan Primary School, QUEANBEYAN, NSW
  
- . Rangeville State School, TOOWOOMBA, QLD
- . Redwood Park School, REDWOOD PARK, SA
- . Renmark Junior Primary School, RENMARK, SA
- . Reynella South Junior Primary School, REYNELLA, SA
- . Richlands State Pre-School, RICHLANDS, QLD
- . Richmond Primary School, KESWICK, SA
- . Ringwood North Primary School, RINGWOOD NORTH, VIC
- . Riverleigh State School, VIA MUNDUBBERA, QLD
- . Rivett Primary School, RIVETT, ACT
- . Robe Primary School, ROBE, SA
- . Robinvale Consolidated School, ROBINVALE, VIC
- . Rochester Primary School, ROCHESTER, VIC
- . Rockhampton Grammar School (The), ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
- . Rockingham Beach Primary School, ROCKINGHAM, WA
- . Romsey Primary School, ROMSEY, VIC
- . Rosanna Primary School, ROSANNA, VIC
- . Rosedale Primary School, ROSEDALE, VIC
- . Roslyn Primary School, BELMONT, VIC
- . Ross Hill School, INVERELL, NSW
- . Rushworth Primary School, RUSHWORTH, VIC
  
- . Sackville Street Public School, INGLEBURN, NSW
- . Sacred Heart Primary School, MILDURA, VIC
- . Saint Patrick's School, STRATFORD, VIC
- . Sanderson Primary School, KARAMA, NT
- . Sandringham Primary School, SANDRINGHAM, VIC
- . Sandy Beach Public School, SANDY BEACH, NSW
- . Sans Souci Public School, SANS SOUCI, NSW
- . Santa Clara School, BENTLEY, WA
- . Scottsdale Primary School, SCOTTSDALE, TAS
- . Seaforth Primary School, GOSNELLS, WA
- . Serviceton State School, DURACK, QLD
- . Seymour Primary School, SEYMOUR, VIC
- . Sir Henry Parkes Memorial Primary School, TENTERFIELD, NSW
- . Spring Ridge Public School, SPRING RIDGE, NSW
- . Ss Peter & Paul's School, GARRAN, ACT
- . St Agatha's School, PENNANT HILLS, NSW
- . St Anne's School, NORTH ALBURY, NSW
- . St Anthony's School, CLOVELLY, NSW

- . St Bernadette's School, CASTLE HILL, NSW
- . St Bernadette's School Board, ST MARYS, SA
- . St Bernard's Primary School, WANGARATTA, VIC
- . St Bridget's Parish Primary School Greythorn, NORTH BALWYN, VIC
- . St Catherine's School, PROSERPINE, QLD
- . St Cecilia's School, GLEN IRIS, VIC
- . St Christopher's School, Syndal, SYNDAL VIC
- . St Clare's School, THOMASTOWN WEST, VIC
- . St Columba's Catholic School, YEOVAL, NSW
- . St Columba's School, NORTH LEICHARDT, NSW
- . St Dominic's Primary School, EAST CAMBERWELL, VIC
- . St Francis De Sales School, MOUNT BARKER, SA
- . St Francis of Assisi Parish Primary School Calwell, ERINDALE CENTRE, ACT
- . St Francis Xavier's School, URANA, NSW
- . St Georges Road Primary School, SHEPPARTON, VIC
- . St Gregory's School, QUEANBEYAN, NSW
- . St Jerome's School, PUNCHBOWL, NSW
- . St Joachims School, LIDCOMBE, NSW
- . St John's Lutheran Primary School, HIGHGATE, SA
- . St Joseph's Primary School, LEETON, NSW
- . St Joseph's Primary School, NORTH GOULBURN, NSW
- . St Joseph's Primary School, SOUTH GRAFTON, NSW
- . St Josphe's School, CHELSEA, VIC
- . St Joseph's School, NARRANDERA, NSW
- . St Joseph's School, PEAK HILL, NSW
- . St Joseph's School, SORRENTO, VIC
- . St Joseph's School, WALGETT, NSW
- . St Jude's Parish School, LANGWARRIN, VIC
- . St Margaret's School, BERWICK, VIC
- . St Martin de Porres Primary School, AVONDALE HEIGHTS, VIC
- . St Mary Magdalen's School, CHADSTONE, VIC
- . St Mary's Primary School, CASINO, NSW
- . St Mary's School, WARRACKNABEAL, VIC
- . St Nicholas' School, TAMWORTH, NSW
- . St Patrick's Parish School, ALBURY, NSW
- . St Patrick's Primary School, SUTHERLAND, NSW
- . St Patrick's School, HOLBROOK, NSW
- . St Patrick's School, PARRAMATTA, NSW
- . St Paul Lutheran Primary School, BLAIR ATHOL, SA
- . St Paul's School, BRIDGEWATER, TAS
- . St Paul's School, MOUNT GAMBIER, SA
- . St Peter's School, SOUTH WEST SUNSHINE, VIC
- . St Pius Primary School, ENMORE, NSW
- . St Pius X Parish Primary School, WARRNAMBOOL, VIC
- . St Therese Primary School, PADSTOW HEIGHTS, NSW
- . St Therese School, LAKEMBA, NSW
- . St Therese's School, WEST WOLLONGONG, NSW
- . St Thomas The Apostle School, BLACKBURN, VIC

- . Stella Maris Primary School, MAROOCHYDORE, QLD
- . Stella Maris Seacombe Gardens Parish School, SEACOMBE GARDENS, SA
- . Strathdownie Primary School, CASTERTON, VIC
- . Strathfieldsaye Primary School, STRATHFIELDSAYE, VIC
- . Start Primary School, PARK HOLME, SA
- . Sunshine Heights Primary School, WEST SUNSHINE, VIC
- . Swift's Creek Primary School, SWIFT'S CREEK, VIC
  
- . Tamworth West Primary School, TAMWORTH, NSW
- . Tanunda Lutheran School, TANUNDA, SA
- . Taree Public School, TAREE, NSW
- . Taylor Primary School, KAMBAH, ACT
- . Temora West Public School, TEMORA, NSW
- . Tighes Hill Public School, TIGHES HILL, NSW
- . Titjikala School, VIA ALICE SPRINGS, NT
- . Tooleybuc Central School, TOOLEYBUC, NSW
- . Toowoomba North State School, TOOWOOMBA, QLD
- . Trevallyn Primary School, LAUNCESTON, TAS
- . Tuena Public School, TUENA, NSW
- . Tuggerawong Public School, TUGGERAWONG, NSW
- . Turramurra North Public School, NORTH TURRAMURRA, NSW
  
- . Upper Sandy Creek Primary School, HUON, VIC
  
- . Victoria Plantation State School, INGHAM, QLD
- . Victoria Point State School, VICTORIA POINT, QLD
  
- . Wagga Wagga Lutheran Primary School, WAGGA WAGGA, NSW
- . Walliston Primary School, WALLISTON, WA
- . Waraburra State School, GRACEMERE, QLD
- . Warakurna Community School, VIA ALICE SPRINGS, NT
- . Warragamba Public School, WARRAGAMBA, NSW
- . Warrane Primary School, WARRANE, TAS
- . Weir State School, TOWNSVILLE, QLD
- . Wellington Point State Primary School, WELLINGTON POINT, QLD
- . Wellington Primary School, WELLINGTON, NSW
- . Werrington Public School, WERRINGTON, NSW
- . West Pymble Public School, WEST PYMBLE, NSW
- . West Wyalong Schools, WEST WYALONG, NSW
- . Wilderness Preparatory School, MEDINDIE, SA
- . Wiley Park Public School, WILEY PARK, NSW
- . Winters Flat Primary School, CASTLEMAINE, VIC
- . Wollondilly Public School, GOULBURN, NSW
- . Woodburn Central School, WOODBURN, NSW
- . Woodridge North State School, WOODRIDGE, QLD
- . Woombye State School, WOOMBYE, QLD
- . Woomera Area School, WOOMERA, SA
- . Woree State School, WOREE, QLD

- . Wudinna Area School, WUDINNA, SA
- . Wyoming Primary School, WYOMING, NSW
- . Wyong Public School, WYONG, NSW
- . Wyrallah Road Public School, LISMORE, NSW
  
- . Yankalilla Area School, YANKALILLA, SA
- . Yarra Junction Primary School, YARRA JUNCTION, VIC
- . Yates Avenue Public School, DUNDAS, NSW

### **Private Individuals**

- . Ms Christina Alexander, KENMORE, QLD.
  
- . Mrs Jo Barnes, ATHERTON, QLD
- . Mrs Carol Bell, CAIRNS, QLD
- . Mrs Lesley Blow, BENTLEIGH, VIC
- . Ms Tracey Bowden, REYNELLA, SA
- . Mrs Cath Briant, BANGHOLME, VIC
  
- . Ms Jan Caughey, VIA WARRAGUL, VIC
- . Mr & Mrs Phil & Jill Clark, FRASER, ACT
- . Mrs Sharon Clarke, COOMA, NSW
- . Ms J Clifford, THURGOONA PARK, NSW
- . Dr Denis Condon, PARK RIDGE DOWNS, QLD and Ms Judith Blaney, FERNVALE, QLD
  
- . Ms Mary Dal Panto, MACKSVILLE, NSW
- . Ms Trisha Dixon, COOMA, NSW
- . Mrs Margaret Dyer, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
  
- . Mrs A E Evans, KOOTINGAL, NSW
  
- . Ms Melva Fitzallen, MENZIES CREEK, VIC
- . Mrs Annie Friedlander, ROSE BAY, NSW
  
- . Mrs Susan Galletly, MACKAY, QLD
- . Mrs Lynne Gilbert, KENTHURST, NSW
- . Mr Ian Gill, BENALLA, VIC
- . Ms Deborah Gooch, DUBBO, NSW
  
- . Ms Susan Harris, PANORAMA, SA
- . Mr Byron Harrison, HOBART, TAS
- . Mrs Judy Hawkins, COLLINSVILLE, QLD
- . Kerry Hempenstall, BUNDOORA, VIC
- . Mr Mal Henman, LEETON, NSW
- . Ms Anita Holowzak, CARINGBAH, NSW
  
- . A L Jenkyns, GYMEA, NSW
- . Mr Alfred Jessup, GRACEVILLE, QLD

. Ms Judi Kirk, QLD  
 . Mr & Mrs Kevin & Sandra Knock, FOREST HILL, NSW  
  
 . Mrs Foong Lam, DIANELLA, WA  
 . Mrs Anne Lambert, WHERROL FLAT, NSW  
 . Mrs Joan Lane, INDOOROOPIILLY, QLD  
  
 . Mr Kevin McDonnell, SEATON, SA  
 . Mr Gerard McEwen, GLANDORE, SA  
 . D M McLaren, VIA BUNDABERG, QLD  
 . Mr Charles McMonnies, SYDNEY, NSW  
 . Mr & Mrs S McPherson, FERNTREE GULLY, VIC  
 . Mrs Hella McShane, HOWDEN, TAS  
  
 . Mr Roy Menner, BROOKLYN PARK, SA  
 . Mrs Sharon Monahan, TUGUN, QLD  
  
 . Mr Peter Nelson, SEMAPHORE SOUTH, SA  
 . Ms Betty Nolan, MONTAGU BAY, TAS  
 . Mrs Sallie Norsworthy, BURWOOD, VIC  
 . Mr Chris Nugent, KALLISTA, VIC  
  
 . Ms Vivien Owen, MARINO, SA  
  
 . Mrs Valerie Pastro, NORWOOD, SA  
 . Ms Noeline Patterson-Campbell, FOREST GLADE, QLD  
 . Mr Rob Pattison, HACKHAM, SA  
 . Ms Patricia Payne, SURRY HILLS, NSW  
 . R Prestwich, FINGAL, NSW  
  
 . Ms Jenny Richardson, INVERLOCH, VIC  
 . Mr Kevin Rooney, ADELAIDE, SA  
 . N Y Ryan, PYRAMID HILL, VIC  
  
 . E Saunders-King, NORTH EPPING, NSW  
 . Mrs Cecily Seaman, GLENGOWRIE, SA  
 . Ms Julie-Anne Sheehan, KENSINGTON, VIC  
 . Mrs Mardi Street, HERMIT PARK, QLD  
 . Mr & Mrs Frank & Lesley Styles, BORONIA, VIC  
 . Mr Geoffrey Swan, BARDON, QLD  
  
 . Ms Linda Thompson, MONTAGU BAY, TAS  
 . Mrs Frances Thulborn, FLAGSTAFF HILL, SA  
 . Dr Fredrick Toben, GOROKE, VIC  
  
 . Mrs M Verity, GUILDFORD, NSW

- . Ms Cathryn Ward, HAWTHORNDENE, SA
- . Ms Elizabeth Webster, MT WARRIGAL, NSW
- . Ms Carol West, ROCHESTER, VIC
- . Mrs J J Wherrett, NEW TOWN, TAS
- . Ms Jan Woodmore, PANANIA, NSW

**State/Territory Government**

- . ACT Department of Education and Training, TUGGERANONG, ACT
- . Department of Education, Limestone Hill School Support Centre, IPSWICH, QLD
- . Department of Education, Speech Therapy Resource Centre, MILTON CENTRE, QLD
- . Department of Education, Stafford School Support Centre, STAFFORD, QLD
- . Department of Education, Sunshine Coast Literacy Reference Group, MOOLOOLABA, QLD
- . Department of Education and the Arts, Curriculum Services Branch, NORTH HOBART, TAS
- . Department of Education and the Arts, Educational Planning, HOBART, TAS
- . Department of School Education, Armidale Education Resource Centre, ARMIDALE, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Birrong Cluster, Bankstown Education Resource Centre, BANKSTOWN, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Dee Why Education Resource Centre, DEE WHY, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Dubbo Education Resource Centre, DUBBO, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Hunter Reading Recovery Centre, JESMOND, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Lake Macquarie Education Resource Centre, ADAMSTOWN, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Metropolitan South West Region, LIVERPOOL, NSW
- . Department of School Education, Wangaratta District School Support Centre, WANGARATTA, VIC
- . Education Department of South Australia, ADELAIDE, SA
- . Minister of Education, South Australian Government, ADELAIDE, SA
- . WA Government, Premier of Western Australia, EAST PERTH, WA
- . Western Australian Ministry of Education, EAST PERTH, WA

### **Catholic Education Office**

- . Catholic Education Centre, DUTTON PARK, QLD
- . Catholic Education Office, ADELAIDE, SA
- . Catholic Education Office, EAST MELBOURNE, VIC
- . Catholic Education Office, LEICHHARDT NSW
- . Catholic Education Office, Non Government Disadvantaged School Program, ADELAIDE, SA

### **Regional Education Centres**

- . ANSUA Children's Learning & Development Centre, ROSALIE, QLD
- . Bathurst Special Education Support Centre, BATHURST, NSW
- . Beenleigh Area School Support Centre, EAGLEBY, QLD
- . Bega Area Learning Difficulties Support Group, BEGA, NSW
- . Coliban Cluster (The), CASTLEMAINE, VIC
- . Coolamon Parents Resource and Support Group, COOLAMON, NSW
- . Elizabeth Downs School Council, ELIZABETH DOWNS, SA
- . Hill End Playgroup, HILL END, NSW
- . Inner City School Support Centre, FITZROY, VIC
- . Kiama/Shellharbour Learning Difficulties, Support Group Inc., JAMBEROO, NSW
- . Learning Place (The), MIDDLE COVE, NSW
- . Mitchell Park Special Education Unit, CLOVELLY PARK, SA
- . Montessori Children's Centre, VICTORIA PARK, WA
- . Movement Activities Centre, DARLINGTON, WA
- . Mornington Network of Pre-Schools and Schools, MORNINGTON, VIC
- . Snowy River Area Literacy Working Party, ORBOST, VIC
- . Southern Fleurieu 'Story A Day', VICTOR HARBOR, SA
- . Special Education Support Centre, ALBURY, NSW
- . Springwood Childrens Centre Inc., SPRINGWOOD, NSW
- . Sutherland Shire Learning Difficulties Support Group Inc., SUTHERLAND, NSW
- . Toddler Kindy Gymparoo, KEW, VIC
- . Upper Hunter Learning Difficulties Support Group, SINGLETON, NSW
- . Urambi Primary School Board, KAMBAH, ACT
- . Waterdale School Support Centre, HEIDELBERG WEST, VIC



## **Tertiary Institutions**

- . Australian College of Education, LEABROOK, SA
- . Edith Cowan University, Dr David Evans, Department of Teaching and Curriculum Studies, MOUNT LAWLEY, WA
- . Edith Cowan University, Dr P J Formentin, PERTH, WA
- . Flinders University of South Australia, BEDFORD PARK, SA
- . Griffith University, Professor Phil Meade, Faculty of Education, BRISBANE, QLD
- . La Trobe University, Dr Elaine Furniss, School of Education, Centre for the Study of Curriculum and Teacher Education, BUNDOORA, VIC
- . La Trobe University, Mr Graham Peters, Centre for the Study of Cultural and Educational Practice, BUNDOORA, VIC
- . La Trobe University, Dr Gideon Polya, Department of Biochemistry, BUNDOORA, VIC
- . La Trobe University, Dr Derek Toomey, Centre for the Study of Community, Education and Social Change, BUNDOORA, VIC
- . La Trobe University College of Northern Victoria, BENDIGO, VIC
- . Macquarie University, Special Education Centre, NORTH RYDE, NSW
- . Monash University, School of Early Childhood and Primary Education, FRANKSTON, VIC
- . University of Canberra, Dr Max Kemp, Schools and Community Centre, CANBERRA, ACT
- . University of Canberra, Mr John McIntyre, Schools & Community Centre, BELCONNEN, ACT
- . University of Central Education, Ms Robyn Cox, School of Education, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
- . University of Central Queensland, Dr Lewis Larking, School of Education, ROCKHAMPTON, QLD
- . University of Newcastle, NEWCASTLE, NSW
- . University of New England, Associate Professor Brian Byrne, ARMIDALE, NSW
- . University of Queensland, Ms Barbara Dodd, Speech and Hearing Department & Ms Gail Gillon, Brisbane Catholic Education Centre, ST LUCIA, QLD
- . University of Queensland, Dr Peter Renshaw, Faculty of Education, BRISBANE, QLD
- . University of South Australia, Ms June Ward, MAGILL, SA
- . University of Southern Queensland, Dr Geoff Bull, Language & Literacy Research Unit, TOOWOOMBA, QLD
- . University of Sydney, Dr Alison Elliott, School of Educational Psychology, Measurement and Technology, SYDNEY, NSW
- . University of Tasmania, Ms Penny Andersen, School of Education, HOBART, TAS

- . University of Technology Sydney, HAYMARKET, NSW
- . University of Technology Sydney, Dr Joan Jardine, School of Teacher Education, BROADWAY, NSW
- . University of Wollongong, Mr Neil Hall, Faculty of Education, WOLLONGONG, NSW

### **Unions/Associations/Organisations**

- . ACT Catholic Primary Principals Association, PEARCE, ACT
- . ACT Early Childhood Forum, MELBA, ACT
- . ACT Primary Principal's Association, KAMBAH, ACT
- . Australian Association of Special Education, NSW Chapter, STRATHFIELD, NSW
- . Australian Association of Speech and Hearing, EAST MELBOURNE, VIC
- . Australian Council for Educational Research Limited, HAWTHORN, VIC
- . Australian Council of Libraries and Information Services, CANBERRA, ACT
- . Australian Council of State School Organisations Inc., HUGHES, ACT
- . Australian Early Childhood Association Inc., WATSON, ACT
- . Australian Early Childhood Association Inc., South Australian Branch, THEBARTON, SA
- . Australian Early Childhood Association, Tasmania Branch, SANDY BAY, TAS
- . Australian Institute of Family Studies, MELBOURNE, VIC
- . Australian Library and Information Association, DEAKIN, ACT
- . Australian Parents Council Incorporated, NORTH SYDNEY, NSW
- . Australian Primary Principal Association, REDWOOD PARK, SA
- . Australian Primary Principals Association Inc., BRISBANE, QLD
- . Australian Teachers Union, CARLTON, VIC
  
- . Basic Concern, Assessment and Tutorial Service, SANDY BAY, TAS
  
- . Catholic Primary Principals' Association WA, WANNEROO, WA
  
- . Diocesan Catholic Education Commission, WAGGA WAGGA, NSW
  
- . Early Childhood Education Council of NSW, ROZELLE, NSW
- . Early Childhood Organisation Inc, HENLEY BEACH, SA
- . Early Childhood Working Group, ACT Literacy Taskforce Inc., RED HILL, ACT
- . Education Support Service Association (Inc), CHATSWOOD, NSW
  
- . Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations, EAST SYDNEY, NSW
  
- . Hill End Public School P & C Association, HILL END, NSW
  
- . Independent Schools Parents Council (NT), DARWIN, NT
- . Independent Schools' Staff Association ACT, FYSHWICK, ACT
- . International College of Applied Learning, AUCKLAND, NEW ZEALAND
- . Isolated Children's Parents' Association, BREWARRINA, NSW
- . Isolated Children's Parents' Association of NSW Incorporated (The), ARMIDALE, NSW

- . Junee Planning and Development Council, JUNEE, NSW
- . Junior Primary Principals' Association, HACKHAM WEST, SA
- . Language Foundation of Australia, ARATULA, QLD
- . Literacy Action Association Incorporated, BOOVAL, QLD
- . Mater Misericordiae Children's Hospital, SOUTH BRISBANE, QLD
- . Metropolitan East Primary Principals' Council, NSW
- . Mooloolaba Learning Support Teachers Network, CALOUNDRA, QLD
- . National Languages Institute of Australia (The), EAST MELBOURNE, VIC
- . Parents and Friends Association, MAROUBRA JUNCTION, NSW
- . Primary English Teaching Association, NEWTOWN, NSW
- . Principals' Branch of the Victorian Catholic Primary Staff Association (The), EAST KEILOR, VIC
- . Quality Educational Development Pty Limited, PARRAMATTA, NSW
- . Queensland Council of Parents' and Citizens' Associations Inc., HERSTON, QLD
- . Queensland Teachers' Union, SPRING HILL, QLD
- . Remedial Teachers' Association of Queensland, ANNERLEY, QLD
- . SA Catholic Primary Principals Association and The Federation of Parents and Friends Associations of South Australian Catholic Schools (The), GLENGOWRIE, SA
- . South Australian Association of School Parents' Clubs Incorporated, ADELAIDE, SA
- . South Australian Independent Schools Board Incorporated, MALVERN, SA
- . South Australian Institute for Educational Research, PARKSIDE, SA
- . South Australian Primary Principals Association, SALISBURY EAST, SA
- . SPELD NSW Inc., GREENWICH, NSW
- . SPELD QLD Inc., AITKENVALE, QLD
- . SPELD QLD Inc., SOUTH BRISBANE, QLD
- . SPELD SA Inc., GLENSIDE, SA
- . SPELD VIC Inc., FITZROY NORTH, VIC
- . Tasmanian Council of State School Parents and Friends Associations (The), HOBART, TAS
- . Tasmanian Primary Principals Association, TREVALLYN, TAS
- . Terry Hills Parents and Citizens Association, TERRY HILLS, NSW
- . Victorian Independent Education Staff Association, JOLIMONT, VIC
- . WA Primary Principals' Association (Inc.), HIGH WYCOMBE, WA

