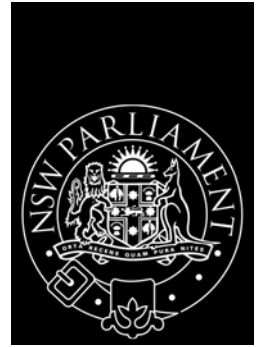


PARLIAMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES



# Committee on Children and Young People

## Children and Young People Aged 9-14 Years in NSW: The Missing Middle

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Volume Two

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## List of Recommendations – Volume One

RECOMMENDATION 1: The Committee recommends that the Premier, in his capacity as the Minister for the Arts, facilitate the development of a youth arts plan with a major focus on regional New South Wales.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted in the development of any proposed youth arts plan.

RECOMMENDATION 2: The Committee recommends that the Premier, in his capacity as the Minister for the Arts, facilitate the development of further arts activities in school holidays for children in the middle years with a focus on disadvantaged communities, particularly Indigenous communities.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed development.

RECOMMENDATION 3: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Youth and the relevant Commonwealth Minister about the feasibility of implementing a series of pilot programs to trial modified versions of the *Active After-school Communities Program*.

RECOMMENDATION 4: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Sport and Recreation about the feasibility of subsidising the costs of participation in sports and other activities outside school hours, with priority given to low-income families and Indigenous families.

RECOMMENDATION 5: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Sport and Recreation expand initiatives to increase access of children and young people aged 9-14 with a disability to sport, arts and other types of recreation.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed expansion of initiatives that aim to increase access of children and young people in the middle years with a disability to sport, arts and other types of recreation.

RECOMMENDATION 6: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about developing and actively implementing a policy allowing use of schools for activities outside of school hours by students and community members.

RECOMMENDATION 7: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Community Services establish project officer positions, based on the model developed by Waverley Council, to coordinate and foster the development of programs outside of school hours for children and young people aged 9-14 throughout the State.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed developments.

**RECOMMENDATION 8:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Government provide funding for activities outside of school as a core component of a state-wide funding stream for 9-14 year olds, with a particular focus on disadvantaged communities, including those with high numbers of Aboriginal children and young people.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed funding for activities outside of school.

**RECOMMENDATION 9:** The Committee recommends that the Department of the Arts, Sport and Recreation collaborate with other relevant government departments to develop a whole-of-government approach to providing activities outside of school for 9-14 year olds.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed development of a whole-of- government approach to providing activities outside of school for 9-14 year olds.

**RECOMMENDATION 10:** The Committee recommends that the Minister for Community Services:

- expand the provision of youth services to allow for the development of new programs in areas of need and to enhance the hours of operation for existing services; and
- provides funding to implement and evaluate a range of activities and support based programs for 9-14 year olds involving youth services.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed expansion of youth services to allow for the development of new programs in areas of need, and in the implementation and evaluation of a range of activities and support programs.

**RECOMMENDATION 11:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about making school facilities across the State available to not-for-profit out of school hours care services at minimal cost.

**RECOMMENDATION 12:** The Committee recommends that the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care continue to work with other government departments and agencies to:

- increase access of children and young people with a disability to existing youth-oriented services and activities; and
- develop appropriate new service models for children and young people aged 9-14 years with a disability.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted as part of this process.

**RECOMMENDATION 13:** The Committee recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People work with key stakeholders to conduct a conference about age-appropriate activities/care for 9-14 year olds.

RECOMMENDATION 14: The Committee recommends that the NSW Government adopt a whole-of-government approach to expanding the provision of vacation care/school holiday programs, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed whole-of-government approach.

RECOMMENDATION 15: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Community Services develop and evaluate school holiday/vacation care programs for 9-14 year olds specifically designed as an early intervention strategy in disadvantaged communities.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed development and evaluation of school holiday/vacation care programs for 9-14 year olds.

RECOMMENDATION 16: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Department of Education and Training to ensure schools are providing adequate safety education for middle years students in the use of internet and other technology.

RECOMMENDATION 17: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Transport about changing the conditions of use of the school bus pass system to allow children and young people to use their bus pass to travel free of charge to out of school hours care.

RECOMMENDATION 18: The Committee recommends that the NSW Government expand the *Kids' Adventure Passport* scheme to include children up to the age of 15 and offer greater public transport concessions and greater access to discounted activities in school holiday periods.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed expansion of the *Kids' Adventure Passport* scheme.

RECOMMENDATION 19: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Ageing and Disability Services about reviewing policies to allow community transport buses under the *Home and Community Care* program to be available for youth transport initiatives on weekends and other low use times.

RECOMMENDATION 20: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Transport about making provision for:

- additional innovative youth transport programs across New South Wales;
- adequate long-term funding for existing youth transport programs;
- allowing existing youth transport programs to be extended to include a younger age group where appropriate; and
- Aboriginal Transport Development Officers in all Community Transport Organisations based in areas with Aboriginal communities.

RECOMMENDATION 21: The Committee recommends that the Ministry of Transport work with other government departments to ensure a whole-of-government approach to youth transport, in consultation with relevant non-government organisations.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed whole-of-government approach to youth transport.

RECOMMENDATION 22: The Committee recommends that NSW Health expand the provision of counselling services and mental health early intervention programs for children and young people, with services for Aboriginal children and young people as a priority.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed expansion.

RECOMMENDATION 23: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Education and Training, about increasing the availability of age-appropriate sexual health programs that encompass the 9-14 age group, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

RECOMMENDATION 24: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Health about funding for non-government organisations providing support services for young people with sexuality/gender issues and young people with a disability.

RECOMMENDATION 25: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Health about expanding innovative strategies to provide oral health prevention and treatment for disadvantaged children and young people.

RECOMMENDATION 26: The Committee recommends that the Department of Health establish additional youth health services across New South Wales and enhances the capacity of existing youth health services, with priority given to areas with a substantial Indigenous population.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed expansion of youth health services.

RECOMMENDATION 27: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Health about the feasibility of establishing youth health coordinator positions in each Area Health Service in New South Wales.

RECOMMENDATION 28: The Committee recommends that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services, the Minister for Housing and the relevant Commonwealth Ministers about strategies to address the need for appropriate accommodation and support for children and young people under fifteen years who are currently accessing SAAP services.

RECOMMENDATION 29: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with key stakeholders to assess the appropriateness of extending



early intervention programs for young people at risk of homelessness to a younger age group.

RECOMMENDATION 30: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services about conducting a review of parenting programs/interventions for parents of teenagers, with a view to identifying and making available a range of programs for parents and carers of 9-14 year olds.

RECOMMENDATION 31: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services about the possibility of including parenting programs as a core component of a *Brighter Futures*-type program for children and young people 9-14 years.

RECOMMENDATION 32: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Ageing, Disability and Homecare on evaluating its demonstration projects establishing peer support networks for children and young people with a disability.

RECOMMENDATION 33: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services about conducting a comprehensive publicly available evaluation of the *Better Futures* program.

RECOMMENDATION 34: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Community Services facilitate the development of a *Brighter Futures*-type model to be extended progressively to provide services to children aged 9-14 years, with priority of access to services for Aboriginal children and their families.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the development of the proposed *Brighter Futures*-type model.

RECOMMENDATION 35: The Committee recommends that the Department of Premier and Cabinet ensure that strategies to address the needs of children and young people exposed to domestic violence are included in the *NSW Domestic and Family Violence Framework*.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted on the development of any such strategies.

RECOMMENDATION 36: The Committee recommends, that pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services about including a range of services for children and young people 9-14 years in the proposed integrated, multi-disciplinary and co-located services (one stop shops).

RECOMMENDATION 37: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Health and the Minister for Community Services about the feasibility of establishing a mechanism for reviewing and assessing access of children and young people in out-of-home care to health services.

**RECOMMENDATION 38:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Community Services about strengthening provisions for children and young people in out-of-home care to participate in social and recreational activities and in tutoring.

## List of Recommendations – Volume Two

- RECOMMENDATION 39: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about expanding positively evaluated programs such as the *Schools in Partnership Program*, and the *Priority Action Schools Program*..... 11
- RECOMMENDATION 40: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about evaluating the *Links to Learning Program* and making the results publicly available. .... 12
- RECOMMENDATION 41: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about the feasibility of reviewing the provision of tutoring and homework assistance particularly to disadvantaged students. .... 24
- RECOMMENDATION 42: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about strengthening the Department’s current scheme on quality teaching in the middle years of schooling. .... 29
- RECOMMENDATION 43: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority and the NSW Board of Studies about incorporating career guidance and financial literacy into the curriculum for all Year 7 and 8 students. .... 33
- RECOMMENDATION 44: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about providing additional careers advisors in schools and expanding the provision of career advice to students in Years 7 and 8. .... 33
- RECOMMENDATION 45: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about implementing targeted evidence-based resilience programs..... 35
- RECOMMENDATION 46: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about monitoring compliance with its *Good Practice Guide* to ensure the appropriate implementation of its *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures*..... 53
- RECOMMENDATION 47: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about identifying best practice models with respect to reducing suspensions and improving outcomes for suspended students. .... 53

RECOMMENDATION 48: The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Training conduct a review of the provision of school counselling, with a view to ensuring the availability of appropriate levels of school counselling services in NSW public schools.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted about the provision of school counselling. ....57

RECOMMENDATION 49: The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about expanding the *Schools as Community Centres* program to include late primary students in disadvantaged schools, and trialling and evaluating the program in high schools. ....64

RECOMMENDATION 50: The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training develop an overarching strategy to support public schools to further implement and evaluate school-community partnerships in all disadvantaged areas in New South Wales. ....66

RECOMMENDATION 51: The Committee recommends that the *Occupation Health and Safety Act 1990* be amended to include specific reference to children’s safety in the workplace and that a Code of Practice be developed and implemented. ....77

RECOMMENDATION 52: The Committee recommends that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People liaise with the NSW Board Of Studies about including workplace and employment education in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus for Year 7 students. ....79

RECOMMENDATION 53: The Committee recommends that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People liaise with the NSW Board Of Studies about including information about ‘light work’ and/or odd jobs and employment-related matters such as safety and conditions at work in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus for Years 5 and 6. ....80

RECOMMENDATION 54: The Committee recommends that the Department of Premier and Cabinet, in its review of the State Plan, consult with the Commission for Children and Young People to ensure participation by young people is explicitly acknowledged in the State Plan and embedded in the policy development process. ....84

RECOMMENDATION 55: The Committee recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People work with relevant NSW Government departments to develop individual plans to increase the consultation and participation of children and young people across these departments. ....85

RECOMMENDATION 56: The Committee recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People continue to work with local councils to increase the consultation and participation in council processes of children and young people, including children in the 9-14 age group. ....86

RECOMMENDATION 57: The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop a model of child impact statements that would be required for all decisions which may affect children and young people. ....88

RECOMMENDATION 58: The Committee recommends that the Premier, through the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, facilitate a cross-government planning process,

involving all relevant government departments, to develop a stronger whole-of-government approach to supporting the care, development and wellbeing of children and young people 0-18 years.

The resulting whole-of-government plan should:

- identify priority key programs/approaches that are likely to impact on multiple outcomes for different age groups of children and young people;
- have a significant focus on providing programs and services to disadvantaged children and young people;
- include a focus on programs and services for children and young people in the middle years.

The Committee further recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed whole-of-government plan..... 100

**RECOMMENDATION 59:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Government provide a state-wide funding stream for programs and services for 9-14 year olds and their families with a major focus on those programs and services identified as a priority in a whole-of-government plan for children and young people.

The Committee further recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed state-wide funding stream for programs and services for 9-14 year olds. .... 104



## Chapter Thirteen - Education – Engagement and Support

The middle years of schooling includes a number of transitions for students; points in their educational pathway that can be of critical importance to their later choices and options for further education and employment. Student engagement is of key importance during these transitions, for it is during these times that students may be at greater risk of disengaging with school and leaving before completing, a choice that places many at risk for later experience of unemployment and underemployment.<sup>1</sup>

### Introduction

- 13.1 One of the most important preconditions for resilience in children and young people, as well as for later social and economic participation, is engagement and success at school. Such engagement and success is largely determined by the critical transition from primary to secondary school. The middle years of schooling are clustered around this transition and have been a focus for efforts to improve educational outcomes including important life skills, wellbeing and resilience.<sup>2</sup>
- 13.2 This chapter considers the risk factors affecting the engagement of young people at school, and examines the existing Commonwealth and state programs promoting engagement. The chapter also discusses the importance of transition to high school and homework support programs in helping to maintain young people's engagement and self-confidence at school. It highlights some of the difficulties experienced by non-government organisations in providing homework support and considers the need for improved resourcing and co-ordination of services in order to ensure that young people receive as much encouragement as possible through the early years of high school.

### Engagement with school

- 13.3 There is substantial evidence that students who do not have positive learning and personal experiences in the middle years are at risk of becoming uninterested in school and learning in general.<sup>3</sup> Respondents to the consultation on future directions for public education and training conducted by the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) in 2005 identified that if middle years students' social adjustment and welfare needs are not met, they are at risk of disengaging.<sup>4</sup>
- 13.4 Disengagement relates directly to school retention and participation rates, which decline in NSW for students after the age of 14 years. Thus, in 2007, participation rates were: 97.8 per cent for 14 year olds; 93.1 per cent for 15 year olds; and 80 per cent for 16 year olds.<sup>5</sup>
- 13.5 The submission from the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) suggested that this decline in participation rates is

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<sup>1</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 24.

<sup>2</sup> Submission no. 4, Education Foundation Australia, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2005. *Report of the consultation on future directions for public education and training: one size doesn't fit all*, p. 57.

<sup>4</sup> *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>5</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.11.

due in part to employment opportunities such as apprenticeships, becoming available to young people as they meet the age requirement to enter the workforce. However, while employment opportunities may account for some of this decline in school participation, some young people experience barriers to continuing their education. Barriers may include behavioural issues, disability, mental health issues, drug/alcohol abuse and literacy/numeracy issues.<sup>6</sup>

### **What causes disengagement?**

13.6 A range of factors contributes to disengagement from school. The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People has identified some of these as difficulties with literacy and numeracy, low self-esteem, bullying, poor teacher-child relationships, and parents who do not value education. Children experiencing any of these difficulties face an elevated risk of disengaging from school, and those with multiple risk factors face a markedly increased risk.<sup>7</sup>

13.7 Marrickville Youth Resource Centre also noted in its submission the causes for students disengaging from school:

Difficulties young people often talk about experiencing at school include not getting the support they need to do the work, not understanding the work (i.e. literacy and numeracy rates below their peers), social acceptance among their peers, lack of access to school counsellors, bullying, discrimination and an unsupportive home situation which makes study hard. For some young people these difficulties prove too great and they leave school before or at the minimum age of 15 years.<sup>8</sup>

13.8 Australia's lowest performing students are most likely to come from Indigenous communities, geographically remote areas and poor socio-economic backgrounds. About 40 per cent of Indigenous students, 23 per cent of students from the lowest category of socio-economic status and 27 per cent of students from remote schools are not meeting a proficiency level in science that the OECD deems necessary to participate fully in a 21<sup>st</sup> century workforce and society.<sup>9</sup> According to ACER:

Many educational issues and problems in Australia cut across all communities. However, the educational outcomes for Indigenous children of all ages across the country are generally considered to be a national disgrace. The most disadvantaged group of nine- to fourteen-year-olds in the country is Indigenous students.<sup>10</sup>

13.9 While the retention rate to Year 12 throughout Australia is 80 per cent, among Aboriginal young people it is only half that percentage.<sup>11</sup> According to Richmond Valley Council, the majority of Indigenous children in that region do not remain at school after Year 9.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.11.

<sup>7</sup> Submission no. 103, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People, p. 3.

<sup>8</sup> Submission no. 27, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, p. 2.

<sup>9</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 7.

<sup>10</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 5.

<sup>11</sup> Dr Andrew Dowling, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p.40.

<sup>12</sup> Submission no. 14, Richmond Valley Council, p. 2.

See also the concerns of Barnardos Australia, Submission no. 21, p. 5.



- 13.10 In a study conducted by the ACER, school achievement was found to have a substantial effect on early school leaving.<sup>13</sup> This effect was greater than other individual-level background and school factors such as socio-economic status, geographic location and school type. Research into gender differences between Australian students has generally shown a link between attitudes to school and gender. The influence of school achievement also operates on early school leaving through the effect it has on students' satisfaction with school (especially among boys) and attitudes to achievement (especially among girls).<sup>14</sup>
- 13.11 Thus, Slade and Trent in 2000 reported that boys often find school a hostile, irrelevant and boring imposition that interferes with their lives outside school. It appears that boys are more likely than girls to act on a negative attitude towards school and leave.<sup>15</sup> Evidence also suggests that in the middle years, socio-economically disadvantaged young people are likely to become disengaged earlier than their more affluent peers.<sup>16</sup>
- 13.12 Of equal concern is the potential for disengagement of Indigenous students. The Queensland Commission for Children and Young People identified a range of factors contributing to poor educational outcomes in its submission:
- The schooling issues for Aboriginal and Torres-Strait Islander children are even more challenging. The Commission ... found low teacher expectations; school work difficulties; teasing and racism from other students; school alienation; lack of family support; language difficulties, and unrealistic goals to be major contributors to poorer educational outcomes.<sup>17</sup>
- 13.13 The NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues report, *Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage in New South Wales: Interim Report*, examined the main causes of low attainment and retention rates among Aboriginal students. The report considered factors that may improve the efficacy of educational service provision, such as:
- the importance of high expectations of students from teachers, family and community;
  - perceptions of the relevance of learning - including not being able to see the value of education if there are no job prospects;
  - the need for culturally appropriate methods of teaching; and
  - the importance of mentoring.<sup>18</sup>
- 13.14 Mr Jeffrey Richardson of the Dharah Girinj Aboriginal Medical Service informed the Committee of the link for Aboriginal students between engagement with school and their employment prospects:

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<sup>13</sup> 'Achievement' is measured by literacy and numeracy achievement at age 14.

<sup>14</sup> Marks, G.N. and Fleming, N. 1999. *Early School Leaving in Australia: findings from the 1995 LSAY Cohort*, Australian Council for Educational Research. Cited in Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.12.

<sup>15</sup> Slade, M. and Trent, F. 2000. 'What the boys are saying', *International Education Journal*, 2000. Cited in Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.12.

<sup>16</sup> Submission no. 4, Education Foundation Australia, p.1.

<sup>17</sup> Submission no. 103, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People, p. 3.

<sup>18</sup> NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues. 2008. *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in New South Wales: Interim Report*.

There is no reason for me as a young Aboriginal person to stay at school because what job am I going to get? My home country may be Rio, Tabulam, it may be Woodenbong. The chance of me getting a job there is absolutely remote. As a 15-year-old because I am probably more suited to going into a trade, our education system is not designed to hold me and hold my interest.<sup>19</sup>

- 13.15 Broader health and social issues may also impact on Indigenous students' capacity to learn and stay engaged with school. An example of this is the high rate among Indigenous children of *otitis media*, a hearing condition, which undoubtedly impacts on their ability to succeed in class.<sup>20</sup> Other factors such as exposure to domestic violence, or alcohol misuse, may also have an impact.
- 13.16 Accordingly, the most effective approaches to school disengagement will be those which address social as well as educational factors. ACER proposed that the following areas need to be addressed, in order to improve the educational outcomes for Indigenous students:
- the standard of living of Indigenous children and young people;
  - the health and wellbeing of Indigenous children and young people;
  - early childhood development of Indigenous children;
  - inter-generational effects of parental income, employment and education levels; and
  - the importance and recognition of Indigenous role models and leaders.
- 13.17 All of these factors have been identified as having a major effect on Indigenous students within the 9-14 year old age group.<sup>21</sup>
- 13.18 Children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds may also be at increased risk of disengaging from school, due to cultural and language barriers. For example, the Committee heard evidence of the risks of disengagement among young people in the Vietnamese community:
- The first thing is that for... the people who have just come to Australia less than five years, they come together with the family and one or two children. They are aged between 8 to 20. The young people go to school with limited English speaking and cultural differences between two countries... It is very difficult for them to adapt with the culture, language and communication in Australia. That is why sometimes they do not want to attend school any more. But most of them, from years 7, 8, 9 or 10, it is very hard for them to participate in the formal learning program like TAFE or go back to school.<sup>22</sup>
- 13.19 Histories of abuse or neglect may also be a barrier to educational engagement and achievement, particularly for children and young people in out-of-home care. Mental health issues relating to stress, trauma, anxiety or depression are common in children and young people who have experienced abuse and neglect, as are rates of externalising behavioural disorders, which may impact on relationships with peers and teachers at school. Mental health or behavioural issues may serve to mask gaps

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<sup>19</sup> Mr Jeffrey Richardson, Dharrah Girinj Aboriginal Medical Service, Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2009, p.6.

<sup>20</sup> Dr Andrew Dowling, Australian Council for Educational Research, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p.39.

<sup>21</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 11.

<sup>22</sup> Mr Peter Pham, Vietnamese Community Australia, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 17.

in literacy or numeracy - which are again disproportionately present among children and young people in care - and as a result, these issues may not be addressed.<sup>23</sup>

### Types of strategies required

13.20 The Committee considers that the middle years of school is a critical time in terms of disengagement from school, with students disengaging even in late primary school. Aboriginal students, students with language backgrounds other than English, students from low socio-economic backgrounds and students with histories of abuse and neglect are particularly at risk. A range of factors at individual, school and family level, such as poor literacy and numeracy, social marginalisation and lack of family support can contribute to disengagement.

13.21 Consequently, a multi-strategic approach is required to address disengagement from school, both in late primary and early high school. According to ACER, enhancing student engagement and improving learning across the middle years, particularly at transition points between primary and secondary schooling, requires:

- a positive school climate, one in which other students are seen as applying themselves to learning and enjoy being there;
- high quality teachers, who can encourage and challenge students to find and pursue matters that interest them;
- effective discipline and a safe and secure school environment;
- opportunities to apply their learning to the outside world, including the world of work;
- access to a range of extra- or co-curricular activities that provide opportunities for students to work together towards a common goal, to develop their social skills and enhance their sense of being a member of a community; and
- continuity of all of the above as they transition from primary to secondary school.<sup>24</sup>

13.22 The relationship between extra-curricular activities and educational engagement was discussed in a number of submissions. UnitingCare Burnside noted the positive impact of sport and other activities on school retention rates:

Schools that are local and have sufficient resources, are able to provide children and young people in the middle years with a safe and educative environment that helps them to learn important academic, social and emotional skills.

Integral to this holistic learning process is the universal availability of extra curricular activities such as sport, music and art. Burnside staff from all over NSW highlighted the positive impact of sport and activity engagement on school retention rates. These activities need to be provided at low or no cost so that their provision in NSW is truly universal.<sup>25</sup>

13.23 Participation in extra-curricular activities may be particularly important for students with a language background other than English. The Committee was informed of the activities needed to assist young people in the Vietnamese community:

Sometimes I tell [the Department of Education] to provide more training programs in the Vietnamese community like computer, sport activities, dancing, photography, outdoor

<sup>23</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 19.

<sup>24</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 19.

<sup>25</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 17.

activities or discussion to have them to get along with the education and to make a friend with others in our community, help them to improve their skills on culture, education, or help them how to deal with the people.<sup>26</sup>

13.24 Substantial evidence indicates that students who do not have positive personal and learning experiences in the middle years are at risk of becoming disengaged from school. Participation in sport and recreational activities may provide opportunities for children and young people in the middle years to develop additional social skills, to achieve and to have positive relationships with others. The Committee considers that the provision of extra-curricular activities for disadvantaged 9-14 year olds should be a high priority. This is discussed further in Chapter 3 of this Report.

### Existing programs

- 13.25 There are a range of NSW and Commonwealth Government programs and funding initiatives aimed at increasing engagement with school and school retention. This includes programs that are directed towards entire school populations, as well as those specifically for middle years students. It is critically important to examine the scope that exists within these established programs for ensuring adequate initiatives are in place for students in the 9-14 years age group.
- 13.26 Recently, an education reform process has been introduced through the Council of Australian Governments' *National Education Agreement*. As part of this process, large-scale initiatives will be funded through the *National Partnership Program*.<sup>27</sup> Schools funding will be complemented by over \$2.2 billion, comprising National Partnerships for literacy and numeracy (\$540 million); improving principal leadership development and teacher quality (\$550 million); and improving educational outcomes in low SES school communities (\$1.1 billion).<sup>28</sup> These partnerships include the participation of government, Catholic and Independent schools.
- 13.27 The NSW Implementation Plans for these National Partnerships have recently been released. In particular, the Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities* notes that the partnership will provide significant new resources to improve the educational outcomes of students in over 500 schools, approximately one in six schools in the state. The program will cover 14,400 Indigenous students, representing about one third of the total Indigenous students in New South Wales. Twenty per cent of the schools are 'small' schools, with an enrolment less than 52.
- 13.28 The submission from DEEWR provided information to the Committee about a range of Commonwealth programs that address engagement with school for specific age groups, including students in early high school.<sup>29</sup> These include the *Success for Boys* program,<sup>30</sup> *Youth Pathways*,<sup>31</sup> and *Connections*.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Mr Peter Pham, Vietnamese Community Australia, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 17.

<sup>27</sup> Council of Australian Governments. 2008. *Communique, Council of Australian Governments' meeting 29 November 2008*.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, pp.12, 18, 19.

<sup>30</sup> The program aimed to assist schools to access evidence-based professional learning intended to improve boys' learning outcomes and engagement with school.

<sup>31</sup> The program is targeted at young people aged 13-19 years who are most at risk of not making a successful transition through school and from school to further education, training, employment and active participation in the community.

- 13.29 At a state level, the importance of retaining students at school has been recognised through priorities in the NSW State Plan. These priorities include:
- priority F6, increase the proportion of children learning with skills for life and learning at school entry;
  - priority S4, increase levels of attainment for all students;<sup>33</sup> and
  - priority S5, have more students complete Year 12 or recognised vocational training.<sup>34</sup>
- 13.30 The *Education Amendment Act 2009*, which will commence on 1 January 2010, also aims to increase school retention by raising the school leaving age to the completion of Year 10 or the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first.
- 13.31 The importance of engaging and supporting middle years students at school has been recognised by DET, whose middle years strategy, *Our Middle Years Learners - Engaged, Resilient, Successful*, aims to engage and support students in ways that inspire them to be successful and to achieve their best possible learning outcomes.<sup>35</sup> The main actions of the strategy are:
- strengthening the effectiveness of transition from primary to secondary school for all students;
  - providing a challenging, cohesive curriculum across Years 5-9 including using the current primary school *Connected Outcomes Groups* model to develop integrated, across-faculty units of work in the early secondary years;
  - improving student wellbeing through implementing whole school approaches to pastoral care that build positive relationships, foster respect and responsibility and provide targeted early intervention and support;
  - exploring more flexible use of resources, including school staffing in the Middle Years, to enable schools to develop local solutions to local needs;
  - investigating innovative and flexible ways of using learning environments to meet the particular needs of Middle Years' students;
  - establishing 'communities of schools' in each school education area to work collaboratively on continuous improvement in Middle Years' education;
  - increasing teacher professional learning opportunities within and across schools that focus on the Middle Years;
  - increasing the innovative use of technology to support learning;
  - increasing learning choices and develop students' skill and confidence as technology users; and
  - improving communication with parents about student progress and commitment.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> The program provides education and personal development for young people aged 13-19 who are disconnected from mainstream schooling. *Connections* offers flexible, accredited education and training options delivered in supported community settings.

<sup>33</sup> Measured through levels of literacy and numeracy.

<sup>34</sup> NSW Government. 2006. *State Plan: a new direction for New South Wales*, Premier's Department, pp. 6, 50 & 54.

<sup>35</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2006. *Our middle years learners – engaged, resilient, successful*, p. 1.

<sup>36</sup> Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p.13.

- 13.32 While not specifically focusing on students in the middle years, the *Priority Schools Funding Program* and the *Priority Action Schools Program* support schools serving high concentrations of low socio-economic status communities in New South Wales. This is of particular importance given that socio-economically disadvantaged young people are at high risk of disengagement from school.
- 13.33 The Government has committed \$65.5 million a year between 2009 and 2012 to provide extra resources to 588 NSW public schools through the wider *Priority Schools Programs*<sup>37</sup> and *Country Areas Program*.<sup>38</sup>
- 13.34 The *Priority Schools Funding Program* provides additional assistance to school communities to reduce the achievement gap for students in schools with high concentrations of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds. The program focuses on improving students' literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes,<sup>39</sup> and the Committee heard evidence as to how the *Priority Schools Funding Program* helps disadvantaged young people improve their literacy and numeracy skills and engage with school:
- [DET has] a priority schools funding program that encapsulates 573 schools. Those schools represent the most needy 21 per cent of students in our State. Those schools are given additional funding. Their primary objective is to improve the literacy, numeracy and engagement of those students where you have an inclusive environment in a school where students are achieving success and work collaboratively with their community.<sup>40</sup>
- 13.35 Priority Schools with the greatest needs are provided with further support through the *Priority Action Schools Program*. These schools are targeted as centres of innovation for improved teaching and learning practices by way of specialised programs and new approaches to staffing and resource allocation.<sup>41</sup>
- 13.36 The objectives of the program are to support schools to build their capacity to:
- improve students' educational outcomes;
  - improve student behaviour and attendance;
  - support teachers through mentoring and induction programs;
  - support whole school approaches to improved teaching practice;
  - reduce high student turnover and increase retention to complete schooling;
  - reduce the impacts of socio-economic disadvantage; and
  - maximise interagency and community support.<sup>42</sup>
- 13.37 In September 2008 the Minister for Education and Training, Hon Verity Firth MP, announced the continuation of the program, with 74 schools to benefit. Schools in the

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<sup>37</sup> Since 2006, the *Priority Schools Funding Program* and the *Priority Action Schools Program* have been incorporated into the *Priority Schools Program*. NSW Department of Education and Training website.

<sup>38</sup> Hon Verity Firth MP, NSW Minister for Education and Training. 2008. *Rees Government injects \$16M into disadvantaged schools*, media release, 24 September 2008.

<sup>39</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training website.

<sup>40</sup> Ms Robyn McKerihan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p.34.

<sup>41</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training website.

<sup>42</sup> Groundwater-Smith, S. and Kemmis, S. 2004. *Knowing makes the difference: learnings from the NSW Priority Action Schools Program*, NSW Department of Education and Training, p. 1.

*Priority Action Schools Program* are eligible for \$360,000 each year, depending on the number of students.<sup>43</sup> In November 2008, it was announced that an additional 27 schools would also receive funding.<sup>44</sup>

- 13.38 A review of the *Priority Schools Action Program* has identified a range of positive outcomes. For example, most schools presenting test data on literacy and numeracy showed positive increases in learning outcomes for students. Many schools reported slight to moderate decrease in classroom behaviour problems, in some cases substantial improvements. Gains were reported in many areas relating to professional development outcomes for teachers, including classroom management, programming and leadership.<sup>45</sup>
- 13.39 Evidence provided to the reviewers of the program showed improved quality of contact, connections and communications between schools and students' families, the wider community, and other support agencies for students and parents. It also showed increased referrals of students and families by schools to outside agencies for assistance, and increased contact and communication between schools and these outside agencies.<sup>46</sup>
- 13.40 While the *Priority Action Schools Program* has achieved positive initial outcomes, the NSW Auditor-General's report, *Improving Literacy and Numeracy in NSW Public Schools*, noted that the program is designed to fund schools for only a limited number of years and is targeted at a relatively small number of schools when there is a much larger number that appear to need assistance.<sup>47</sup>
- 13.41 Another DET program which addresses disengagement from school has a major focus on Aboriginal students. The aim of the *Schools in Partnership* initiative is to support schools to build capacity and strengthen partnerships with Aboriginal community members and other agencies. The partnership aims to assist schools to improve the literacy, numeracy and participation outcomes of all students.<sup>48</sup>
- 13.42 About one in 10 Aboriginal children in schools benefit from these programs. According to DET, in 2006, \$65 million over 4 years had been provided in additional funding support for targeted Aboriginal education programs. The *Schools in Partnership* initiative is one of these programs, involving approximately 30 schools.<sup>49</sup> The program delivered positive results early in the life of the program, with the initial 10 schools in the program reporting improvements in literacy and numeracy levels, improved attendance and fewer suspensions. For instance, Dubbo West Public School recorded improved attendance, a significant increase in parental involvement,

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<sup>43</sup> Hon Verity Firth MP, NSW Minister for Education and Training. 2008. *Rees Government injects \$16M into disadvantaged schools*, media release, 24 September 2008.

<sup>44</sup> Hon Kaye Griffin MLC, Legislative Council *Hansard*, 14 November 2008.

<sup>45</sup> Groundwater-Smith, S. and Kemmis, S. 2004. *Knowing makes the difference: learnings from the NSW Priority Action Schools Program*, NSW Department of Education and Training, p. 5.

<sup>46</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>47</sup> Auditor-General, Auditor-General's Report: Performance Audit. 2008. *Improving literacy and numeracy in NSW Public Schools: Department of Education and Training*, p. 55.

<sup>48</sup> NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues. 2008. *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in New South Wales: interim report*, p. 145.

<sup>49</sup> NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues. 2008. *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in New South Wales: interim report*, p. 145.

and recently recruited a male Aboriginal principal to help engage the Aboriginal male students.<sup>50</sup>

13.43 All schools participating in *Schools in Partnership*, *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* and *Targeted School Initiative*<sup>51</sup> completed rigorous evaluation processes at the end of the 2007 school year. Improvements in learning outcomes, improved rates of literacy, numeracy and attendance, reduced suspension and significantly enhanced community engagement, have all been reported by schools participating in these targeted initiatives.<sup>52</sup>

13.44 The Committee notes that concerns were raised in evidence to the *Inquiry into Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage in NSW* by the NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc. (AECG), as to the small number of schools involved in the *Schools in Partnership* initiative and that there are none located in some of the areas of greatest Aboriginal need:

South-western Sydney has got 20 per cent of the government enrolments. Campbelltown has the second highest Aboriginal population in Australia where 14,500 Aboriginal people live. There is not one school under the Schools in Partnership program. Mind you, they would say that there are other equity programs because there are a lot of PAS [priority action school] schools out there because of the level of poverty that exists.

There are still a lot of Aboriginal people there. They would say that other equity programs attract that level of funding and they are catered for. Except you would have to argue about the level of funding that it attracts. It attracts funding for not only Aboriginal kids but for the highest number of refugees, the highest NESB [non-English speaking background] students. To try and do the whole lot in terms of equity programs, I am not sure of the results.<sup>53</sup>

13.45 The Committee notes that the middle years is a critical time in relation to disengagement from school and that students from low socio-economic backgrounds are particularly at risk of disengagement from school. Hence programs that aim to make a measurable difference to educational outcomes for students from low-socio-economic backgrounds during primary school and early high school are highly relevant to the performance of middle years students.

13.46 Evidence given to the Committee indicates that there are positively evaluated programs in place in New South Wales that impact on a range of outcomes for students from low socio-economic backgrounds, including Aboriginal students. The Committee recommends that such programs should be expanded to include more schools in disadvantaged areas, taking into consideration the spread of existing and planned programs such as those to be provided through the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities*.

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<sup>50</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training website. *A further 20 schools to join the 'Schools In Partnership' initiative*, 6 September 2006.

<sup>51</sup> In 2008, the Schools in Partnership initiative operated in 30 schools, the *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy*, in eight schools, and the *Targeted School Initiative*, in five schools. These programs provided a number of literacy and numeracy professional development and training opportunities for classroom teachers. NSW Department of Education and Training. 2008. *Annual Report 2008*, p. 12.

<sup>52</sup> NSW State Plan website. *Reporting progress Priority S4: increasing levels of attainment for all students*.

<sup>53</sup> NSW Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues. 2008. *Overcoming Indigenous disadvantage in NSW*, p. 36.



**RECOMMENDATION 39:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about expanding positively evaluated programs such as the *Schools in Partnership Program*, and the *Priority Action Schools Program*.

### ***Links to Learning***

13.47 The NSW Government also funds programs specifically directed towards young people in early high school who are at risk of leaving school early. For example, DET funds community organisations to operate *Links to Learning* projects supporting such young people in Years 7-12 (*Students at Risk* projects); and for unemployed people 15 to 24 years who have left school without completing Year 12 or its equivalent (*Early Leavers* projects).<sup>54</sup>

13.48 In 2009, there were 86 *Links to Learning* projects across New South Wales; of these 33 are for students at risk of not completing their education.<sup>55</sup> The submission from the NSW Government noted that anecdotal information from organisations operating projects indicated that a significant number of *Students at Risk* participants remain engaged with education.<sup>56</sup> The Committee was informed of some of the strengths of the *Links to Learning* program by the Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation:

*Links to Learning*... offers an alternate learning environment with the flexibility to customize programs to suit young people who for whatever reason are not engaging in the traditional education model.

... [it] provides an excellent opportunity for community based organisations, who most likely already have many of the participants as clients in their own services, to work with the schools and training providers to support the re-engagement of young people into education or acquire employability skills.

This program would be useful in more disadvantaged areas provided there was an appropriate community organisation to deliver. In many communities in far west NSW no youth service exists and community support programs are generally delivered through outreach service models.<sup>57</sup>

13.49 Murdi Paaki considered that the *Links to Learning* program is appropriate for Aboriginal students, and provided details of some aspects of the program which could be improved, such as overwhelming compliance requirements for the program.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p.16.

<sup>55</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 11.

<sup>56</sup> In 2007, 35 of these projects worked in partnership with more than 100 Government high schools to support more than 1,180 students in the 9-14 years age range.

Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p. 16.

<sup>57</sup> Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation Ltd, Correspondence in response to questions, 27 May 2009, p. 2.

<sup>58</sup> Murdi Paaki Regional Enterprise Corporation Ltd, Correspondence in response to questions, 27 May 2009, p. 3.

13.50 DET has advised the Committee that a full evaluation of Links to Learning was conducted in 2000 and the next full evaluation of the program is planned to occur during the 2010 to 2012 funding cycle to include the impact of the State Government's raising of the school leaving age proposal which comes into legislation on 1 January 2010.<sup>59</sup>

**Committee comment**

13.51 Anecdotal information suggests that a significant number of participants in the *Students at Risk* component of the Links to Learning program, which includes students from Years 7 to 12, remain engaged with school. Given this promising preliminary information, the Committee considers that the program should be evaluated as planned by DET and the results made publicly available, with a view to rolling it out more widely in disadvantaged areas.

**RECOMMENDATION 40:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about evaluating the *Links to Learning* Program and making the results publicly available.

13.52 Other programs are offered through non-government organisations for children and young people at risk of disengagement from school. UnitingCare Burnside informed the Committee about a NSW Government funded living skills program offered through Burnside's Family Learning Centre in Ermington. The *Children's Living Skills* program is based in metropolitan Sydney to build living skills for children and young people. It is a targeted service for children and young people who are at risk of disengagement from school.<sup>60</sup>

13.53 This program directly addresses risk factors by enhancing children and young people's ability to engage with those protective factors that are available to them, such as school social networks and positive adult role models. Importantly, it is offered as part of a 'wrap-around' service that works to address risk factors at the same time.<sup>61</sup> The program, for children 6 to 13 years of age, offers:

- after-school social skills and recreational groups;
- school-based social skills programs for whole classes;
- Breakfast Club;
- support for attendance at holiday camps; and
- occasional workshops and excursions.<sup>62</sup>

13.54 The Smith Family also conducts programs which provide educational support to students, including middle years students, through their *Learning for Life* Programs. *Learning for Life* workers support children by linking them with opportunities including

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<sup>59</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 11 June 2009. p. 11.

<sup>60</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 16.

<sup>61</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> Uniting Care Burnside website.

literacy support, mentoring, tutoring and personal development initiatives, in addition to financial scholarships to assist with essential school expenses such as uniforms, books and excursions.<sup>63</sup>

- 13.55 Engagement in school for the 9-14 age group has become even more important, with the raising of the school leaving age from 15 years to the completion of year 10 or the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first. The *Education Amendment Act 2009*<sup>64</sup> introduced a requirement so that every young person must participate in some form of education or training, or be in employment, from the time they complete year 10 until they reach 17 years of age.
- 13.56 As identified in the submission from ACER, in order to enhance student engagement and improve learning across the middle years, New South Wales students need: a positive school climate; high quality teachers; effective discipline and a safe and secure school environment; opportunities to apply their learning to the outside world, including the world of work; access to a range of extra- or co-curricular activities. There needs to be continuity of all of these as they transition from primary to secondary school.<sup>65</sup> The following sections address these issues in more detail:
- transition to high school programs;
  - homework assistance and tutoring;
  - teacher quality;
  - curriculum;
  - literacy and numeracy;
  - behaviour problems including truancy and bullying;
  - suspension procedures;
  - school counsellors; and
  - schools engaging with the community.

### Transition to high school programs

From the comfort of a primary school with one teacher per class, children are moved into an arrangement seeing up to 8 teachers per day. Transition to High School arrangements are of critical importance to support children at this stage of their development.<sup>66</sup>

- 13.57 The transition from primary to high school is a time of substantial change for children. The differing environments of primary and secondary school can be daunting, and for some children in the middle years it can be a difficult time. Children move from relatively small and personalised primary schools to larger, more impersonal, and independent learning based high schools, and are exposed to new peer groups. This transition is happening at a time when children are also entering into adolescence, which brings with it a range of physical, social and emotional changes.<sup>67</sup> As Professor Tony Vinson has stated:

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<sup>63</sup> The Smith Family website.

<sup>64</sup> Schedule 1 of the *Education Amendment Act 2009* amended s 21B of the *Education Act 1990*.

<sup>65</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p.19.

<sup>66</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p. 3.

<sup>67</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p.14.

At any time of life, a change of the magnitude of moving from primary school to high school would cause significant disruption; during early adolescence this is exacerbated by the developmental challenges the young people face.<sup>68</sup>

13.58 Given the importance of school-based protective factors, the way that the transition from primary to high school is handled by the school system may be critical to a young person's future health and wellbeing. The timing and nature of school transition can play a 'make or break' role in a young person's developmental trajectory.<sup>69</sup>

13.59 It is also a period when problems may start to become apparent as young people struggle to find their place in a high school system, as well as experiencing key adolescent development stages:

... if they are already doing poorly at primary school because of their language and literacy issues, because they are not getting support at home—not from lack of wanting to but simply because parents cannot help them—how are they going to manage when they get to high school and the whole environment with so much more on them being independent learners?<sup>70</sup>

13.60 The impact of school transition can manifest in a number of ways. For example, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People noted that children making this transition can suffer “a decline in their self-esteem, increased feelings of alienation and a decline in the quality of their relationships with teachers.”<sup>71</sup> The experience of transition to secondary school can also play a crucial role in retention in the school system and educational outcomes,<sup>72</sup> and have major ramifications for a young person's life adjustment, self esteem, health and future employment outcomes.<sup>73</sup>

13.61 While the transition to high school can be problematic for some, evidence given to this Committee indicates that many students do not encounter substantial difficulties dealing with the transition to high school:

Sometimes stress is overstated. By the time students get to the end of primary they are quite ready and looking forward to a change. In most cases the period of stress is rather short lived. A lot of time they adapt quickly and successfully to high school. The novelty factor helps. It is often after year 7 where difficulties arise, because there is that novelty.<sup>74</sup>

13.62 The Council of Social Service of New South Wales (NCOSS) also pointed out that the majority of young people manage the transition to high school well, but suggested that a smaller subset of students may find the transition to high school particularly difficult. This can include Aboriginal students, students with a disability, and students in rural areas. NCOSS referred to research which identifies the types of difficulties that can be encountered by 'at risk' students:

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<sup>68</sup> Submission no. 36, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, p.1.

<sup>69</sup> Hampshire, A. & Borer, A. 2005. Developing resilience at every stage of a young person's life. *Proceedings of the 9th Australian Institute of Family Studies Conference*, Melbourne, 9-11 February 2005, p. 3.

<sup>70</sup> Ms Carolyn Bourke, Fairfield City Library Service, Transcript of evidence, Fairfield 8 August, p. 15.

<sup>71</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 14.

<sup>72</sup> Submission no. 103, Queensland Commission for Children and Young People, p. 3.

<sup>73</sup> Submission no. 75, Mosman Municipal Council, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> Brother Peter Carroll, Trinity Catholic College, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 21.

A study of 1400 'at risk' students and young people found that their perceptions of schooling changed through the transition from primary to high school. Primary school was more enjoyable while high school became hard and relationships with teachers and peers changed. Many of this group eventually leave school early and so have higher rates of unemployment as well as greater contact with Police and the justice system.<sup>75</sup>

- 13.63 Many Aboriginal students and their families find the transition to secondary school difficult. The NSW Catholic Education Commission noted that, often these students have come from smaller, more community-like schools where they have a sense of belonging that flows from pastoral care approaches where Aboriginal students are 'everyone's concern'.<sup>76</sup>
- 13.64 The Catholic Education Commission suggests that issues could be addressed by use of appropriate diagnostic tools which assess literacy and numeracy proficiency in Year 7; schools raising their expectations of Aboriginal students' achievements; case management plans for those students who require them; and cultural awareness training for all school personnel, through student induction programs and buddy/mentor programs.<sup>77</sup>
- 13.65 In November 2008 the NSW Premier announced that the *Transition to Year 7* program, which helps primary school students make the move to high school, would be expanded from 30 public secondary schools and central schools in 2008 to 246 in 2009. The \$11.5 million program will be further expanded include all 463 public secondary and central schools by 2010.<sup>78</sup>
- 13.66 When asked by the Committee, to what extent are specific procedures in place as part of the *Transition to Year 7* program for Aboriginal children and children with a disability, DET replied that the *Transition to Year 7* initiative does not clearly state any specific requirements for the transition of Aboriginal students and children with a disability, but funding is provided to schools on the basis that schools will use their funds flexibly "to best meet the transition needs of students within their particular school contexts". In relation to Aboriginal children, there are also other initiatives and strategies in operation within the State to support improved primary-secondary transition.<sup>79</sup>
- 13.67 The transition to high school for children with a disability and the importance of appropriate information and preparation for families was discussed in the submission from the NSW Government. The submission also noted that the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care is developing a resource kit for families to help manage the transition period.<sup>80</sup> To ensure that there is adequate preparation time, review meetings are held by the end of Semester 1 for students with a disability who are expected to move to another setting at the end of the year. This planning time may need to be significantly increased in some circumstances, depending on the

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<sup>75</sup> Submission no. 16, NCOSS - Council of Social Service of NSW, p. 3.

<sup>76</sup> Catholic Education Commission, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 2.

<sup>77</sup> Catholic Education Commission, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 2.

<sup>78</sup> Hon Nathan Rees MP, Premier. 2008. *Transition to high school program gears up for 2009*, Media release, 17 November 2008.

<sup>79</sup> These include the *Schools in Partnership* initiative, *Targeted Aboriginal Students Strategy* and *Targeted School Initiative*, *Kids Excel* and *Youth Excel*.

NSW Department of Education and Training, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, pp. 2-3.

<sup>80</sup> Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p. 52.

educational needs of the particular student. The school principal is responsible to ensure that planning for transition from primary to secondary school occurs as required, and the learning support team in each school plans the way that students with a disability are supported and may also contribute to planning for student transition to Year 7.<sup>81</sup>

- 13.68 However, the Committee notes that the NSW Teachers Federation has indicated some concern about the current approach taken by DET in relation to transition of students with a disability to Year 7:

That there is no mention of students with disabilities or special needs is a glaring omission in the current policy. Teachers need accurate information for class placement, allocation of resources and to inform teaching practice. It is too late in Term 3 to find out that a student had been on a special reading program in the primary school when the parent is phoned to discuss a student's lack of engagement with the work.<sup>82</sup>

- 13.69 The Committee heard that providing the necessary support for students with special learning needs can be a more complex process, based on the experience of the Catholic Education Commission:

There is often quite a long transitional process for those students, which involves looking at collaborative information collection and assisting those students, often up to a year earlier, so they can transition successfully. Those students need extra support in the social/emotional area, and communication and finding their way around the schools, but there is also linking with outside agencies that are involved with those students so the transition can occur easily. There are also lots of equipment and access requirements for those students so the transition for them is quite lengthy at times.<sup>83</sup>

- 13.70 The submission from the GLD Support Group, NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children commented on the challenges for children and young people 9-14 years who are both gifted and learning disabled:

As they progress from primary school to high school, academic work demands more hours of sustained effort and students are presented with ever increasing organisational and time management challenges. The gifted and learning disabled child's giftedness can no longer mask the unidentified learning difficulties and previous coping strategies, such as memorisation, fail. When they can't cope, GLD children often find themselves labeled as "lazy" and "careless".<sup>84</sup>

- 13.71 Rural children transitioning to high school may encounter specific difficulties, such as geographic spread, the travel required involved and the 'dislocation' from known community:

... you just walk down the road to year 6 with a nice little friendly school environment, ...and then all of a sudden you move to year 7. You have to travel an hour on a bus. You have been split from your own classmates three ways. You arrive in a completely different town, probably one that you have not even been to at any other time, and you have a completely new set of rules. If you muck up you get to go home and hang out at the beach at the river beach... The temptation is just to get out. It is so hard.<sup>85</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 4.

<sup>82</sup> NSW Teachers Federation, Correspondence in response to questions, 4 May 2009, p. 4.

<sup>83</sup> Mrs Geraldine Gray, Catholic Education Commission NSW, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 16.

<sup>84</sup> Submission no. 34, GLD Support Group, NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children, p. 3.

<sup>85</sup> Ms Joanne Petrovic, Richmond Valley Council, Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2008, p.13. See also Submission no. 10, Port Stephens Council, p. 4.

- 13.72 A range of agencies are involved in improving the transition from primary school to high school for students with local transition programs developed by schools and by agencies such as councils, non-government organisations and private companies. A number of these programs have been funded through the *Better Futures* program, while others are part of a rollout of transition to high school programs being conducted by DET, or have been developed by Catholic or Independent schools. For example, in the Catholic education system, transition programs in schools are locally driven with a pivotal liaison role for school principals.<sup>86</sup>
- 13.73 As part of DET's middle years strategy, *Our Middle Years Learners – Engaged, Resilient, Successful*, every public school in New South Wales is required to establish a primary-secondary transition program.<sup>87</sup> *Transition to Year 7* enables schools to fund initiatives such as:
- establishing high school orientation and induction programs in every New South Wales government primary and secondary school;
  - introducing taster classes for Year 6 students, particularly in specialist secondary school science laboratories and design and technology classrooms;
  - improving data and information transfer on each student's academic and social strengths and areas for development;
  - improving pastoral care programs, including the use of home rooms for Year 7 where appropriate; and
  - establishing a designated transition coordinator in every New South Wales secondary and central school to manage the pastoral care, induction, orientation and data exchange programs.<sup>88</sup>
- 13.74 As mentioned earlier, the *Transition to Year 7* program will be expanded from 30 public secondary schools and central schools in 2008, to 246 in 2009, and to all 463 public secondary and central schools by 2010.<sup>89</sup>
- 13.75 Other programs are offered by private providers to help students through the transition from one education environment to another,<sup>90</sup> and some non-government organisations receiving *Better Futures* funding have developed initiatives relating to transition. Thus, the Committee heard that the *Dapto-Koonawarra* project in the Illawarra, which has focused on supporting the transition to high school and reducing the incidence of truancy and behavioural issues has been positively received in the community and by local high school principals.<sup>91</sup>
- 13.76 Mentoring and peer support are often used to support students in the transition to high school. Mentoring has been used successfully by Barnardos Australia for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds:

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<sup>86</sup> Mr Ian Baker, Catholic Education Commission NSW, Transcript of evidence 2 July 2008, p. 51.

<sup>87</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2006. *New Strategy To Help Students Make the Transition to High School*, media release 11 October 2006.

<sup>88</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 1.

<sup>89</sup> Ms Marianne Millan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p.36.

<sup>90</sup> Submission no. 33, Rutledge Solutions Pty Ltd, p. 7.

<sup>91</sup> Mr Paul Murphy, NSW Department of Community Services, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 27.

We often use mentors for kids who are going into [high] school. They will often chat with their kid about the meaning of this: what it feels like, how uncomfortable it is, how to find what you have got, where to put your books—all the things that very often if you come from a good, middle-class family they are doing for the kid going to high school.<sup>92</sup>

13.77 Another strategy described to the Committee included reducing the number of teachers with whom students in the early years of high school interact on a daily basis:

...the transition is not as great and the change is not as great as going from primary with two teachers to high school with eight teachers. In the middle school years, there are programs which are not so readily available in New South Wales as in other places. You could put that as a primary focus for the early years in high school.<sup>93</sup>

13.78 Ms Margaret Chittick of the Catholic Education Commission informed the Committee about the promising results of co-located schools integrating learning activities:

... where primary schools and secondary schools are co-located ... we have had pilot projects that have worked very well of, say, year six groups and year seven groups actually having integrated learning activities. The focus is on learning, but it is also a very effective tool for bridging the gap: developing for the year six's older mentors, because in a primary school up until year six the children have always been used to having someone older that might be a buddy or a wise person.<sup>94</sup>

13.79 Strategies to involve parents can be an important part of transition to high school programs, especially as this period is also a time of change for parents, who may have had a very different relationship with a child's primary school than is the norm with secondary schools:

We find there is a major difference between the ability for parents to be in contact with the local school and their child's classroom teacher from K to 6 to when they move their child into 7 to 10 ... when you walk up to the school, if your child is facing some issues and disengagement, you actually do not see the classroom teacher. You usually come to a wall of suits. I do not mean to be offensive. You usually have to get through the principal, the deputy principal and the head teacher before you can actually talk to the person who has that one-on-one relationship with your child. You want to develop that relationship with your own particular child. You two are the most significant people in their lives. That relationship breaks down from K to 6 to 7 to 12.<sup>95</sup>

13.80 The Committee notes that schools participating in the *Transition to Year 7* initiative in 2008-2009 reported a variety of strategies at the local level to inform and engage parents. Examples of these strategies include:

- Year 6 parent information sessions at primary schools, either during the day or in the evening;
- high school information sessions at primary school Parents and Citizens meetings;

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<sup>92</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p.10.

Peer support programs are also used within the Catholic education system: Mrs Lorraine Walker, Catholic Education Commission NSW, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 16.

<sup>93</sup> Brother Peter Carroll, Trinity College Lismore, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 51.

<sup>94</sup> Ms Margaret Chittick, Catholic Education Commission NSW, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 51.

<sup>95</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2009, pp. 62-63.



- high school meetings for new parents during Term 1, Year 7, either during the day or in the evening
  - targeted activities for Indigenous parents to encourage participation and partnerships
  - parent orientation programs, such as *How to help your child in Year 7*; and
  - parent workshops to encourage parent participation and support.<sup>96</sup>
- 13.81 Initial feedback from schools which received funding under the *Transition to Year 7* initiative in mid-2008 indicates a definite focus on the engagement of parents in the transition process, and a strong desire to improve and extend that engagement.<sup>97</sup> Moreover, awareness of the need for transition programs would appear to be increasing in the community.<sup>98</sup>
- 13.82 The availability and quality of transition to high school programs were also discussed in submissions, for example, in the Wollongong region and in the Blue Mountains.<sup>99</sup> Thus, Waverley Council noted the lack of consistency among transition to high school programs:
- We have no detailed information on how well or badly local schools are doing transition support but gather from anecdotal sources that it is a somewhat haphazard process left up to the discretion of each school...
- DET has a set of recommendations or guidelines relating to the key elements of Primary to High School transitions. Individual schools then implement or develop their own transition processes in conjunction with feeder schools in their area. There are no mandatory requirements on schools to do transition programs in any given way, so there are no reporting requirements either. This means that the delivery is random and ad hoc with some schools providing transition support well and others less so.<sup>100</sup>
- 13.83 The NSW Teachers Federation indicated its concern about insufficient resourcing of transition strategies:
- Top priority is that transition programs must not rely on teacher goodwill to pick them up as an additional responsibility – It needs to be properly resourced to pay for personnel to implement it, through releasing teachers at both primary and secondary schools to put the program in place, run it, evaluate it and maintain contact with students.<sup>101</sup>

### Committee comment

- 13.84 While a number of transition to high school programs are in place and appear to work effectively in some schools, implementation has been piecemeal and programs have yet to be implemented comprehensively across the State. The DET *Transition to Year 7* program will be further expanded from the initial 20 schools to include all 463 public secondary and central schools by 2010. It is anticipated that this should make

<sup>96</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 2.

<sup>97</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>98</sup> Ms Dianne Butland, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 30.

<sup>99</sup> On availability, see Submission no. 51, Wollongong City Council, p. 1, and Submission no. 74, Blue Mountains City Council, p. 3.

On quality see Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 10.

<sup>100</sup> Waverley Council, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 2.

<sup>101</sup> NSW Teachers Federation, Correspondence in response to questions, 4 May 2009, p. 2.

a major contribution to addressing issues raised in this Inquiry about transition to high school programs in NSW public schools.

- 13.85 The Committee notes that *Transition to Year 7* will be evaluated,<sup>102</sup> and considers that the evaluation of the program should assess levels of parental involvement, approaches to teaching and learning in the middle years, as well as transition processes for students with disabilities and Indigenous students. The results of the evaluation should be made publicly available.

### Homework assistance and tutoring

...young people between the ages of 9-13 are not being supported in their transition from primary to secondary school. The homework centre and early intervention programs at the neighbourhood level will assist young people to build confidence, healthy community values and successful educational outcomes.<sup>103</sup>

- 13.86 A number of submissions to the Inquiry discussed homework assistance and tutoring for students in the middle years. The Committee was informed that there is a considerable demand for tutoring from households where the parents do not speak English.<sup>104</sup> Community First Step runs a *Homework Help* program providing literacy, numeracy and homework support to students aged 8-12 years. According to their submission, this program has waiting lists of over 20 students and families who are predominately from non-English speaking background communities.<sup>105</sup>
- 13.87 With respect to the complex difficulties faced by students from refugee backgrounds, the Committee heard that it may be necessary to provide homework services not only to groups of students in community centres, but also to individuals within their own homes.<sup>106</sup>
- 13.88 Children and young people from disadvantaged backgrounds also have a greater need for homework assistance and tutoring. UnitingCare Burnside informed the Committee that such children are:
- ...less likely to have accessed early childhood education and care services which are crucial for assisting with diagnosis and treatment of learning difficulties. Burnside service providers work closely with pre-adolescents during late primary school to address undiagnosed learning difficulties and any resulting gaps in literacy and numeracy. This is an early intervention strategy to prevent disengagement from education in the early high school years.<sup>107</sup>
- 13.89 Randwick City Council pointed to homework/tutoring clubs as an example of services which are not affordable for low income families but which are particularly necessary for disadvantaged school children requiring additional assistance. The Council also suggested that such services ought to be made available away from the school environment, so that students using them will not be stigmatised by their classmates.<sup>108</sup>
- 13.90 Another group with particular needs for homework programs is Indigenous children:

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<sup>102</sup> Marianne Millan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 36.

<sup>103</sup> Submission no. 101, Albury City Council, p. 4.

<sup>104</sup> Ms Dale Donadel, Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 11.

<sup>105</sup> Submission no. 98, Community First Step, p. 3.

<sup>106</sup> Mr Ashur Isaac, Assyrian Resource Centre, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 16.

<sup>107</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 11.

<sup>108</sup> Submission no. 46, Randwick City Council, p. 2.

At present our focus is on severely disengaged young people from the school system. For groups who appear not to be able to take very good advantage of school, in particular, Aboriginal children, we are now running homework programs for such children, again to engage them in literacy and numeracy. We are doing this work in conjunction with and alongside schools because schools often do not have the resources to give the individual treatment that is needed.<sup>109</sup>

### Existing services

- 13.91 While DET does not have a state-wide strategy for homework assistance and tutoring, support programs for Aboriginal students are provided through the strategy known as *The Norta Norta Program*.<sup>110</sup> Schools receive additional funding to provide tutorial support to Aboriginal students identified as performing below the national standards in literacy and numeracy on the *National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy* (NAPLAN), in Years 3, 5, 7 and 9.<sup>111</sup>
- 13.92 DET in partnership with the University of Western Sydney, and the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation is involved in the *Refugee Action Support Program*, which aims to help humanitarian refugee children make the transition from Intensive English Centres to mainstream Australian high school. The program has a large tutoring component. The University provides the tutors, the Foundation provides funding and training for the tutors and DET provides funding for teachers and coordination.<sup>112</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers informed the Committee about the program:
- ...what we have got through the Refugee Action Support Program, as one example, is 80 secondary teaching students each year delivering 50 hours of tutoring each to three students. So, about 250 refugee students get about 50 hours of tutoring for free, and it is part of the teacher education of our students... We also have students who do what is called Circle Time, which is an emotional literacy mentoring program. Next year we are starting a program for undergraduates who are interested in teaching called Classrooms Without Borders, which is somewhat loosely based on *Médecins Sans Frontières* -doctors without borders.<sup>113</sup>
- 13.93 Professor Vickers also considered that the model could be expanded, by the involvement of other universities.<sup>114</sup> On this point, DET has advised the Committee that negotiations are underway between Charles Sturt University and the Australian Literacy and Numeracy Foundation to initiate a similar program in a Riverina high school with refugee enrolments.<sup>115</sup>
- 13.94 At the local government level, Fairfield City Library Service runs free homework centres in four of its locations on two evenings a week, as well as providing family literacy programs and on-line tutoring free of charge. However, these services are under great pressure to meet the demand.<sup>116</sup> Some local councils provide homework

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<sup>109</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 39.

<sup>110</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 10.

<sup>111</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers, University of Western Sydney, Transcript of evidence, 15 April 2009, p. 6.

<sup>114</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>115</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 11.

<sup>116</sup> Ms Carolyn Bourke, Fairfield City Council, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 19.

assistance and online tutoring through public libraries, as they constitute a relatively safe community space regularly frequented by 9-14 year olds. Fairfield City Library, for example, has free internet access for research for young people as well as free homework centres and online tutoring;<sup>117</sup> and Port Stephens Children's Library Services offers research and homework assistance and, in addition, it can connect students with live tutors for one on one tutoring.<sup>118</sup>

- 13.95 Port Stephens Council also informed the Committee that a *Learning for Life* worker has worked with local groups in the townships of Raymond Terrace and Karuah as part of the *Communities for Children Initiative* to give educational support to students. As part of this initiative, local VIEW Clubs donated books, stationery, and library bags which were distributed to families through local schools and community organisations.<sup>119</sup>

### Non-government services

- 13.96 Barnardos Australia informed the Committee that its homework centres are under enormous pressure to provide services for the 10-14 age group, and that additional homework and social support is needed for Indigenous children who drop out of school prior to high school.<sup>120</sup>

- 13.97 Programs assisting Indigenous students are provided by Barnardos Australia through the Urunga Learning Centre at Redfern and in the central west of New South Wales at Warren and Wellington:

You have individual help and assistance because there is little of it at home because your parents have not been through the same process... We also provide good nutritious food not just at afternoon tea. It is important. Kids learn better when they are properly fed.

...One of the things about tutoring is, and I think other charities also recognise this, that it is not something you can just provide to children. You are most effective if you do it in conjunction with adults, with the families of such children. If a child comes from a fairly seriously disadvantaged background with multiple problems in the family group.<sup>121</sup>

- 13.98 The *Barnardos Tutoring Program* utilises volunteers from the community to assist children from 6-16 years from disadvantaged backgrounds who have poor literacy and numeracy skills.<sup>122</sup> The program acknowledges the need to provide for individual tutoring in order to give the best possible homework assistance to children and young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

We have also been providing individual tutors because Barnardos, alongside a number of other charities, took the position that individual tutoring is often the best way for some children to make sure they can catch up. So we have run a variety of programs like this, sometimes in local libraries, a small homework group.

We ask for volunteers and people volunteer to become tutors. We select them carefully... In the school system, which has so many students in it, a child with particular difficulties gets left behind. There is a limited number of remedial teaching

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<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 15.

<sup>118</sup> Submission no. 10a Port Stephens Council, p. 9.

<sup>119</sup> Submission no. 10a Port Stephens Council, pp. 7-8.

<sup>120</sup> Submission no. 21, Barnardos Australia, p. 5.

<sup>121</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 39.

<sup>122</sup> Barnardos Australia website, *Kids Friends Tutoring Program*.

staff, and such children need quite intensive support. They also need encouragement: someone to say that it is possible for them too.<sup>123</sup>

13.99 The Burnside Family Learning Centre in Ermington provides literacy and learning support for children in local primary schools who have identified difficulties with literacy and numeracy as well as support for families. Activities include supported playgroups, tutoring, homework support and counselling services for parents.<sup>124</sup>

13.100 The Centre provides help with studies to children and young people who have experienced traumatic situations such as domestic violence, family break-up, or parental illness. Ms Racé Milic, aged ten, is one example of a young person who has encountered difficult circumstances and who has been positively assisted by UnitingCare Burnside:

I am in year 5. I go to Rydalmere Public School. I also attend Burnside Family Learning Centre where I have tutoring for one hour a week. My tutor's name is Tina. She helps me with maths and English and she has been helping me get through the year 5 basic skills test. I also go to homework group class with my sister, Maja. The homework group has helped us a lot. Since attending Burnside I have been to a lot of activities, which I would not otherwise have the chance to attend.<sup>125</sup>

13.101 The Smith Family provides a range of *Learning for Life* programs which target disadvantaged children at vulnerable transition points in their development, such as moving from home to primary school, and from school to further study or workforce entry. The Australia-wide network of *Learning for Life* workers aims to assist disadvantaged children by linking them with opportunities including literacy support, mentoring, tutoring and personal development initiatives, in addition to financial scholarships to assist with essential school expenses such as uniforms, books and excursions.<sup>126</sup>

13.102 Neighbourhood centres may also be a source of homework support in some localities. In its submission, the Gloucester Youth Advisory Committee, which advises the Gloucester Shire Council on youth issues, noted that:

Gloucester has a local Homework Centre Program run by the local Neighbourhood Centre which greatly assists many primary and junior high school students with attendances growing; however there is still a need for alternate approaches to school education for “at risk 13-14 olds” to assist their regular attendance and retention at high school until at least Year 10. Full time school counsellors will assist this area of deficiency in the meantime.<sup>127</sup>

## Funding

13.103 From the evidence presented to the Committee, it is clear that services encounter difficulties obtaining funding for homework programs. For example, Ms Lynnette Smith of Adult Community Education Inc. in Casino, informed the Committee that:

We ran a homework centre for three years on two nights a week, for open slather. It was run voluntarily. It ran out of our building and we coughed up the money for the electricity and computer use and so on. We had, on average, 38 Indigenous kids come

<sup>123</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 9.

<sup>124</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 49.

<sup>125</sup> Miss Racé Milic, UnitingCare Burnside Family Learning Centre, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p.13.

<sup>126</sup> The Smith Family website.

<sup>127</sup> Submission no. 71, Gloucester Youth Advisory Committee, p. 1.

to that program on two nights a week, week after week after week ... That was run because there was a need, but there was absolutely no funding for it. There was absolutely no help from Education whatsoever. But we had 38 kids coming, or 40, who then improved at school.<sup>128</sup>

13.104 The lack of a state-wide approach to funding for libraries providing home work assistance and similar support services for 9-14 year olds was of concern to Fairfield City Library Service. While libraries were taking up the opportunities to provide support services where possible, much more could be done across the State:

So there are opportunities, but it is a drop in the ocean. We have this ability and public libraries across the State are doing perhaps not all that we do here, because the council is actually very passionate about this area, but are offering similar kinds of services but with very little other than local funding, which is fairly arbitrary by what happens in each local environment; it is not a statewide look at these issues and that is one of the things that concerns us.<sup>129</sup>

### Committee comment

13.105 The evidence presented to the Committee indicates that 9-14 is a high risk period for disengagement from school when homework support and tutoring could help to prevent young people from becoming disengaged from their studies. Non-government organisations, as well as councils in metropolitan and regional areas have informed the Committee that while there is a need and demand for homework assistance programs for this age group, funding is difficult to obtain.

13.106 It is also clear that to date, the provision of homework support has been fragmented because of limited funding and the lack of a coherent state-wide strategy for homework support. The Committee considers that the provision of tutoring and homework support is an essential service for children and young people in the middle years who come from non-English speaking backgrounds, are Indigenous or who suffer from socio-economic disadvantage.

13.107 Therefore the Committee considers that the DET, in consultation with the DoCS should review the provision of homework support and tutoring provided to school students in disadvantaged areas, with a view to developing a state-wide strategy.

**RECOMMENDATION 41:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about the feasibility of reviewing the provision of tutoring and homework assistance particularly to disadvantaged students.

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<sup>128</sup> Ms Lynnette Smith, Adult Community Education Inc. North Coast, Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2008, p. 9.

<sup>129</sup> Ms Carolyn Bourke, Fairfield City Council, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 15.

## Chapter Fourteen - Teaching and Curriculum

Schools are active social systems, and children with positive relationships demonstrate positive behaviours. The teacher-student relationship is central in this system. Teacher education programs that draw upon the data showing that emotional support and attention to the student-teacher relationship, in fact, enhance children's capacities to learn could prove quite significant.<sup>130</sup>

### Introduction

- 14.1 Improving the quality of teaching is critically important to ensure that 9-14 year olds have a positive school experience and achieve their potential. Significant steps are now being taken at both Commonwealth and state level to address teaching quality.
- 14.2 This chapter considers policies and initiatives to improve teacher quality in the light of the needs of middle years students raised in evidence to this Inquiry. The importance of having a middle years curriculum which engages students' interests, seeks their input, and helps to build resilience is also discussed.

### Teacher quality

#### In the classroom

- 14.3 Extensive research conducted in Australia since the early 1990s shows that classroom teaching and learning practices are the single most critical factor in the achievement and engagement of middle years students.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, evidence suggests that more can be done to improve student achievement through improving the quality of teaching than by the increase or improvement of any other factor.<sup>132</sup>
- 14.4 McKinsey & Company discussed the impact of teacher quality in their 2007 report on best performing school systems in the United States:
- Ten years ago, seminal research... showed that if two average eight-year-old students were given different teachers – one of them a high performer, the other a low performer – their performance diverge by more than 50 percentile points within three years ... By way of comparison, the evidence shows that reducing class sizes from 23 to 15 students improves the performance of an average student by eight percentile points at best. Another study... shows that the performance gap between students assigned three effective teachers in a row, and those assigned three ineffective teachers in a row, was 49 percentile points... students placed with top-performing math teachers made substantial gains, while students placed with the worst teachers regressed — their math got worse.<sup>133</sup>
- 14.5 Children and young people themselves have identified the importance of teachers to their education experience. Consultations conducted by the Commission with children in the middle years identified the significance of teachers:

The relationships that teachers develop with children play a large role in determining attitudes about schooling, ongoing engagement with learning and consequently the

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<sup>130</sup> Submission no. 48, Regional Youth Development Officers Network (RYDON), p. 7.

<sup>131</sup> Submission no. 4, Education Foundation Australia, p. 1.

<sup>132</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 13.

<sup>133</sup> McKinsey & Company 2007. *How the world's best-performing school systems come out on top*, McKinsey & Company, New York, p. 12.

ultimate success or failure of the children they teach. Children want teachers who they can talk with, who are respectful and who will be fair.

*It's probably the individual teacher, like, their personality and that, that's what you get along with, teachers, their personality. [Boy, 13 years].<sup>134</sup>*

14.6 Good student-teacher relationships may also have an impact on the resilience of school students. The Centre for Children and Young People informed the Committee that the overwhelming response from students to the question "What would help you when things get tough at school?" was, "A teacher that knows me and likes me."<sup>135</sup>

14.7 The research evidence is also clear on a related matter. When it comes to measuring student achievement, teacher quality varies considerably, with the differences *within* schools often greater than the differences between schools and systems. Systemic issues influencing and hindering quality teaching include factors such as:

- pay systems that do not encourage or reward professional learning and skills;
- a tendency to appoint the least experienced teachers to the most challenging schools;
- inadequate links between teacher education institutions and practitioners; and
- varying induction and support for novice teachers.<sup>136</sup>

14.8 The NSW Teachers Federation stressed the need for resources to support quality teaching, including classroom aides and support, professional learning and development, and safe and practical teaching/learning environments and staff areas.<sup>137</sup> Other evidence to the Inquiry identified the additional resources required for English language support for newly arrived students,<sup>138</sup> and support for students with a disability.<sup>139</sup>

14.9 The need for teachers to use teaching methods suitable for students in this age range, particularly those with emotional and behavioural problems, was also identified in the submission from Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support:

Children and young people attending school in this age group (13-15 years) are at the highest risk of disengagement with their studies. From the experience of the staff at Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support, teaching methods at this level of schooling are often out of synch with the needs of their students, and in particular of those with emotional and behavioural disorders.<sup>140</sup>

### Quality teaching and learning practices

14.10 Several submissions commented on the need for professional development of teachers, including trainee teachers.<sup>141</sup> In its submission, the NSW Teachers Federation emphasised the importance of using pedagogical techniques, which are

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<sup>134</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 13.

<sup>135</sup> Professor Anne Graham, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p.5.

<sup>136</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 13.

<sup>137</sup> Submission no. 68, NSW Teachers Federation, p. 4.

<sup>138</sup> Ms Ricci Bartel, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 13.

<sup>139</sup> See, e.g., Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch, Institute of Family Advocacy and Leadership Development, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 23; and Submission no. 8, Discipline of Speech Pathology, University of Sydney, p. 2.

<sup>140</sup> Submission no. 59, Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support, p. 4.

<sup>141</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 32.



appropriate to avoiding disengagement among middle years students.<sup>142</sup> Similarly, the Commission considered that pre-service teacher training should include the development of the critical capacity to acquire and maintain friendly and respectful relationships with children.<sup>143</sup>

- 14.11 Both the NSW and Commonwealth governments are taking steps to address teacher quality. The Commonwealth Government, through COAG, has developed a *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality*, which aims to deliver reforms targeting critical points in the teacher 'lifecycle' to attract, train, place, develop and retain quality teachers and educational leaders. The National Partnership also acknowledges that school principals are pivotal to improving teacher quality and school quality, such that \$50 million will be dedicated to professional development and support for principals.<sup>144</sup>
- 14.12 Since 2006, the *Quality Teaching in the Middle Years* initiative has supported the professional learning of primary and secondary teachers of students in Years 5 to 9. This initiative, funded by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR), has focused on improving the quality of teaching and learning in five Australian Government priority areas, namely English/Literacy, Mathematics/Numeracy, Science/Technology, Civics/Citizenship, and Health Education.<sup>145</sup>
- 14.13 At the state level, the NSW Department of Education and Training (DET) *Quality Teaching* model is the key framework for quality teaching in NSW public schools. It is a key strategy for school leaders and teachers to use in creating learning environments that are relevant and engaging for students. A requirement of the DET's *Office of Schools Plan 2009-2011* is that all professional learning programs provided for school leaders and teachers incorporate the *Quality Teaching* model.<sup>146</sup>
- 14.14 DET has also participated in a longitudinal research study with the University of Newcastle - *Systemic Implications of Pedagogy and Achievement in New South Wales Public Schools* – which has explored the relationship between teacher professional learning and the quality of teaching and student achievement. Initial findings include that:
- teachers use the *Quality Teaching* model as a framework for collegial discussions on student performance, particularly engagement and understanding;
  - improvements in student performance are strongly linked to the dimension of intellectual quality;
  - raising the intellectual quality of pedagogy significantly benefited the achievement of students of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and students from low socio-economic status backgrounds;

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<sup>142</sup> Submission no. 68, NSW Teachers Federation, p. 3. See also, Submission no. 59, Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support, p. 4.

<sup>143</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 14.

<sup>144</sup> Hon Julia Gillard MP, Commonwealth Minister for Education. 2008. *Historic education reform agreement*, media release, 30 November 2008.

<sup>145</sup> NSW Department of Education, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 8.

<sup>146</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

- a significant improvement in authentic achievement for all students occurred when assessment tasks reflected elements of the *Quality Teaching* model.<sup>147</sup>
- 14.15 In addition, DET has identified eight professional learning programs designed to assist teachers to meet the needs of students in the middle years, which are registered with the Institute of Teachers as *Institute Registered Professional Development* and incorporate the elements of the *Quality Teaching* model.<sup>148</sup>
- 14.16 The NSW Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* was released in August 2009. It includes twelve areas of reform such as:
- providing additional professional development and support for teachers and principals;
  - attracting graduates and to create new pathways into the teaching profession;
  - further developing Indigenous education pathways;
  - nationally-agreed processes for accrediting/certifying Accomplished and Leading Teachers;
  - joint engagement with higher education providers to improve teacher quality.<sup>149</sup>

In addition, there are six 'reward reforms' which include, for example:

- improved pay dispersion to reward quality teaching;
- improved reward structures for teachers and leaders who work in disadvantaged rural/remote and hard to staff schools;
- improved in-school support for teachers and leaders, particularly in disadvantaged Indigenous, rural/remote and hard-to-staff schools.<sup>150</sup>

### **Committee comment**

- 14.17 The Committee supports the NSW Government's *Quality Teaching* initiatives and is very pleased to note the improvements in achievement of students from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent and students from low socio-economic backgrounds.
- 14.18 The Committee also notes that evidence has identified that there are a wide range of broader systemic issues, which are matters of concern, such as:
- recruitment and pay that impact on the quality of teaching;
  - the level of assistance available to teachers in areas such as English as a second language;
  - support for students with a disability;
  - adequate classroom facilities.

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<sup>147</sup> NSW Department of Education, Student Engagement and Program Evaluation Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 7.

<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 7-8.

<sup>149</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2009. *New South Wales implementation plans for schools national partnerships*. p. 16.

<sup>150</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 27-32.

- 14.19 The Committee is pleased to note that the NSW Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Improving Teacher Quality* will address some of the issues relating to reward structures for teachers and leaders.
- 14.20 However, it is of concern to the Committee that some evidence to the Inquiry indicates that teaching methods at this level of schooling are often not attuned with the needs of their students, particularly those with emotional and behavioural disorders. The Committee considers that it is critical that there is an emphasis on quality teaching for middle years students as it is a high risk time in relation to disengagement from school and as specific pedagogical techniques are required for this age group.

**RECOMMENDATION 42:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about strengthening the Department's current scheme on quality teaching in the middle years of schooling.

## Curriculum

Often we find that the curriculum gets changed only every 10 years, or whenever we remember that it has not had an update in the recent few years, and the connectedness from what they are learning in the classroom and what is reality for them outside of school needs to be addressed.<sup>151</sup>

## Relevance and appropriateness

- 14.21 In its 2009 report on the shape of the Australian curriculum, the National Curriculum Board<sup>152</sup> noted that over the past 20 years changes have occurred in the way in which people interact with each other, and in the skills that young Australians will need in a globalised world. The report concluded that:

Schooling must not only deal with these remarkable changes but also, as far as possible, *anticipate* the kinds of conditions in which young Australians will need to function as individuals, citizens and workers.<sup>153</sup>

- 14.22 The DET middle years strategy, *Our Middle Years Learners – Engaged, Resilient, Successful*, notes the importance of a program of study that is flexible, relevant and has direct links with real world issues for students in this age group:

During the Middle Years it is essential that students experience teaching of the highest quality. They need to develop both independence and the ability to work cooperatively with others. A program of study that provides flexibility, relevance and direct links to real world issues will offer the best framework within which learning can occur.<sup>154</sup>

<sup>151</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of New South Wales, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 62.

<sup>152</sup> The National Curriculum Board was replaced by the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority in May 2009.

<sup>153</sup> National Curriculum Board. 2009. *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum*, pp.5-6. Emphasis added.

<sup>154</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2006. *Our middle years learners – engaged, resilient, successful*, p. 8.

- 14.23 Despite the emphasis in policy on making the curriculum relevant to the real world, evidence to the Inquiry suggests that there is still a lack of connectedness between what students are being taught and their reality outside of school.<sup>155</sup> This is particularly the case with children and young people whose cultural references are not necessarily those of the wider community, such as Indigenous students and those from socio-economically deprived backgrounds.<sup>156</sup>
- 14.24 The Northern Territory Government provided information about approaches to middle years' curriculum taken in its jurisdiction, noting that the achievement levels of many students flatten out during the middle years and that many students disengage from their learning. The Committee notes that Northern Territory schools are now exploring various approaches to overcome the lack of connectedness through changes such as:
- structuring real life and integrated learning experiences based on student interests and experiences;
  - planning curriculum to link directly to learning outcomes;
  - providing opportunities for students to share responsibility for what they learn and how it is assessed;
  - developing standards and targets for students that include both performance and achievement elements; and
  - monitoring and assessing students against those standards and targets.<sup>157</sup>

### **Committee comment**

- 14.25 Evidence presented to the Inquiry indicates that middle years students need a curriculum that not only teaches them the requisite skills, but is relevant and shows them how what they learn can be practically applied. There needs to be sufficient flexibility to allow the curriculum to be taught in a manner which fully engages their interest and encourages them to learn. One way of making the curriculum more flexible and relevant, with direct links to the real world, is to provide opportunities for increased participation of students within the classroom and at other levels of the school system.

### **Input from children and young people**

- 14.26 Evidence to the Inquiry identified youth participation, involving young people in decision-making about issues that affect their wellbeing at school, is an important element of school connectedness.<sup>158</sup> Research indicates that school connectedness is an important protective factor, as has been discussed in Chapter 1.6.
- 14.27 The Commission suggested that teachers could facilitate students' feedback and encourage their participation in school policies, curriculum development, choice of subjects offered and the way subjects are taught.<sup>159</sup>

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<sup>155</sup> Ms Dianne Butland, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2008, pp. 30-31.

<sup>156</sup> Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 2.

<sup>157</sup> Submission no. 104, Northern Territory Government, pp. 6, 7-8.

<sup>158</sup> NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 4.

<sup>159</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, pp. 7-8.

- 14.28 Professor Vickers of the University of Western Sydney noted that there is considerable amount of evidence from research studies that children like their teachers more, and are more engaged in learning and more motivated if they have some level of choice in what they are doing:

For example, these are the four novels we will read this year in English. What order would you like to read them in? They are happier than if they are told just what to do. It is not difficult to move to a point where children are involved to a greater extent in having some level of decision making. That does increase their engagement and I think it is important that we work with teachers to make it clear that the old scope and sequence, straight down the line stuff is not effective with today's young people.<sup>160</sup>

- 14.29 She went on to suggest that the problem relates to the gap between the formal curriculum and the curriculum as it is taught:

... you could have an outcome and indicator combination, for example, "children will understand ecological systems and the interrelationships between plants and animals." In some schools this will be a scope and sequence exercise where somebody, the school principal, has decided that this is how it will be taught, and it is rolled out and the kids are not involved in any negotiation about the how, why, when and whatever.<sup>161</sup>

- 14.30 Greater input of students in curriculum development could also take place at the NSW Board of Studies level. The Commission identified that they have had some discussions with the NSW Board of Studies in relation to this matter:

In relation to the Board of Studies, they have has been talking with us about increasing young people's participation and the Board has made some progress. It has involved some young people on its committees, and this could be extended significantly.<sup>162</sup>

- 14.31 A new national curriculum for all Australian students from K-12 will be adopted from 2011 providing another opportunity for greater input of students into curriculum development. According to the National Curriculum Board, while the new curriculum will emphasise the fundamentals of a given learning area:

In other cases, teachers will be able to choose how best to introduce and develop increasingly deep understandings of concepts and processes, maximising the engagement and learning of every student they work with, every day.<sup>163</sup>

### Committee comment

- 14.32 Evidence to the Inquiry notes the importance of a curriculum that is relevant to middle years students and of giving students an opportunity to provide input into the way the curriculum is developed and taught. The Committee supports the participation of students in the implementation of the curriculum in the classroom and their participation in curriculum development at the NSW Board of Studies level. The Committee also considers that the establishment of the national curriculum offers an excellent opportunity for students to actively participate in its development and assist in making it relevant to the world in which children and young people live and learn.

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<sup>160</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers, University of Western Sydney, Transcript of evidence, 15 April 2009, pp. 3-4.

<sup>161</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>162</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, pp. 7-8.

<sup>163</sup> National Curriculum Board. 2009. *The Shape of the Australian Curriculum May 2009*, p. 10.

### Strengthening the curriculum - careers

14.33 Some evidence to this Inquiry points to the need for a greater opportunities for students, particularly in Year 7 and 8, to think about careers both through the curriculum and through programs and support staff for students. This can be a particular need for students from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds:

In some areas that is not a big deal because parents can step in but you have heard of the background of the parents in [Fairfield]. A lot of them do not speak English. A lot of them possibly do not have jobs so they do not know how to tell their kids to prepare for a job interview and have some life skills in that area. That can be quite difficult for our kids.<sup>164</sup>

14.34 Ms Carol Richardson of Fairfield Business Education Partnership told the Committee that there is not a lot of funding in schools for students in years 7 and 8 to actually think about careers:

It is left until years 9 and 10 and in a lot of the research that is being done years 7 and 8 are the time when the kids should be starting to think about it because then it affects their attitudes towards school when they get to the horrible stage in years 9 and 10. If there was more funding in schools for careers advisers, for example, who focus on years 10 and 12, and the in between ages just get left.<sup>165</sup>

14.35 As is discussed in Chapter 18 of the Report, children begin to undertake 'formal' work from age 12 years, either through sport-related activities or newspaper and pamphlet delivery before moving onto employment in fast foods and sales work at around age 14 years. Research by the Commission found that the inexperience of 12 to 16 year olds means that they need relevant, accessible information to make the transition from family and school into the world of employment.<sup>166</sup>

14.36 Other evidence to the Inquiry points to the need for subjects addressing life skills for middle years' students, such as financial literacy.<sup>167</sup> Currently, students in Years 7 to 10 can undertake core units covering commercial and legal aspects of employment and personal finance; and can participate in the *School to Work* program, designed to assist students to manage their transitions to a range of post-school options. However, the 2007 Annual Report of the *School to Work* program notes that participation in Years 7 and 8 had fallen from previous years, and that this "may be due to efforts being directed to other year levels."<sup>168</sup>

### Committee comment

14.37 Evidence to the Inquiry points to the need for students in Years 7 and 8 to be provided with advice about career pathways. The Committee considers that there is merit in broadening existing courses and programs by introducing greater emphasis

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<sup>164</sup> Ms Carol Richardson, Fairfield Business Education Partnership, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p.12.

Ms Richardson also noted that that for some students have considerable gaps in the skills required to make them more work ready, with children who had left school at 15 and without completing Year 8 who were unable to complete a basic application form.

<sup>165</sup> Ms Carol Richardson, Fairfield Business Education Partnership, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p.11.

<sup>166</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People. 2009. *ask the children, I want to work*, p. 8.

<sup>167</sup> See for example Submission no. 92, Ashbury Public School, p. 2; and Submission no. 91, St. Luke's Grammar School, p. 3.

<sup>168</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Vocational Education in Schools Directorate. 2008. *School to Work Program, annual report 2007*, p. 5.

in the curriculum on career guidance and personal finance to all students in Years 7 and 8. The Committee also considers that additional staffing needs to be provided to allow careers advisors and programs like *School to Work* to have a greater focus on the early years of high school.

**RECOMMENDATION 43:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority and the NSW Board of Studies about incorporating career guidance and financial literacy into the curriculum for all Year 7 and 8 students.

**RECOMMENDATION 44:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about providing additional careers advisors in schools and expanding the provision of career advice to students in Years 7 and 8.

### Strengthening the curriculum - resilience

Schools need to implement initiatives, specifically designed for 9-14 year olds, which develop resilience but are also interactive, interesting and informative.<sup>169</sup>

- 14.38 Strategies to build resilience can be implemented as part of the curriculum, as well as more broadly within the school environment. The Committee was advised that building resilience is already covered in some programs that are offered in schools, for example, the Commonwealth Government's *National School Drug Education Strategy* (NSDES) and the *Resilience Education and Drug Information* (REDI) suite of resources.<sup>170</sup>
- 14.39 The NSW Government commented in its submission about the role of the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education (PDHPE) learning area:
- Students have opportunities to explore issues that are likely to impact on the health and wellbeing of themselves and others such as mental health, drug use, supportive relationships, gender roles and discrimination. Learning is designed to be affirming and inclusive of young people who experience a range of challenges in managing their own health. Students have opportunities to develop connectedness and personal coping strategies for everyday life, all of which have been shown to be important protective factors for resilient adolescents.<sup>171</sup>
- 14.40 Similarly, the NSW Catholic Education Commission noted that while the PDHPE syllabus doesn't refer to resilience as such, the result is nonetheless the development of the skills of "decision making, problem solving, relationships, communicating, self

<sup>169</sup> Submission no. 97, Freeman Catholic College, p. 1.

<sup>170</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.19.

<sup>171</sup> Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p. 17.

awareness and self management.”<sup>172</sup> The Catholic Education Commission also noted that resilience-building strategies should be integrated into all curriculum areas.<sup>173</sup>

- 14.41 Other submissions supported the inclusion within the curriculum of specific targeted resilience programs.<sup>174</sup> Professor David Bennett of the NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health informed the Committee that there are approximately 40 programs that could be used to build resilience and positive mental health in children.<sup>175</sup> There is strong evidence of the effectiveness of some of these programs. Professor David Bennett discussed this with the Committee:

There are a number of such programs that have proven evidence of effectiveness. There is a very strong evidence base for some programs. The Resourceful Adolescent Program is 11 sessions for 13 to 15 year olds. That is universal. There is also an adolescent program that has a strong evidence base. There is a program called Friends, which targets anxious children, and that has also been shown to be an important and successful resilience-building program. There is another program called Adolescents Coping with Emotions, or ACE. Each has a strong evidence base and there are about 40 programs that could be used to build resilience and positive mental health in children.<sup>176</sup>

- 14.42 However, concern was expressed to the Committee that there are potential barriers to running resilience-building programs in schools. For example, Mission Australia advised that other curriculum priorities have led schools to decline to run its *Adolescent and Family Counselling Program* for 12-15 year olds within school hours.<sup>177</sup> On a different point, Blue Mountains City Council noted that outdoor programs such as that offered by Mountains Youth Services Team for young men and the *Better Choices* program for young women have been hindered due to lack of funding.<sup>178</sup>

- 14.43 Other evidence to the Inquiry pointed to a range of factors relating to the school environment that are protective of mental health. Professor Bennett informed the Committee that:

... we have to convey the notion that schools are an ideal setting to help to shape self-esteem and self-worth as well as promote effectiveness with children - not just as fodder for future work, but in terms of creating a healthier future adult population.<sup>179</sup>

### Committee comment

- 14.44 Evidence to the Inquiry has indicated support for the expansion of provision of targeted resilience programs in schools for this age group and that there is strong evidence of the effectiveness of some of these programs. The Committee notes that

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<sup>172</sup> Catholic Education Commission New South Wales, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p.3.

<sup>173</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>174</sup> See Submission no. 42, South Penrith and Youth Services (SPYNS), p. 2; and Submission no. 25, Lismore DGO Group, p. 2.

<sup>175</sup> Professor David Bennett, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 8.

<sup>176</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>177</sup> Submission no. 83, Mission Australia, pp. 3-4.

<sup>178</sup> Submission no. 74, Blue Mountains City Council, p. 3.

<sup>179</sup> Professor David Bennett, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 8.



there are barriers to implementing these programs in schools, including competing curriculum requirements.

- 14.45 The Committee considers that both targeted resilience programs as well as strategies to build resilience more broadly within the school environment are of particular importance to middle years students, given that it is a time when behavioural, academic and motivational problems may emerge and conversely adjustment to transitions in the middle years tends to foreshadow future educational attainment and personal wellbeing.

**RECOMMENDATION 45:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about implementing targeted evidence-based resilience programs.

## Chapter Fifteen - Literacy and Numeracy

...by the time students are 14 years of age, their levels of literacy and numeracy are strong indicators of future success. Students with high levels of literacy and numeracy achievement are more likely to continue at school and go onto well-paid jobs.<sup>180</sup>

### Introduction

- 15.1 Children and young people aged 9-14 years will enter an information-based, globalised workforce in which literacy and numeracy will, more than any time in human history, be a determinant of their economic and social success. This chapter will therefore focus on the current status of these skills, and the means to ensure that young people are appropriately equipped to face the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.
- 15.2 Research indicates that improving literacy and numeracy can have a positive effect on children and young people's wellbeing and ability to deal with every day tasks. For example, the NSW Audit Office noted in its performance audit on improving literacy and numeracy in NSW public schools, that improving students' literacy and numeracy can have a positive effect on their confidence, as well as their lifelong learning and health.<sup>181</sup>

### What is literacy in the 21<sup>st</sup> century?

- 15.3 The centrality of literacy to modern life is highlighted by its definition in the OECD *Programme for International Student Assessment [PISA]* as "understanding, using and reflecting on written texts, in order to achieve one's goals, to develop one's knowledge and to participate in society."<sup>182</sup> The complexity of literacy was explained to the Committee in the following terms:

Literacy, in general, is a fundamental predictor of success in life. By literacy I mean that there are different levels of literacy. Being able to read something is one level of literacy, but being able to read and understand it, or read it and critically appraise it and understand what your position is in relation to it, is a different type of literacy—the type of literacy for which schools should be aiming.<sup>183</sup>

- 15.4 Its particular relevance to 9-14 year olds was stressed by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations [DEEWR]:

The middle years are a complex time for students, while learners themselves are dealing with a number of complexities as they progress from late childhood to early adolescence, so too the curriculum becomes increasingly specialised, as do the languages and literacies associated with the ways meaning and knowledge are constructed and used.

In addition, the nature and definition of literacy is changing as a broader repertoire of knowledge, skills and capabilities are required than at any time in the past. Terms such as 'multiliteracies' and 'technoliteracies' have entered into the discussion of what it means to be literate in this century.<sup>184</sup>

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<sup>180</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2005. *Report of the consultation on future directions for public education and training: One size doesn't fit all*, p. 58.

<sup>181</sup> Auditor-General, Auditor-General's Report: Performance Audit. 2008. *Improving literacy and numeracy in NSW Public Schools: Department of Education and Training*, p. 1.

<sup>182</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, p. 27.

<sup>183</sup> Dr Andrew Dowling, Australian Council of Educational Research, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2009, p. 40.

<sup>184</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p. 6.

- 15.5 Literacy and numeracy levels of students in Australian schools are assessed against national and international benchmarks such as the PISA, the *Australian National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy*, and the International Association for the Evaluation of Educational Achievement's *Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study*.<sup>185</sup>

### Areas for improvement

- 15.6 Although the majority of NSW students perform well against these national and international benchmarks, both the tests themselves, and other evidence presented to the Inquiry, indicate that certain groups of children and young people do not perform as well as their student cohorts:
- Australia's lowest performing students are most likely to come from Indigenous communities, geographically remote areas and poor socio-economic backgrounds. About 40% of Indigenous students, 23% of students from the lowest category of socio-economic status and 27% of students from remote schools are not meeting a proficiency level in science that the OECD deems necessary to participate fully in a 21st century workforce and society... There are schools catering to students from remote, Indigenous and low socio-economic backgrounds that do perform well – and these examples provide the key to improvement across the entire education system.<sup>186</sup>
- 15.7 The performance lag of Indigenous children was noted by the Department of Education and Training (DET) in its submission:
- In Years 3 and 5, Aboriginal students are roughly 19 months behind non-Aboriginal students in their literacy learning. By Year 7, for many Aboriginal students that gap increases to somewhere between 30 and 36 months of learning.<sup>187</sup>
- 15.8 Evidence to the Committee from Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support noted that of some 21 students currently enrolled with their service, eight are in a situation of disadvantage and come from households with parents who receive government benefits. This level of disadvantage impacts on students' literacy level, which in turn impacts upon their ability to access services:
- ...students needs often include support with everyday tasks and activities such as reading bus timetables and filling out forms. However, this is a symptom of something much bigger that needs to be addressed on a much larger scale.<sup>188</sup>
- 15.9 A further area of concern raised in submissions was the literacy and numeracy levels for children with a disability. For example, Vision Australia observed that children who are blind or have low vision have much lower levels of literacy than that of their sighted peers and that there are disturbing trends apparent in relation to providing literacy through Braille.<sup>189</sup> Speech Pathology Australia noted that there is a 'significant prevalence' of communication disorders among children and young people in New South Wales, with a 2007 study showing that 13 per cent of primary and secondary school students within one school district in New South Wales presented with a communication disorder, and that there is substantial evidence to

<sup>185</sup> Ministerial Council for Education, Early Childhood Development and Youth Affairs website. *National Assessment Program (NAP)*.

<sup>186</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, pp. 6-7.

<sup>187</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2005. *Report of the consultation on future directions for public education and training: One size doesn't fit all*, pp. 58-59.  
See also Submission no. 7, The Smith Family, pp. 3-4.

<sup>188</sup> Submission no. 59, Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support, p. 6.

<sup>189</sup> Submission no. 82, Vision Australia, p. 4.

indicate these students are significantly more likely to have literacy problems and learning difficulties.<sup>190</sup>

### Outcomes of literacy problems

15.10 The common theme of evidence to the Inquiry was that the ability to not only read but to understand and apply what has been read has wide-ranging and long-lasting implications for children and young people in the middle years. In its middle years strategy paper, *Our Middle Years Learners – Engaged, Resilient, Successful*, DET noted that while technology has revolutionised the way in which young people communicate, it has also resulted in an increased need for reading and writing skills, with “speed, agility and in different genres.”<sup>191</sup>

15.11 DEEWR commented on the impact of literacy on outcomes for young people:

Specifically targeting those students who are falling behind is essential to ensure that they achieve positive outcomes in their adult lives. Literacy and numeracy skills are the most influential factor in Year 9 students staying on to complete Year 12, and in tertiary entrance performance. It is also important to focus on achieving improvement for Indigenous students, recognising the significant challenge and pressing need to improve their outcomes.<sup>192</sup>

15.12 More immediately, the submission from the Lismore DGO Group noted that there also appears to be a significant link between literacy skills and behaviour and truancy in high school environments.<sup>193</sup> Alternatively, the fear of being embarrassed in front of their peers can lead to students with literacy problems to act out in class, to mask the problem.<sup>194</sup>

15.13 Low literacy and numeracy levels can also impact upon a student’s sense of wellbeing. The submission from the Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University noted that, as literacy is generally taken for granted in the high school setting, there is:

... little acknowledgement in schools of the marginalisation and isolation that children and young people feel arising from their low literacy levels. In particular ... while it is well known that there are low literacy levels of children and young people in this age group, less is known and understood about the emotional consequences of low levels of literacy for children.<sup>195</sup>

15.14 Literacy in English can be a major issue for children and young people from non-English speaking backgrounds. Low levels of literacy and numeracy amongst children is often a cyclic issue in families where parents have low levels of literacy and numeracy skills and English language proficiency.<sup>196</sup>

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<sup>190</sup> Submission no. 23, Speech Pathology Australia, NSW Branch, p. 2. See also Submission no. 8, Discipline of Speech Pathology, University of Sydney, p. 1.

<sup>191</sup> NSW Department of Education & Training, *Our middle years learners – engaged, resilient, successful*, p. 2.

<sup>192</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website, *Importance of literacy and numeracy*.

<sup>193</sup> Submission no. 25, Lismore DGO Group, p. 1.

<sup>194</sup> See Ms Lynette Smith, Adult Community Education North Coast, Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2009, p.5.

<sup>195</sup> Submission no. 64, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, p. 3.

<sup>196</sup> Submission no. 98, Community First Step, pp. 2-3.

## Current programs

- 15.15 The importance of high quality teaching and a whole-of-curriculum approach to the teaching of literacy and numeracy was also raised in submissions to the Inquiry:
- High quality teaching has the greatest potential to influence student outcomes in literacy and numeracy. Teachers should have the skills and tools to meet the literacy and numeracy learning needs of every child. Supporting a highly qualified teaching profession, through specialised training in literacy and numeracy for all teachers, will help deliver improved outcomes for students.<sup>197</sup>
- 15.16 The national need to improve literacy and numeracy has been widely recognised. The 2008-09 Commonwealth Budget announced funding of \$577.4 million over 4 years to deliver a *National Action Plan for Literacy and Numeracy* outcomes. The centrepiece of this budget initiative is the National Partnership Agreement, with \$540 million to support the National Action Plan. An additional \$30 million has been allocated to fund Literacy and Numeracy pilots in low SES communities. All Australian governments (the Commonwealth, states and territories) are party to the Agreement, recognising that they have a mutual interest in and shared responsibility for improving outcomes in the area of literacy and numeracy and need to work together to achieve those outcomes.<sup>198</sup>
- 15.17 The National Action Plan aims to:
- assess all students by their teachers as early as possible in the first years of schooling;
  - develop early intervention strategies for those students identified as having difficulty;
  - develop agreed national benchmarks for years 3, 5 and 7 against which all children's achievement in these years can be measured and reported; and
  - provide professional development for teachers to support the key elements of the plan.<sup>199</sup>
- 15.18 The NSW Government has recently published its Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy*, which includes a focus on literacy for stage 2 (Years 3 and 4) and stage 3 (Years 5 and 6).<sup>200</sup>
- 15.19 At the state level, the NSW State Plan commits the Government to raising students' literacy and numeracy levels and improving the outcomes they achieve at school. The State Plan aims to:
- reduce the proportion of lowest performing students in literacy and numeracy in Years 3, 5 and 7 by 10 per cent by 2008, with a further 20 per cent reduction by 2016;

<sup>197</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website, *What the research tells us*.

<sup>198</sup> Council of Australian Governments. 2009. *National partnership agreement on Literacy and Numeracy*, pp.4, 5.

<sup>199</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations website, *National Literacy and Numeracy Plan*.

<sup>200</sup> See National Partnerships NSW. 2009. *New South Wales implementation plans for schools national partnerships: literacy and numeracy national partnership*.

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- increase the proportion of students meeting or exceeding national literacy and numeracy proficiency standards in Years 3, 5 and 7 by 10 per cent by 2012, with a further 5 per cent increase by 2016; and
  - close the 2004 gap between Aboriginal and all students in primary school [Years 3 and 5] numeracy and literacy rates by 2016.<sup>201</sup>
- 15.20 From 2006-2008, DET had in place a *State Literacy Plan*, the success of which was measured by improvement in student literacy achievements. In 2007, the overall literacy means and the writing means were the highest ever achieved for Year 7 and Year 8 students.<sup>202</sup> DET's State Office Directorate had also developed the *Literacy K-12 Policy* aligned to the *State Literacy Plan*, and had conducted focused professional learning programs such as *Literacy on Track* and *Literacy in the Middle Years*. In addition, an early career teacher induction program was developed for teachers of middle years students.<sup>203</sup>
- 15.21 The NSW *State Literacy Plan* has now been incorporated into the Office of Schools Plan 2009-11. This plan has six priority areas: literacy, numeracy, student engagement and retention, Aboriginal education and training, teacher quality and connected learning.<sup>204</sup>
- 15.22 In October 2008 a performance audit of the DET literacy and numeracy program was conducted by the NSW Audit Office. While the Audit Office was impressed with DET's focus on improving literacy and numeracy, it concluded that all children who are at risk of failing need:
- a full assessment and an individual learning plan for their improvement which can follow them in any move from school to school;
  - access to resources and support based on their individual needs and disadvantage, not based on the school in which they happen to be enrolled; and
  - a continuing record of their performance and the support they have received, so that teaching can be better tailored to their individual needs and their progress can be effectively tracked regardless of their location.<sup>205</sup>
- 15.23 The Audit Office also stressed the need for more intensive scrutiny of how underperforming schools are using their resources, what changes are being made, and their impact.<sup>206</sup> The Committee notes that DET has accepted all of the Audit Office recommendations, and that four project teams have been tasked with their implementation.<sup>207</sup>

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<sup>201</sup> New South Wales Government. 2007. *State Plan: a new direction for NSW, 2007 Updates*, Priority S4 - Increasing levels of attainment for all students.

<sup>202</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training Student Engagements and Program Evaluation, Correspondence Bureau, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 2.

<sup>203</sup> *ibid.*

The Office of Schools Plan notes that the *Middle Years Learners Strategy* for Years 5 to 9 remains an important guide for schools and regions, and that this strategy paper is to be updated and sharpened in its focus during the course of 2008-09

<sup>204</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2008. *The Office of Schools Plan 2009 – 2011*, p. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Auditor-General, Auditor-General's Report: Performance Audit. 2008. *Improving literacy and numeracy in NSW Public Schools: Department of Education and Training*, p. 1.

<sup>206</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>207</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2008. *The Office of Schools Plan 2009 – 2011*.

## Literacy programs for students in the middle years

15.24 In evidence to the Committee, concerns were expressed that, although there are some good literacy programs for very young children, these need to be continued through to the middle years:

Increasing literacy rates will help to provide better opportunities to young people. This has been encouraged along by the implementation of the NSW State Government's Learning Assistance Program. While a good initiative it needs to be rolled out to schools in regional and rural areas, in conjunction with broad community education of the existence of the program.

The NSW State Government Reading Recovery program is currently available to children in Year 1 only, who attend school regularly. Programs such as these should be available to older groups of children and young people, based on the competency of the child or young person, rather than age.

There is a lack of similar programs to address low levels of numeracy within this age group.<sup>208</sup>

15.25 The Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) submission also recommended expanding ongoing programs to middle years' students, recognising their diversity of needs, drawing upon research which found that discontinued supports dissipate early gains, particularly when the programs involve children and young people who are not achieving well in conventional schooling settings:

There appears to be a need to expand ongoing intervention strategies designed to meet the diverse needs of middle years students. Ways of maintaining intervention and support throughout the middle years need to be developed and introduced in all schools.

The evidence presented indicates that, in relation to literacy for students in the middle years, to improve the learning of children in NSW, quality teaching targeted to the identified needs of students and supported by quality teacher professional learning is paramount.<sup>209</sup>

## Committee comment

15.26 Evidence to the Inquiry indicates that literacy and numeracy skills are the most influential factors in Year 9 students staying on to Year 12. The Committee considers that quality teaching is fundamental to improving literacy amongst middle years

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<sup>208</sup> Submission no. 48, Region Youth Development Officers Network, p. 7.

The *Learning Assistance Program* provides students in regular classes in primary, secondary and central schools with additional assistance in literacy, numeracy and language, including those with significant learning difficulties, mild intellectual disabilities and language disorders; *Reading Recovery* is an early intervention to reduce reading and writing failure for students in Year 1. *Reading Recovery* is not generally considered to be a remedial reading program, but it is based on early identification to prevent reading failure occurring. See NSW Department of Education and Training website.

<sup>209</sup> Submission no. 50, Australian Council for Educational Research, pp. 31-32.

students, as has been discussed previously in this Report. However there is also a need for a greater emphasis on literacy programs for middle years students. The Committee welcomes the focus within the NSW Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Literacy and Numeracy* on students in Years 5 and 6, but also notes the importance of literacy programs for students with literacy problems in Years 7 and 8.



## Chapter Sixteen - Problems at School

School issues for this age group include difficulties with transition into high school and associated bullying and initiation. We see a number of 9–14 year olds who are then truanting from school, which leads to them falling behind with their education to the point that they then require tutoring to catch up.<sup>210</sup>

### Introduction

- 16.1 This chapter discusses problems at school including the behavioural issues that were most frequently raised in evidence, namely bullying and truancy; and then considers suspension from school, which is one of the most serious responses to repeated inappropriate behaviour. Finally, the chapter examines the use of school counselling as a way of addressing difficulties experienced by school students.

### Behavioural problems: Bullying

- 16.2 Increased recognition of the problem of bullying in Australia over the past two decades has led to a greater understanding of what constitutes bullying, its causes and effects, and the extent to which it exists in Australian schools.<sup>211</sup> Although its prevalence among children is hard to gauge - because it usually takes place in the absence of adults and because of the fears of the victims - evidence suggests that around one in six children between the ages of 7 and 17 years is bullied each week.<sup>212</sup>
- 16.3 Among the causes of bullying are family disharmony and child maltreatment; among its effects are physical harm, stress, anxiety, depression, and suicide.<sup>213</sup> The submission from the NSW Women's Refuge Child Support Workers noted that children who bully other children are often bullied in the home:
- The majority of children who experience or witness domestic violence ... often lack any social skills both with their peers and in the wider community in which they live ... Many resort to using bullying behaviour to achieve what they desire and the growth of bully[ing] programs flourishing in schools certainly lend a sad credibility to the experience of child support workers in NSW.<sup>214</sup>
- 16.4 In December 2008, the NSW Legislative Council's General Purpose Standing Committee No 2 established an inquiry into best practice approaches to reduce bullying of children and young people.<sup>215</sup> Having regards to the remit of this inquiry, the Committee does not intend to deal with bullying in great detail. However, as a number of submissions and witnesses expressed concern about bullying and the

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<sup>210</sup> Submission no. 21 Barnardos Australia, p.5.

<sup>211</sup> Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, *Key Information from the Literature About Bullying*, p. 1.

<sup>212</sup> *ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>213</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 2, 3 and 6.

<sup>214</sup> Submission no. 19, NSW Women's Refuge Child Support Workers, p. 11.

<sup>215</sup> The Committee is to report on best practice approaches to reducing bullying after inquiring into the nature of bullying; the causes of bullying; prevention strategies, including with respect to cyber bullying; inter-agency cooperation; the evidence base for effective anti-bullying strategies; and national and international approaches to combating bullying. See <[www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc2](http://www.parliament.nsw.gov.au/gpsc2)>.

harmful impact it has on children in the 9-14 years age group, this chapter will briefly address the issue.<sup>216</sup>

### Victims of bullying

- 16.5 Bullying can take the form of psychological or physical oppression.<sup>217</sup> The Immigrant Women's Speakout Association told the Committee that many families have told them that their children were being bullied at school because "they looked different, dress differently and were unable to speak English very well."<sup>218</sup> According to the Association, a *Kids Helpline* study found that bullying was the fourth biggest concern of children from non-English speaking backgrounds, and that such children made more calls about, and reported more incidents of, bullying than other children.<sup>219</sup> Similarly, Mr Jorge Aroche of the NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors (STARTTS) informed the Committee that bullying was a significant problem among refugee children.<sup>220</sup>
- 16.6 The Committee also heard that autistic children are prone to bullying because of their obvious differences from their classmates:
- They are very easily led because they think and are processing information in quite a different way. It is very easy to set them up and say to someone with Asperger's or to a young fellow to behave in a certain way, and he might do that, even though it is certainly not appropriate. One of the major effects of social impairment is social exclusion. Certainly from 9 years of age, people with Asperger's or children with Asperger's are very aware of the differences in their social difficulties. That leads to social anxiety and often avoidance and often anxiety and depression.<sup>221</sup>
- 16.7 The Commissioner for Children and Young People informed the Committee that while bullying affects children in both primary and high school, it is more often reported amongst primary school aged children, with evaluations showing that anti-bullying strategies are more successful if implemented in primary school.<sup>222</sup>

### Responses to bullying

- 16.8 Several submissions identified proactive education strategies for students as a key part of the solution to bullying in several submissions. For example, students from Hebersham Public School told the Committee that students need guidance on how to handle bullying:
- Bullying is happening all the time so we need to learn how to deal with bullies and how to make them understand that we will not put up with it. We need guidance from our teachers and families members to know how to handle bullies and how to be safe. This too is a fundamental value we learn at our school.<sup>223</sup>
- 16.9 Undoubtedly, parents are a vital means of support for children who are victims of bullying. However, evidence to the Committee suggests that parents need assistance

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<sup>216</sup> See, e.g., Miss Natalia M., St Francis De Sales Primary School, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 19,

<sup>217</sup> K. Rigby, quoted in Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Workplace Relations, *Key Information from the Literature About Bullying*, p. 1.

<sup>218</sup> Submission no. 62, Immigrant Women's Speakout Association, p. 19.

<sup>219</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>220</sup> Mr Jorge Aroche, STARTTS, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 18.

<sup>221</sup> Mr Anthony Warren, Autism Spectrum Australia, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 30.

<sup>222</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 13.

<sup>223</sup> Submission no. 96, Hebersham Public School, p. 19.

to support children when they are facing new forms of behaviours, such as cyber-bullying. Thus, the submission from Lismore DGO Group identified a need for more research, education and school programming to deal with cyber-bullying.<sup>224</sup>

16.10 Creating environments in which bullying is deemed unacceptable is another important response. Thus, the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) noted that strengthening relationships between children and teachers builds social cohesion within the school environment, which in turn can help in addressing bullying.<sup>225</sup> Parent Line - a telephone advice service for parents and carers of children - indicated to the Committee that there had been an improvement in the way schools deal with bullying, as evidenced by a reduction in the number of repeat callers, and in referral to outside sources for anti-bullying matters.<sup>226</sup>

16.11 For children aged 9-14, peers can also have a significant role in supporting victims of bullying.<sup>227</sup> Research indicates that the *Peer Support Program* conducted by Peer Support Australia assists students as they move from primary to high school; improves relationships with peers and teachers; and successfully changes attitudes about bullying:

The Peer Support Program is a universal intervention program and early intervention is paramount in decreasing the negative effects of bullying behaviours as one example of mental health concerns amongst young people. Effective intervention programs require whole school communities to work together to encourage a sense of belonging and the involvement of all members of the community.<sup>228</sup>

16.12 In 2003 the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs created the *National Safe Schools Framework* as a way of establishing a coordinated approach to addressing bullying, harassment and other forms of abuse in schools, which is now being implemented in schools in all Australian jurisdictions.<sup>229</sup> It is worth quoting the Framework's approaches in some detail:

The Framework recognises the need for sustained positive approaches that include an appreciation of the ways in which social attitudes and values impact on the behaviour of students in the school communities. Such approaches encourage all members of the school community to: value diversity; contribute positively to the safety and wellbeing of themselves and others; act independently, justly, cooperatively and responsibly in school, work, civic and family relationships; and contribute to the implementation of appropriate strategies that create and maintain a safe and supportive learning environment. It is underpinned by a set of guiding principles and related key elements or approaches that schools can put in place to effectively provide a safe and supportive learning environment.<sup>230</sup>

16.13 The Committee acknowledges the seriousness of bullying among the 9-14 age group, and looks forward to the findings and recommendations of the General Purpose Standing Committee No 2 inquiry into this important issue.

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<sup>224</sup> Submission no. 25, Lismore DGO Group, p. 3.

<sup>225</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 14.

<sup>226</sup> Submission no. 26, Parent Line, p. 6.

<sup>227</sup> Submission no. 5, Peer Support Australia, pp. 9 and 14.

<sup>228</sup> Submission no. 5, Peer Support Australia, p. 14.

<sup>229</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p. 9.

<sup>230</sup> *ibid.*

## Behavioural problems: Truancy

- 16.14 Another important form of inappropriate school-related behaviour among 9-14 year olds is truancy. Although statistics indicating the exact number of children and young people who truant on any given day in New South Wales are not available, it has been estimated that less than one per cent of school children miss school each day without an explanation.<sup>231</sup>
- 16.15 The ramifications of truancy to the 9-14 age group is twofold: first, children and young people are not being supervised by any responsible adults; and second, missing out on school means a limited opportunity to gain basic skills and knowledge which are vital for later success in life.<sup>232</sup> The difficulties that children face in the transition to high school may contribute to truancy in this age group. According to Barnardos Australia:
- We see a number of 9–14 year olds who are... truanting from school, which leads to them falling behind with their education to the point that they then require tutoring to catch up. Tutoring, however, is financially prohibitive for these families and so children are leaving school before they get their school certificate and have no jobs to go to. These young people require assistance with social support as well as educational assistance.<sup>233</sup>
- 16.16 The Committee understands that liaison officers are a key element of the manner in which the Department of Education and Training (DET) deals with truancy. Home School Liaison Officers (HSLO) are trained to work with truanting students and their families,<sup>234</sup> as part of an integrated response:
- ...if a student is not attending school, then they will not necessarily improve their learning outcomes. Any school that has an attendance level that is below State average must have an individual plan to address those attendance programs. That is negotiated with the school principal and the school education director and regional support is provided to the achievement of that.<sup>235</sup>
- 16.17 In addition, Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers work with Aboriginal students and their communities, including with respect to truanting.<sup>236</sup>
- 16.18 However, some submissions to the Committee commented on inadequacies in the DET response to truancy, especially with respect to the availability of HSLOs: Randwick City Council noted that there are only two HSLOs servicing all schools in the Eastern Suburbs of Sydney.<sup>237</sup> The Committee was also informed that some children and young people not attending school are not being followed up:

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<sup>231</sup> Hon J. J. Della Bosca MLC, NSW Minister for Education. 2007. *Legislative Council Hansard, Questions Without Notice*, 13 November 2007, p. 3894. The Minister noted that this does not necessarily mean that students are truanting, because they may in fact not have had the proper advice from parents in relation to sickness or other valid reasons for not attending.

<sup>232</sup> On this issue, see Delaney, K. 2005. *School's cool???*, Youth Action and Policy Association.

<sup>233</sup> Submission no. 21, Barnardos Australia, p. 5.

<sup>234</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education and Training, *NSW Public Schools: supporting students: attendance programs*.

<sup>235</sup> If a matter cannot be resolved at this level, it will be referred to the School Education Director, who would then refer that on for the consideration of some form of prosecution. Ms Robyn McKerihan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, pp. 34-35.

<sup>236</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, *NSW Public Schools: supporting students: attendance programs*.

<sup>237</sup> Submission no. 46, Randwick City Council, p. 2.

If young people are asked to leave a school [which often happens instead of being formally expelled], or do not re-enrol in school at the beginning of a school year, there is no follow up by the Home School Liaison Officer [HSLO]. There do not seem to be any reports generated that the young person is not at school [as they are not enrolled]. Similarly, if a young person stops going to a non-government school, and does not then go to a government school, it does not appear that there is anyone responsible for following this up. We are aware of many young people who are under the school leaving age but are not at school, often with their parents' knowledge.<sup>238</sup>

16.19 According to Barnardos Australia, accessing HSLOs through a formal application instigated by a school principal is problematic:

Principals may have a lack of incentive to access these services, for example, to assist in reinstating a troublesome child [often with complex needs and displaying very challenging behaviours] back to their school... we need a system in which non-government agencies, families and interested community members can provide input regarding children not attending school.<sup>239</sup>

16.20 The Committee notes that additional support for non-government organisations with innovative programs that have proven successful would also be of assistance in dealing with truancy. Ms Lynette Smith of Adult Community Education, Casino, told the Committee about her Centre's success with children who had experienced significant difficulties in the mainstream education system:

We run a program for kids who cannot or will not go to school basically. It tends to be the 12-plus group. The youngest child we have had in the program was 10 and was refused at all schools on the North Coast because of violent behaviour. This child was a dream. We had no problem with this kid whatsoever. We sat down when we started this program with 10 kids who were on the edge of being expelled from school. Within three months that had risen to 49 children because their friends, they brought their friends there because they said "It is not like school".

What we found initially was the first problems were the kids' literacy and numeracy were so low that you had children in year 7 who were only capable of doing year 1 and year 2 work. So you become a behaviour problem. Don't want to be the dumb kid in the class. I'll be the behavioural problem. I will be the class clown, whatever. So we sat down and we tried to address this problem as seriously as we could. One of the first things we did was actually talk to young people involved. One of the things that they complained about was rules—so many rules—rules about this, rules about that. So we sat down and we came up with three simple rules for the program.<sup>240</sup>

16.21 The Committee is pleased to note that the NSW Government's recently released child protection plan, *Keep them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing*, includes a commitment to provide 25 additional HSLOs by 2010.<sup>241</sup> The report also states that the Government will increase the number of Aboriginal Student Liaison Officers.<sup>242</sup>

16.22 On this point, Mr Ian Baker of the NSW Catholic Education Commission informed the Committee about the effect on Indigenous students of the lack of access to liaison officers in Catholic schools, and suggested that Catholic schools would also welcome the opportunity to be included within the *Home School Liaison Program*:

<sup>238</sup> Submission no. 21, Barnardos Australia, p. 5.

<sup>239</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>240</sup> Ms Lynnette Smith, Adult Community Education Inc., Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2008, p. 5.

<sup>241</sup> NSW Government, 2009, *Keep Them Safe: A shared approach to child wellbeing*, NSW Government, NSW, p. 9.

<sup>242</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

We have the situation where a family will have one child in a government schools and that child will have access to the home school liaison service and another child in a Catholic school will not. We endorse the recommendation in Keep Them Safe to expand the home school liaison service. We would like to be part of it.<sup>243</sup>

## Responses to behavioural problems

- 16.23 Research has shown that classroom behaviour management is both a significant factor in student disengagement, and is one of the main reasons teachers leave the profession.<sup>244</sup> A number of submissions expressed concerns about teachers' skills in engaging students with behavioural problems. Canterbury City Council identified a need to provide teachers with classroom management skills to appropriately engage with disruptive and unruly classroom behaviour;<sup>245</sup> while the submission from the GLD Support Group suggested that, the classroom practice needs to move beyond apparent behaviour problems to seek root causes for disruptive behaviour.<sup>246</sup>
- 16.24 Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support stressed the need for more training for teachers in NSW schools in relation to students with emotional and behavioural disorders. According to the submission:
- Students at L.M.A.S have experienced personal conflicts ... where teachers are untrained in special needs and therefore unable to handle such students. In several cases this has resulted in the home school not following the guidelines set by the DET, and therefore disadvantaging the students who are left without a home school.<sup>247</sup>
- 16.25 The Committee notes that the State Government has taken further steps towards addressing the issue of classroom behaviour management. In November 2008, an additional \$9 million was approved for DET to support students with complex needs, by establishing a specialist teacher presence in 265 schools in 40 communities of schools across the State in 2009.<sup>248</sup> These school learning support coordinators will provide support for students with complex additional learning needs, including students with reading and language difficulties and other learning and behavioural difficulties.<sup>249</sup>
- 16.26 DET has also advised the Committee that the *Behaviour, Learning and Teaching* program, a professional development relating to managing student behaviour has recently been accredited as a registered professional development program with the NSW Institute of Teachers. The program also provides support to school staff in managing student behaviour and learning.<sup>250</sup>

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<sup>243</sup> Mr Ian Baker, Catholic Education Commission, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 20.

<sup>244</sup> Giallo R. and Little E. 2003. 'Classroom behaviour problems: the relationship between preparedness, classroom experiences, and self-efficacy in graduate and student teachers', *Australian Journal of Educational & Developmental Psychology*, vol. 3, 2003, p. 21.

<sup>245</sup> Submission no. 102, Canterbury City Council, p. 3.

<sup>246</sup> Submission no. 34, GLD Support Group, NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children, p. 4.

<sup>247</sup> Submission no. 59, Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support, p. 4.

<sup>248</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 6.

<sup>249</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>250</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

## Suspension from school

16.27 One response to inappropriate student behaviour in the school setting is suspension: in 2007, 1.8 per cent of school children in New South Wales received long suspensions,<sup>251</sup> this figure rising to 4.4 per cent for students in Years 7 to 10. The two predominant reasons were physical violence and persistent misbehaviour, which accounted for 47 per cent and 40 per cent of suspensions, respectively. A regional breakdown of suspension statistics shows that the New England region has highest proportion of suspended students, while Northern Sydney region has the lowest.<sup>252</sup>

16.28 Unsurprisingly, evidence referred to the relatively high proportion of disadvantaged children who receive suspensions. UnitingCare Burnside informed the Committee that a significant number of children in their out-of-home care programs came into conflict with the school system:

In 2007 Burnside had 76 children and young people 5 – 16 years old in care.... Thirteen children and young people in Burnside services, aged between 10 and 16 years, were expelled or suspended from schools in 2007. This represents *approximately 17% or almost 1 in 5 children placed in our care were [sic] in conflict with the school system at this level.* The result was approximately 30 months of lost school time between the 13 children.<sup>253</sup>

## The suspension process

16.29 The DET *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures* (Suspension Procedures) outline the process to be followed for the suspension and expulsion of public school children in New South Wales. The aim of suspension is to enable students to reflect on, accept and work on changing their behaviour, while allowing time “for school personnel to plan appropriate support for the student to assist with successful re-entry.”<sup>254</sup>

16.30 Under General Principles, the Suspension Procedures stipulate that:

- the principal will consider the safety, care and welfare of the student, staff and other students in the class when deciding whether to suspend a student;
- in most cases, a range of appropriate welfare and discipline strategies will have been implemented before a student is suspended; and
- except for in serious cases, before suspending a student a principal will ensure appropriate support personnel have been involved, a specific behaviour management plan has been developed to assist the student, and a formal caution has been issued.<sup>255</sup>

16.31 A number of organisations informed the Committee about problems with the suspension process. For example, it was suggested to the Committee that there was a lack of state-wide consistency;<sup>256</sup> and that a more effective way for both teachers

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<sup>251</sup> Students may receive a short suspension which runs from one to four days, or a long suspension which can last up to 20 days.

<sup>252</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, *Long suspension and expulsion summary 2007*.

<sup>253</sup> UnitingCare Burnside, Questions answered after hearing, 11 June 2008, p. 7.

<sup>254</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, 2007, *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures*, p. 5.

<sup>255</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>256</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens’ Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 64.

and students would be to provide such early interventions as would negate the need for suspension at all.<sup>257</sup>

### Impact of suspension

16.32 The impacts of current suspension practices were outlined in several submissions. One of the key problems with suspension is its potential for reinforcing students' disengagement with the schooling process:

One can understand that schools are left with few options when they have children who behave in violent or difficult ways in the school or are totally non-social. However, for those students, they become increasingly disengaged not only from school but the whole of society. Unless we have more options for funded day programs to re-engage these children, you are not likely to see them get into high school and be effective ... For the senior age group it is also extremely important that day programs are provided, which ease them back into school.<sup>258</sup>

16.33 The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations also noted the cyclical nature of disengagement, suspension and increased disengagement:

...the longer we suspend a child the longer they become disengaged in schooling and we are nullifying the reason. Often there is risky behaviour or outstanding behaviour within a child because they are disengaged. Then we remove them from the school for a period of time and complicate the matter by disengaging them even further.<sup>259</sup>

16.34 In addition, children and young people who are suspended from school often lack adult supervision. Research finds that children under 13 that are regularly left to spend time alone or to care for younger siblings, can be at risk of injuries, developmental problems, further challenging behaviour and poor academic achievement.<sup>260</sup>

16.35 Suspending students may also have a deleterious impact on parents, carers and service providers. According to the Federation, the suspension process shifts school problems to the very families who are the least able to deal with the problems: in most cases these families are unable to support any school learning.<sup>261</sup> Barnardos Australia expressed concern that the overrepresentation of disadvantaged children further entrenches their disadvantage, as they "end up at home with stressed families (leading to increased conflict), hanging around on the streets, bored and without direction."<sup>262</sup>

16.36 These problems for parents/carers can be compounded by the lack of schoolwork given to suspended children, and suspension resolution meetings not occurring in a timely manner. Statistics provided by UnitingCare Burnside from their out-of-home care services indicated that in about 40 per cent of cases no schoolwork was provided to suspended students, and where it was provided there were several incidences of young people refusing to complete it.<sup>263</sup>

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<sup>257</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 8.

<sup>258</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 40.

<sup>259</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 64.

<sup>260</sup> Submission no. 48, Regional Youth Development Officers Network, p. 8.

<sup>261</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 61.

<sup>262</sup> Submission no. 21, Barnardos Australia, p. 5.

<sup>263</sup> UnitingCare Burnside, Questions answered after hearing, 11 June 2008, p. 4.



16.37 Ms Louise Voigt of Barnardos Australia pointed to the need to ensure that students return to school after their suspension. This requires working with the parents as well as children:

... many of these parents were never very keen on school to begin with. So try to ensure that those parents see school as being something, which may be of advantage to their children. Again, it is work with families.<sup>264</sup>

16.38 The Committee also heard that parents of suspended students need more support to deal with the suspension process:

... challenging behaviour is not only happening at school, it is possibly happening at home and we may have parents who do not feel confident to say, "Hey, this isn't working for me either. I need some help."<sup>265</sup>

16.39 Both UnitingCare Burnside and Southern Youth and Family Services spoke of the impact on support workers when young people are suspended. In correspondence to the Committee, UnitingCare Burnside noted that:

Residential Care services often do not have the staffing levels to address the young person's individual learning needs on a 1:1 basis. For some services there may be no staff available during the day... and the young person will be left entirely to their own devices. This is not satisfactory for the successful outcome of re-engagement with learning, and workers ask that consideration be given to allowing the young person to work out their expulsion time in the school, though obviously not in a classroom environment.<sup>266</sup>

16.40 Southern Youth and Family Services referred to the difficulties faced in assisting homeless students who are suspended, where the SAAP youth accommodation service may only have one worker on duty to provide additional supports.<sup>267</sup>

16.41 UnitingCare Burnside also expressed concern about children who are expelled even from behavioural schools, such that the only option is distance education. This is particularly problematic, given that suspended students often lack the requisite motivation, discipline and support. For students in care, distance education denies them the benefits of peer socialisation, reduces their chances of learning appropriate behaviours, and limits their access to individual remedial work.<sup>268</sup>

### Alternative approaches to suspension

16.42 UnitingCare Burnside has suggested that schools consider suspension in a separate area of the school, where school work could be completed and followed up, thereby making suspension less of a 'reward'.<sup>269</sup> The Federation of Parent and Citizens' Associations of NSW also pointed to the need for some programs for in-school suspension.<sup>270</sup>

<sup>264</sup> Ms Louise Voigt, Barnardos Australia, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 8.

<sup>265</sup> Ms Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 64.

<sup>266</sup> UnitingCare Burnside, Questions answered after hearing, 11 June 2008, p. 3.

<sup>267</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, p.10.

<sup>268</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 20.

<sup>269</sup> UnitingCare Burnside, Questions answered after hearing, 11 June 2008, p. 7.

See also Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 1.

<sup>270</sup> Submission no. 36a, Federation of Parent and Citizens' Associations of NSW, p. 2.

Problems at School

- 16.43 DET informed the Committee about suspension centres, which aim to assist students who are placed on long suspension to make a successful return to school. There are 22 of these established state-wide, supporting groups of schools that have high suspension rates.<sup>271</sup> Students who are most likely to benefit from the intervention, are referred by their school principal, to help them return to school as quickly as possible.
- 16.44 Suspension centres focus heavily on addressing the causes of poor behaviour and involve conflict resolution and self-esteem building, along with literacy and homework support. Data indicates that the majority of students who were sent to a suspension centre are benefiting from this program and are not being referred back to the centre.<sup>272</sup>
- 16.45 DET provided information about programs that have had an impact on numbers of suspensions. These include the *Positive Behaviour for Learning* program; a suspension pilot program in the Riverina region; and the *Steps 2 Success* program. In relation to the latter program, analysis of suspension data indicates a significant reduction in suspensions for all students, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.<sup>273</sup>
- 16.46 Mrs Geraldine Gray of the Catholic Education Commission also told the Committee about programs that were impacting on the number of suspensions:
- One of the largest [programs] would be the positive behaviour support program, which is a whole school program that looks at renewing school rules but in doing that having the students have a voice in what is required so they own the school rules. There is some evidence coming out that this sort of approach is improving general behaviour in a school, so slowing down the number of suspensions to start with.<sup>274</sup>
- 16.47 The Committee notes that DET has recently published a *Good Practice Guide* relating to the suspension process on the departmental intranet, providing support to schools in the following areas:
- working in partnership with parents and the community;
  - providing school work for students who are suspended;
  - developing re-integration plans for return from suspension;
  - adjusting the curriculum and teaching methods;
  - engaging and working with external support; and
  - developing and implementing support strategies for teachers
- 16.48 As schools have just begun working with the *Good Practice Guide*, feedback on its effectiveness has not yet been sought.<sup>275</sup>

**Committee comment**

- 16.49 Inappropriate behaviour in NSW schools can arise from a number of factors, including learning difficulties and a lack of self-confidence, as well as from social

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<sup>271</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 2.

<sup>272</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>273</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>274</sup> Ms Geraldine Gray, Catholic Education Commission, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 18.

<sup>275</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 4.

problems.<sup>276</sup> The Committee notes evidence to the inquiry indicating that disadvantaged children and young people are more likely to be suspended than their peers. This in turn impacts on the parents/carers of disadvantaged children and young people, who are often the least able to assist students or to engage productively with the formal schooling process.

- 16.50 The Committee considers that the most effective response to behavioural problems is one which engages students, families and the whole school community to address the underlying factors which contribute to such behaviour such as literacy problems and exposure to domestic violence, issues which are addressed in more detail elsewhere in this Report.
- 16.51 The Committee notes that concerns have been raised in evidence about some of the procedures relating to school suspension, such as the lack of provision of homework. The Committee welcomes the introduction of DET's *Good Practice Guide*, which provides support to schools in a number of areas relating to suspension procedures.
- 16.52 The Committee welcomes programs such as the *Steps to Success* program that address behavioural problems in the classroom and that result in reductions in more negative outcomes such as suspension from school. The Committee also notes that in relation to suspension centres, the majority of students attending are benefiting from this program and are not being referred back to the centre. Therefore the Committee considers that best practice models for reducing suspensions and improving outcomes for suspended students should be identified.

**RECOMMENDATION 46:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about monitoring compliance with its *Good Practice Guide* to ensure the appropriate implementation of its *Suspension and Expulsion of School Students – Procedures*.

**RECOMMENDATION 47:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about identifying best practice models with respect to reducing suspensions and improving outcomes for suspended students.

## School counsellors

- 16.53 One of the key early responses to the difficulties encountered by middle years students is in-school counselling. Many submissions to the Inquiry raised issues such as accessibility, quality, training and level of demand for school counselling

<sup>276</sup> Submission no. 33, Rutledge Solutions Pty Ltd, p. 4.

services.<sup>277</sup> Brother Peter Carroll of Trinity Catholic College made the following comments:

...I would not want to be in a school without a counsellor because they are so invaluable in terms of supporting students. They are under a lot of stress because of the caseloads that they have. But I do think that they are just invaluable.<sup>278</sup>

16.54 The students of St Francis De Sales School indicated that an advantage of having counsellors at school is that students can get to know them well, and so have confidence in discussing personal problems.<sup>279</sup> Their submission also explained how a comprehensive school counselling program can assist in building students' resilience, by working as a team with the teachers, parents and the community to "create a caring climate and atmosphere."<sup>280</sup>

16.55 School counsellors provide a source of expertise for school around particular issues and connections with local services. For example, school counsellors form an integral part of the DET autism strategy:

We have more than 790 school counsellors across the State... receiving specific training in the identification and support of students with autism. A very important component of that is the knowledge of what are the other government services, be they in the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Community Services or Health, so that the school counsellor can work with the parent to provide them with that information and to make those entrees to providing support for the family because it can be extremely demanding on a family with a young child who has autism or Asperger's tendencies.<sup>281</sup>

16.56 School counsellors also play an important role in the school-based support for students with learning or behavioural problems, by providing relevant information about the student's needs to be considered in referring students to other appropriate supports.<sup>282</sup> The *School-Link Program* coordinated by the Centre for Mental Health, NSW Health in collaboration with DET is an example of an existing training program that provides school counsellors with a network of connections with other local departments and services, thereby ensuring interagency support for families in the vital area of mental health.<sup>283</sup>

### Accessing counselling

16.57 Evidence to the Inquiry from children and young people themselves raised concerns such as the confidentiality of the counselling process and the concerns of students that their peers will find out they have accessed counseling services.<sup>284</sup> Several members of Young People Big Voice, the young persons' consultative committee of the Centre for Children and Young People, also expressed concerns about the quality of school counsellors:

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<sup>277</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 94, Castle Hill High School, p. 5.

<sup>278</sup> Brother Peter Carroll, Trinity Catholic College, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 23.

<sup>279</sup> Submission no. 95, St Francis De Sales School, p.13.

<sup>280</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>281</sup> Ms Robyn McKerihan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 36.

<sup>282</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 4.

<sup>283</sup> See Ms Robyn McKerihan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 37.

<sup>284</sup> Submission no. 64, Centre for Children and Young People, p. 4.

**Mr Rodwell:** School counsellors are textbook. You walk in, you sit down, they patronise you. They ask you a question, "Do you have daddy problems?" They do not actually listen. They read from the textbook, they get you out, they get the next kid in. They do not actually understand what you are going through.

**Mr Stevens:** They are not qualified for the job, I think. They are meant to counsel you but they do not. They just sit there and ask you question after question after question and say, "All right, see you next time." When you come back in the next day they ask you your name again. They do not even know you. It is just like classes, it is not actually helping out.<sup>285</sup>

16.58 Members of Young People Big Voice also noted that a well-known teacher may be preferred over a counsellor by some students:

**Mr Stevens:** You go to a school counsellor and you just do not know who they are. You are expected to let everything out. I would go to my roll call teacher. I have had her since year 7 and I know her quite well. I walk in the class and I go, "Hey, Mrs Crethar." You see her walking through the garden and you say hi to her. I trust her and I would go to her to talk to, but the school counsellor—

**Mr Rodwell:** A lot of school counsellors are not there all day, they are there for two hours. You hardly ever see them because they do not come out of their room, so there is no real bond. You do not see them in the playground and go, "Hi, how are you going? It was good having a chat." There is no real bond that is set up between seeing their face around and being able to talk to them outside of the formalities inside their room. When you are upset, when you are feeling down, when you feel like you need somebody to talk to, it is like talking to a book. That is all that it is.<sup>286</sup>

16.59 Mr Brett Paradise of the Northern Rivers Social Development Council noted that adults will often spend some time trying out a number of counsellors or psychologists before finding one they feel comfortable with, yet school students will often only have one counsellor available at their school.<sup>287</sup>

16.60 An issue of particular concern raised is the lack of school counsellor resources available, with an average counsellors/student ratio in NSW government schools of 1:1,050, and counsellors typically providing services to a high school and feeder primary schools.<sup>288</sup> For example, the Wood Inquiry noted that Bourke High School has the services of a school counsellor one day a week, with that same counsellor servicing Bourke Public School and the schools in Cobar, Nyngan and Brewarrina, hundreds of kilometres apart.<sup>289</sup>

16.61 Brother Peter Carroll of Trinity Catholic College stated that school counselling is under-resourced and reactive:

<sup>285</sup> Mr Tully Rodwell & Mr Ben Stevens, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 11.

<sup>286</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>287</sup> Mr Brett Paradise, Northern Rivers Social Development Council, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p.24.

<sup>288</sup> Australian Guidance and Counselling Association. 2008. *An Australia wide comparison of school counsellor /psychologist guidance services 2008*, compiled by the AGCA National Executive.

See also, Submission no. 64, Centre for Children and Young People, p. 4; Mr Brett Paradise, Northern Rivers Social Development Council & Ms Frances Trimboli, YWCA New South Wales, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, pp. 22-23.

<sup>289</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p.257.

Problems at School

I have a school of 1,200 students. We have one full-time counsellor and then a part-time person who is not strictly speaking a counsellor, more a home school liaison officer. The students respond very positively... There are a lot of stresses in the role and if there were more resources counsellors could be involved in more programs that are more preventative, instead of just reacting to what is going to them. That is very important, that schools have programs that are proactive, dealing with issues that they know are there and that they know will arise.<sup>290</sup>

16.62 The majority of NSW school principals share the view that existing school counselling services are inadequate, with a recent report finding that 82 per cent of principals considered that they are so inadequate that frequently all counsellors have time for is assessment/testing, rather than the needed therapy or support.<sup>291</sup>

16.63 Counsellors' limited time necessitates the prioritising crisis situations, and so they may find it difficult to allocate time to any but the most serious of problems. This in turn inhibits other students from accessing counselling services:

... students who do have needs ... are seeing kids who have behavioural issues going to the counsellors and they do not want to identify in the same way. So they are reluctant to access the service... So those kids are not being serviced at all. They probably would stay out of the system or not have continued issues if they just had that little bit of service up front when they needed it.<sup>292</sup>

16.64 A number of organisations and individuals recommended increasing access to school counsellors for children and young people in the middle years by reducing the student to counsellor ratio, particularly in disadvantaged areas.<sup>293</sup> The Committee notes that the Commission recommended increasing the minimum school counsellor/student ratio to 1:500,<sup>294</sup> in line with the recommendation made by Professor Tony Vinson in his 2002 *Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW*.<sup>295</sup>

16.65 The Wood Inquiry Report also stressed the need to fund more school counsellors, so that they can take on:

... an enhanced role... in supporting the child protection system, including undertaking regular home visits in the case of students who are known to be experiencing difficulties at home, or who are not attending school on a regular basis.<sup>296</sup>

### Committee comment

16.66 School counsellors have a critical role in the school environment, not only in relation to counselling students, but also role in the processes surrounding students with special needs and child protection issues. While the importance of this type of

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<sup>290</sup> Brother Peter Carroll, Trinity Catholic College, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 22.

<sup>291</sup> Public Schools Principals Forum. 2009. *Provision of services for special needs/ disabled students in NSW*, p. 8.

<sup>292</sup> Ms Frances Trimboli, YWCA New South Wales, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 23.

<sup>293</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 5.

<sup>294</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 15.

<sup>295</sup> NSW Teachers Federation and Federation of P&C Associations of NSW. 2002. *Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW – second report*, chaired by Professor Tony Vinson, p. 64.

The submission from the NSW Teachers Federation also supported Professor Vinson's recommendation: Submission no. 68, NSW Teachers Federation, p. 4.

<sup>296</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, pp.257-258.

support is widely acknowledged, concerns were raised about the quality of some schools counsellors and barriers to accessing school counsellors. While in some circumstances the quality of service provided by school counsellors may be the result of inadequate skills of the school counsellors, in many cases it may be the result of counsellors having excessive workloads.

- 16.67 The Committee notes that providing additional school counsellors would allow for a better quality service, with the attendant possibility of initiating school-based prevention and early intervention programs. Evidence given to the Inquiry suggests that peer support programs and mentoring programs are important early intervention programs, but they cannot replace the role of the school counsellor in supporting students with more serious problems, and in the school's overall responses to students with experiencing difficulties.
- 16.68 The Committee considers that a review should be conducted on the ways in which counsellors are currently utilised in schools, the approaches to counselling that work best for the 9-14 years age group and the optimum caseloads for school counsellors, with a view to substantially increasing the availability of appropriate counselling services.

**RECOMMENDATION 48:** The Committee recommends that the Minister for Education and Training conduct a review of the provision of school counselling, with a view to ensuring the availability of appropriate levels of school counselling services in NSW public schools.

The Committee further recommends that the Commissioner for Children and Young People be consulted about the provision of school counselling.

## Chapter Seventeen - Schools in the Community

Research demonstrates that effective schools have high levels of parental and community involvement. This involvement is strongly related to improved student learning, attendance and behaviour. Family involvement can have a major impact on student learning, regardless of the social or cultural background of the family.<sup>297</sup>

### Introduction

- 17.1 As discussed in Chapter 13, disengagement from school is not just about school, but can be a response to a complex range of factors both within and outside the school environment including matters such as personal and family issues, drug and alcohol abuse and mental health problems.<sup>298</sup> Research establishing links between socio-economic disadvantage and poor educational and other outcomes has led to a growing awareness of the importance of working with families and communities to improve educational outcomes. Accordingly, strategies to deal with factors both within and outside of the school require interconnected planning between school, family and community.<sup>299</sup>
- 17.2 Where schools, communities and service providers are able to establish effective partnerships, there is a much greater chance of developing comprehensive integrated responses to the needs of young people.<sup>300</sup> This chapter considers the current approaches being taken at Commonwealth and state level and includes reference to some best-practice models of school-community partnerships.

### Parent participation

- 17.3 An essential component of schools working with the community is the engagement and involvement of parents. While dynamic two-way partnerships between schools and family are considered the highest level of parental engagement, as the NSW Government submission noted, “even simple one-way communication between the school and home is also effective in managing problems.”<sup>301</sup>
- 17.4 Australian researchers have observed that providing parents with an opportunity to make significant contributions to important school decisions – and not just be token participants in social activities – strongly motivates them to contribute.<sup>302</sup> The NSW Government’s *Priority Schools Program* identifies three levels of such participation:
- Parent involvement is when the school keeps parents informed and parents play traditional volunteer roles at the school’s request. Parents play an important role in school activities but do not usually help to make educational decisions.
- Parent participation is when parents know what is happening at school and take part in educational decision making as well as more traditional volunteer activities. The school generally sets the limits of participation but it is the first step in building true partnerships.

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<sup>297</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. *family-school partnerships framework: A guide for schools and families*, p. 2.

<sup>298</sup> Submission no. 4, Education Foundation Australia, p. 5.

<sup>299</sup> Submission no. 4, Education Foundation Australia, p. 5.

<sup>300</sup> Spyns Inc. 2007. *Getting it together—making a difference with school and community partnerships*, p. 4.

<sup>301</sup> Submission no. 87, NSW Government, p. 38.

<sup>302</sup> NSW Teachers Federation and Federation of P&C Associations of NSW. 2002. *Inquiry into the provision of public education in NSW – third report*, chaired by Professor Tony Vinson, p. 3.



Partnership of home, school and community is a two-way process; a relationship based on mutual understanding and equality. It is when all partners share responsibility and obligations of decision making in appropriate ways.<sup>303</sup>

17.5 Families have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life, and the evidence shows that when schools, parents and communities do work in partnership, children tend to do better in school, stay in school longer and enjoy school more.<sup>304</sup> Moreover, research has shown that parent-school partnerships are a positive factor in managing the behavioural problems of children and young people;<sup>305</sup> and one of the common factors of highly effective schools:

...schools that achieve high standards regardless of gender, family background or socioeconomic status, have a number of features in common. One of these is a high level of parent, family and community involvement. In these schools, parents and families are encouraged "to take an active role in discussing, monitoring and supporting their children's learning. Parents are involved in setting goals for the school and in developing school policies."<sup>306</sup>

17.6 However, there can be a range of barriers preventing parents from being involved with schools and their children's education. These can include work commitments, lack of familiarity with the Australian school system and personal factors such as the parents' own experiences of the educational process.

17.7 Work commitments hinder many parents from spending more time participating in their children's education. The NSW Commission for Children and Young People noted that parents' involvement in their children's schooling can be affected if their work obligations mean they spend less time with their children.<sup>307</sup> This is particularly the case when both parents are working, such that school participation opportunities need to work around the times at which parents are available.<sup>308</sup>

17.8 As the parents of middle years children need to be able to feel comfortable when dealing with teachers and school administrators, difficulties can arise where the parents themselves see school as a foreign place.<sup>309</sup> Parents of children with behavioural issues may have had problems at school themselves, or may not have had much experience dealing with people in the wider community when it comes to engaging with teachers and school administrators.<sup>310</sup>

17.9 Parents may also have difficulty in negotiating with the school system if they come from culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and are relying on their children to communicate for them in the school setting.<sup>311</sup> It is also possible that parents do not understand the schooling system in New South Wales if they have come from

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<sup>303</sup> Priority Schools Programs website, FAQs.

<sup>304</sup> Hon Julia Gillard MP, Commonwealth Minister for Education. 2008. *Supporting families and schools to work together*, media release, 5 November 2008.

<sup>305</sup> NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 9.

<sup>306</sup> Macgregor, R. 2006. *Engaging with parents, families and community: the why and how of effective and sustainable partnerships*, p. 2.

<sup>307</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People p. 16.

<sup>308</sup> Ms Maren Wilson, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 65.

<sup>309</sup> Submission no. 36a, Federation of Parent and Citizens' Associations of NSW, p. 2.

<sup>310</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>311</sup> Ms Tairyn Vergara, Parkes Community Network, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 10.

other countries where there are different sets of expectations about the education system:

...when schools have tried to engage parents with information sessions and informed them about educational pathways and what they can expect from the school and how they can contact the school coordinator and get them to meet teachers, the more effective it is for parents to be a part of their children's life while they are at school and work with the schools in order to assist their children when they are going through difficulties.<sup>312</sup>

17.10 While all of these issues should be taken into consideration in devising the best ways of involving parents in the educational process, the Committee has heard that, to date, a coordinated approach has not been well implemented:

There are documents written about parent participation and recognition of its importance and it is stronger in primary schools and it very easily peters off in secondary schools. Yet that is the time in which that engagement is so important.<sup>313</sup>

### **Partnerships with community**

17.11 Schools can also create important partnerships within their local communities more broadly in order to address student needs, bringing services relating to health and wellbeing into the school domain. Schools can become a locus of service provision for the community and provide access to a range of services that might otherwise not be easily available for children and young people in the middle years.

17.12 Fundamental to this process is the creation of relationships between schools and service providers, which lead to coordinated service provision. According to the NSW Teachers Federation, children and young people need easier access to appropriate activities and support in order to develop resilience, together with support from relevant government agencies:

...this could be achieved by the representation of particular agencies on public school sites so that children and young people do not have to rely on transportation, parents/carers or restricted timetables in order to access them. For example, a young person who does not hold a driver's licence and does not live close to public transport and has to work a part time job on weeknights and weekends has difficulty accessing certain services. These services may include youth workers to provide social and emotional support and health workers to provide physical and mental health support.<sup>314</sup>

17.13 The Committee was provided with some examples of this already occurring, such as the school-located *FRESH* school holiday program for 8-12 year olds in Sydney.<sup>315</sup> However, the Committee also heard that there is a need for more joint programs in schools:

We are talking about a safe environment that we could use and utilise for young people. Schools are an ideal place. One of the keys would be to open up schools to be more community focused, not just look at it as an educational institution, but as a community place where we do these programs together. Some schools do that in a limited way; it would be good to encourage that more.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>312</sup> Mr Ashur Isaac, Assyrian Resource Centre, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 16.

<sup>313</sup> Ms Diane Butland, Federation of Parents & Citizens Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 32.

<sup>314</sup> Submission no. 68, NSW Teachers Federation, p. 4.

<sup>315</sup> Ms Julie Robinson, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 51.

<sup>316</sup> Mr Brett Paradise, Transcript of evidence 6 August 2008, p. 28.

## The current approach in New South Wales

17.14 The importance of schools engaging with parents and the broader community is identified in the Department of Education and Training's (DET) middle years strategy:

It is important that we create meaningful connections with parents, other schools, local businesses and industry, government agencies, community organisations, tertiary providers and others within the community in order to provide relevant, real world learning opportunities, effective student support and expand students' career horizons.<sup>317</sup>

17.15 The strategy contains commitments to strengthen communication and participation by parents, to provide increased opportunities for relevant, real world learning in the community, and to investigate new ways of strengthening partnerships with government and non-government organisations to further enhance student learning and support.<sup>318</sup>

17.16 This emphasis was reflected in a recommendation from the 2006 report of the *Family-School Partnerships Project*. This project, conducted by the Federal Department of Education, Science and Training, together with the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council, outlined a number of the positive outcomes of family-school partnerships. The study demonstrated that partnerships between families and schools have the potential to:

- improve educational outcomes for students;
- contribute to the building of social capital in the community;
- positively affect school culture;
- stimulate self-growth among parents; and
- enhance the professional rewards for principals and school staff.<sup>319</sup>

17.17 In August 2008 the Commonwealth Government launched the Family-School and Community Partnerships Bureau to conduct research, disseminate best practice and provide practical support and advice to parents, principals, teachers and others about how to build and sustain partnerships.<sup>320</sup> The Bureau assisted in rolling out the *Family-Schools Partnerships Framework*, which has been endorsed by all state Education Ministers. The Framework outlines how school communities can build effective family-school partnerships.<sup>321</sup> One of the Framework's key features is the establishment of Partnership Leadership Teams within the Government, Catholic and

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<sup>317</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2006. *Our middle years learners - engaged, resilient, successful*, p. 11.

<sup>318</sup> *ibid.*, p. 12.

<sup>319</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council. 2006. *Family-school partnerships project: a qualitative and quantitative study*, p. 14.

<sup>320</sup> Family-School & Community Partnerships Bureau website.

<sup>321</sup> The Framework contains:

- a vision for improved partnerships between families and schools;
- a set of principles to guide families and schools in developing partnerships;
- seven key dimensions of effective family-school partnerships; and
- a set of strategies providing practical guidance to school communities and school systems in implementing and fostering family-school partnerships

Independent school systems, the role of which is to coordinate the implementation of family-school partnerships in all schools under the aegis of the various systems.<sup>322</sup>

17.18 A number of witnesses before the Inquiry gave evidence of existing programs in New South Wales that have a strong emphasis on school-community engagement, such as the *Priority Schools Program* for the lowest SES schools within the State;<sup>323</sup> and the *Schools In Partnership* program for creating family engagement in Indigenous communities.<sup>324</sup> A particularly promising program is the *Schools as Community Centres*, which is dealt with in detail below.

### **Schools as Community Centres**

17.19 The NSW Government's *Schools as Community Centres* Program is a relatively successful and low-cost model that enhances school-community partnerships. The program operates through *Families NSW* in 47 targeted schools, supporting families raising children from birth to eight years and providing initiatives such as supported playgroups, parenting skills, and transition to school projects in partnership with families, communities, schools and the human services agencies. These initiatives have the following essential features:

- the centre is located in a school;
- there is a facilitator at each site who reports to the State Steering Committee;
- a local management committee has representation (regional or local managers) from the participating NSW Government Departments;
- local projects focus on families with children from birth to eight years with a focus on the years before school; and
- a community development approach is adopted to implement the program.<sup>325</sup>

17.20 *Schools as Community Centres* generate a wide range of programs. For example, the Thou Walla Family Centre at Irawang Public School in Raymond Terrace works in partnership with a range of local service providers, offering services such as *Arvo Club* for school aged children; a Department of Housing Drop In clinic; and *Dads in Distress*, a support group for men dealing with separation, child access and depression.<sup>326</sup>

17.21 The Committee notes that *Schools as Community Centres* projects have been subject to evaluation, which has found that they were successful in:

- developing strong links with local communities;
- facilitating increased interagency communication and cooperation;
- reducing parents isolation and increasing their self confidence;
- improving school readiness amongst children participating in the project;

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<sup>322</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations. *Family-schools partnerships framework: a guide for schools and families*, p. 14.

<sup>323</sup> Dianne Giblin, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 65.

<sup>324</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers, University of Western Sydney, Transcript of evidence, 15 April 2009, p. 4.

<sup>325</sup> *Schools as Community Centres* do not necessarily provide out-of-school-hours care, although an out-of-school-hours care provider may be co-located at the school site: The R.E. Ross Trust. 2006. *Linking schools and early years services. section four: a review of international and Australian models*. Prepared by Centre for Community Child Health, Royal Children's Hospital, Melbourne, p. 22.

<sup>326</sup> Submission no. 10a, Port Stephens Council, p. 3.

- increasing referrals to local services; and
- increasing enrolments in transition to school programs.<sup>327</sup>

17.22 Evidence to the Inquiry from the Commission supported the expansion of *Schools as Community Centres* across more primary schools:

It would be desirable to increase sites of Schools as Community Centres in Primary Schools because they have demonstrated positive outcomes for children, their families and community, including positive transition to school; community capacity building; increased confidence and skills for parents; and positive connections between schools, families and students.<sup>328</sup>

Similarly, the Wood Inquiry identified a benefit in greater use of this model:

The purpose of the Centres is to operate as hubs for family support and development. Having a point of contact at these locations can allow a softer and coordinated entry into services for those families who need assistance, but who have not reached the stage of statutory intervention.<sup>329</sup>

17.23 In addition, that the expansion of the *Schools as Community Centres* program into secondary schools was supported by the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW;<sup>330</sup> Network of Community Activities;<sup>331</sup> and the Commission for Children and Young People, provided that the model was successfully trialled and evaluated in high schools.<sup>332</sup>

17.24 The Committee notes that in 2009 an evaluation of the *Schools as Community Centres* service model will commence along with a review of 30 individual *Schools as Community Centres* projects;<sup>333</sup> and that strengthening the *Schools as Community Centre* concept is one of the strategies identified in the NSW Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities*.<sup>334</sup>

### Committee comment

17.25 The *Schools as Community Centre* model appears to be a relatively low-cost model for enhancing school-community partnerships in disadvantaged areas, and has been positively evaluated. As it is currently targeted towards children 0-8 years, the Committee considers that the program should be substantially expanded to allow for existing and new sites to include primary school aged children up to the end of Year 6. In addition, evidence given to the Inquiry supports a piloting the program in high school with a view to widespread implementation.

<sup>327</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity, Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p.8.

<sup>328</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, p. 8.

<sup>329</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 3, p. 995.

<sup>330</sup> Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of NSW, Questions answered after hearing, 17 March 2009, p. 1.

<sup>331</sup> Robyn Monro-Miller, Network of Community Activities, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, pp. 35-36.

<sup>332</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, p. 9.

<sup>333</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training, Access and Equity. Questions answered after hearing, 2 July 2008, p. 8.

<sup>334</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training. 2009. *New South Wales implementation plans for schools national partnership*, p. 72.

**RECOMMENDATION 49:** The Committee recommends that, pursuant to s 11(d) of the *Commission for Children and Young People Act 1998*, the Commissioner for Children and Young People consult with the Minister for Education and Training about expanding the *Schools as Community Centres* program to include late primary students in disadvantaged schools, and trialling and evaluating the program in high schools.

**Best practice models: The UK *Extended Schools* Initiative**

17.26 In examining best practice models for school-community partnerships, the Committee noted the effectiveness of the United Kingdom Department for Children, Schools and Families' *Extended Schools* initiative. One in three schools in the United Kingdom is now participating in the initiative, which is aimed at improving outcomes and raising standards of achievement for children and young people by providing access to extended services in partnership with voluntary, private and independent providers.<sup>335</sup>

17.27 Part of the United Kingdom *Every Child Matters* and national childcare agendas, *Extended Schools* aims to provide access through schools for all children to the following core services by 2010:

- a varied menu of activities (including study support, play/recreation, sport, music, arts and crafts and other special interest clubs, volunteering and business and enterprise activities), in a safe place, for primary and secondary schools;
- childcare 8 am – 6 pm, 48 weeks a year for primary schools;
- parenting support, including family learning;
- swift and easy access to targeted and specialist services such as speech and language therapy; and
- community access to facilities including adult learning, ICT and sports facilities.<sup>336</sup>

17.28 *Extended Schools* offer access to a range of services from 8 am to 6 pm, 48 weeks a year including school holidays. Not each school will need to provide all of these activities or supports on site – access can be through a cluster of local schools, or through other providers.<sup>337</sup>

17.29 Evaluation of *Extended Schools* has shown that there is strong evidence of the positive impact on children and young people's motivation, behaviour and engagement with learning, as well as their health and social outcomes. A guide to *Extended Schools* outlined some of the evidence:

Almost all of the extended provision... was found to be effective in meeting the range of needs of children, young people, families and adults in the local community, and addressed all five outcomes of *Every Child Matters*.

<sup>335</sup> Every Child Matters website.

<sup>336</sup> UK Department for Children, Schools and Families. 2008. *Publicising your extended services: a toolkit for schools, local authorities and their partners*, p. 3.

<sup>337</sup> UK Department for Children, Schools and Families. 2008. *Extended schools: building on experience*, p. 2.

There is considerable evidence that extended schools have led to improvements in the attainment, engagement in learning, and self-esteem of children and young people living in disadvantaged circumstances and those in difficulties. In doing so they narrowed – and in some cases eliminated – the achievement gap for the most disadvantaged children.<sup>338</sup>

17.30 The *Extended Schools* program demonstrates the effectiveness of a well-funded school-community initiative with widespread implementation that addresses the need for childcare in primary school and access to activities after school, including study support in high school. Services are also offered in school holiday periods.

### Low socio-economic status school communities

17.31 The Committee heard evidence to the effect that partnerships with the community are particularly important in areas of high disadvantage.<sup>339</sup> Thus, the 2006 *Family-School Partnerships Project* proposed that remote areas and areas of social and economic disadvantage be considered priority areas for the promotion of the family-school partnerships referred to earlier in this chapter.<sup>340</sup>

17.32 All Australian Governments have recently endorsed the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities*, a component of which is the provision of access to extended services through schools. The Agreement will provide \$438 million to NSW schools over five years, and aims to transform the educational process in the most disadvantaged communities, by improving student engagement and attainment, and to begin to overcome entrenched disadvantage in these communities.<sup>341</sup>

17.33 A number of possible reforms are set out in the National Partnership Agreement. Some of these reforms target school operational arrangements, which encourage innovation and flexibility; others work towards creating external partnerships with parents, other schools, businesses and communities and the provision of access to extended services. Indicative actions linked to these reforms include:

- allowing schools greater scope to tailor operational arrangements to local needs;
- parental engagement strategies, in line with the national *Family-School Partnerships Framework*;
- partnerships with local community groups and other agencies to ensure that students have access to appropriate pastoral, health and welfare, employment and other services support;
- partnerships with businesses to broaden the horizons of students, support educators and provide employment links with businesses;
- partnerships with other schools, including shared facilities and joint initiatives; and

<sup>338</sup> VCS Engage. 2008. *Extended schools guide: engaging the third sector in the extended schools programme*, p. 3.

<sup>339</sup> Ms Robyn McKerihan, NSW Department of Education and Training, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p.34.

<sup>340</sup> Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, et al. 2006. *Family-school partnerships project: a qualitative and quantitative study*, p. 27.

<sup>341</sup> NSW Department of Education and Training website.

- brokering a range of services for students and families, including co-location of some services like early childhood facilities, linking employment services to schools and referring parents to family support programs.<sup>342</sup>

17.34 The Committee notes that the NSW Implementation Plan for the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities* was released in August 2009 and that one of the optional reforms relates to the development of partnerships between schools and external agencies.<sup>343</sup>

### Committee comment

17.35 The Committee considers that there is a need for DET to have an overall funded strategy to ensure that all public schools - and particularly disadvantaged schools - have the capacity to develop and implement meaningful school-community partnerships. This is particularly important given the significance of effective school-community partnerships on education and welfare outcomes, as well as the availability of additional funding through the National Partnership Agreement. A Partnerships Leadership Team, described earlier in this chapter, would be well positioned to develop and implement such a strategy.

17.36 In developing a school-community partnerships strategy, the following factors should be considered:

- the geographic spread and adequacy of the resources of existing programs like the *Priority Schools Program*, the *Schools in Partnership* program and the *Schools as Community Centres* program;
- the geographic spread of schools receiving funding from the *National Partnership Agreement on Low Socio-economic Status School Communities* that implement reform 6 aimed at strengthening external partnerships;
- other models such as the *Extended School* program in the United Kingdom, which can inform the type of programs provided; and
- the demand for and availability of activities after school and out of school hours care in particular locations.

17.37 Moreover, schools with a substantial percentage of Indigenous student enrolments should be prioritised when developing a school-community partnerships strategy for New South Wales, and student consultation and participation should be factored into its design, implementation and evaluation.

**RECOMMENDATION 50:** The Committee recommends that the Department of Education and Training develop an overarching strategy to support public schools to further implement and evaluate school-community partnerships in

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<sup>342</sup> Council of Australian Governments. 2009. *National partnership agreement on low socio-economic status school communities*, pp. 11-12.

<sup>343</sup> See National Partnerships NSW website. 2009. *New South Wales Implementation Plans for Schools National Partnerships*, NSW Department of Education and Training.



all disadvantaged areas in New South Wales.

## Chapter Eighteen - Employment

Work and family stress reverberates back into family life; onto children, and onto extended family members. It affects the ability of workers and their families to participate as fully as they might like in their communities. At the workplace level, it has consequences for all workers through increased rates of colleague absenteeism, illness, reduced productivity and stress.<sup>344</sup>

### Introduction

- 18.1 The years 9-14 are not only the time of transition from primary to secondary school, but are also the time when children and young people first become exposed to the realities of the everyday responsibilities of paid employment.
- 18.2 This chapter considers the role of work in the lives of children and young people in the middle years. This is evident in two key respects: the pressures of work impacting upon parent's relationships with their children; and when children themselves make their own first forays into the world of work.

### Work/family balance

- 18.3 Employment patterns of Australians have changed considerably over the last 25 years: average weekly hours of both full-time workers and part-time workers have increased, and there has been a significant rise in the proportion of working mothers.<sup>345</sup> Consequently, balancing work and family responsibilities has become a major issue for Australian families, with a 2006 *Families Australia* poll showing that two-thirds of those surveyed believed that striking a good balance between work and family life was more difficult than five years previously.<sup>346</sup>
- 18.4 Higher employment rates of mothers have had a major impact upon many aspects of family life, particularly the amount of time available to spend with their children.<sup>347</sup> In 2004 women represented 52.7 per cent of all casual workers, leading the Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission (HREOC), to suggest that women engage in casual work "in order to balance paid work and family responsibilities."<sup>348</sup> Moreover, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) has noted that, although flexible work arrangements may be available to many employees, fathers may feel economic or social pressure not to take advantage of them.<sup>349</sup>

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<sup>344</sup> House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services. 2006. *Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family*, p. 28.

<sup>345</sup> Employment of mothers is partly related to the ages of their children. In June 2004, mothers were employed in 45% of families whose youngest child was aged under 5 years. This figure increased to 64% for families whose youngest child was aged 5–9 years and 71% for families whose youngest child was aged 10–14 years.

Australian Bureau of Statistics. 2006. *Australian Social Trends 2006*, 4102.0, pp. 124 and 126.

<sup>346</sup> House of Representatives Standing Committee on Family and Human Services. 2006. *Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family*, p. 23.

<sup>347</sup> Commonwealth Department of Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs. 2007. *Social Policy Research Paper Number 30*, Introduction, p. 1.

<sup>348</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005. *Striking the balance : women, men, work and family*, p. 18.

<sup>349</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006. 4102.0 *Australian Social Trends 2006*, p. 43.

On this point, see also Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005. *Striking the balance : women, men, work and family*, p. 1.

18.5 Changes in Australian workplaces, such as increased casualisation and an increase in part-time work, may also affect parents' access to 'quality jobs' which give them the capacity to fit job requirements around their family's needs.<sup>350</sup> Thus, while working part-time was seen as a solution to competing time demands of working parents, it halved the rate of access to family-related paid leave. Improving the quality of part-time work ought to be a priority.<sup>351</sup>

### Impact upon children and young people

18.6 A considerable amount of evidence to the Inquiry dealt with the impact upon children and young people of parents working outside the commonly accepted hours of 9 a.m. to 5 p.m., or who have substantial commuting time to and from work. The two most frequently raised issues were that this impinges on parents spending quality time with children, and that children may unavoidably be left alone for considerable periods of time each working day:

Many work practices are not compatible with children's 'time'. Long hours work culture, lack of employee initiated flexibility, shift work, long commutes, and increased work stress reduce the amount of time and energy adults can spend with their children and in the community [thus reducing social connection with other children and their families].<sup>352</sup>

18.7 The Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW noted the particular needs of parents of children in the middle years:

... parents start to allow children more independence, and less monitoring. This, coupled with longer working hours and less time and energies focused on the regulation of a child's activities by the parent, has a huge impact on social and relational development.<sup>353</sup>

18.8 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) noted that parents wellbeing will ultimately impact on that of their children, citing Canadian research which found that the timing of parents' work is associated with the quality of children's family environment.<sup>354</sup> Other submissions noted the stresses placed upon families trying to balance work/family responsibilities.<sup>355</sup> This is a particular issue for families in which parents live substantial distances from their workplace, for example travelling from Western Sydney:

[Fairfield] might be unique in the sense that we have a large number of families with both parents having to work, and the physical distance that our parents travel to work means that they are not home until 6.30 or 7 o'clock at night...they will sit in traffic for an hour and a half to two hours each way, each day. So those kids are not being

<sup>350</sup> "High quality" jobs are categorised as those with job security, job control, access to family friendly provisions and no job overload: Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p.16.

<sup>351</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 16. See also Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 45; and Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005. *Striking the balance : women, men, work and family*, pp. 18 and 22.

<sup>352</sup> Submission no. 3, Centre for Work and Life at the Hawke Research Institute, pp. 4-5. See also Submission no. 85, Rosemount Good Shepard Youth & Family Services, p. 2; and Submission no. 6, Holroyd City Council, p. 3.

<sup>353</sup> Submission no. 36, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, p. 5.

<sup>354</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 16.

<sup>355</sup> See Submission no. 7, The Smith Family, p. 3; Submission no. 17, The Association for Children's Welfare Agencies, p. 5; and Submission no. 54, South Youth and Family Services, p. 16.

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catered for before and after school. Their parents might leave home at 6.30 or 7 o'clock in the morning. These kids have to get themselves to school, and often they do not, and there is nowhere for them to go after school.<sup>356</sup>

18.9 Shift work has been identified both in research and in evidence to the Inquiry as a cause of stress in parents and children.<sup>357</sup> Mission Australia noted that shift work creates specific issues for families:

When parents work shifts, it was difficult to put in place regular routines, or set boundaries in place for children. Parents may want their children to have stability, and to follow rules and boundaries; however, they are often unable to be consistent and supportive due to their work commitments.<sup>358</sup>

18.10 Long working hours can impact upon a parent's ability to engage with their children through participation in school, community and sporting activities.<sup>359</sup> Scouts NSW suggested that 'time-poor' adults are unable to provide sufficient support to their children, let alone take on additional voluntary responsibilities.<sup>360</sup>

18.11 In addition, children and young people in the upper cohort of the 9-14 age group may have the responsibility of looking after younger siblings in the absence of parents.<sup>361</sup> Wesley Mission noted that many parents, when faced with the cost of before and after school care, consider children old enough to supervise themselves. This impedes the children's ability to be part of a socially active group, and can lead to social isolation, or children defying their parents by having others present without supervision.<sup>362</sup>

18.12 Several organisations suggested to the Committee that the best way to avoid these problems is to balance work and family responsibilities through access to family friendly work arrangements. The following section will consider some of the options that were raised in evidence to this Inquiry.

### Family-friendly work arrangements

18.13 A common theme of submissions was that real flexibility in the workplace would allow parents to deal with ongoing needs of their children, and to handle family crises when they arise. This would include practices such as job sharing, working from home, and flexible hours.<sup>363</sup> Flexible workplace practices were also suggested as a possible option for overcoming the problem of caring for children before and after school.<sup>364</sup> Thus, Wollongong City Council informed the Committee:

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<sup>356</sup> Ms Carol Richardson, Fairfield Business Education Partnership, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p.12.

<sup>357</sup> Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, 2005. *Striking the balance : women, men, work and family*, p. 61.

<sup>358</sup> Submission no. 83, Mission Australia, p. 4.

<sup>359</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 70, New South Wales Parents Council, p. 3; Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, pp. 16-17; and Submission no. 6, Holroyd City Council, p. 3.

<sup>360</sup> Submission no. 40, Scouts Australia NSW, p. 7.

<sup>361</sup> Submission no. 83, Mission Australia, p. 5.

<sup>362</sup> Submission no. 61, Wesley Mission, p. 5.

<sup>363</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 78, YMCA, p. 1; Submission no. 56, Unions NSW, p. 1; and Submission no. 93, Beverly Hills Girls High School, p. 8.

<sup>364</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 93, Beverly Hills Girls High School, p. 8; and Submission no. 70, NSW Parents Council, p. 4.

The issue keeps coming back to flexibility in the workplace i.e. ability to work from home for part of the day to allow parents to be home when children arrive, availability of flexible hours of work and capacity to work part time. Family friendly work practices are something that gets talked about a lot but unfortunately doesn't translate very well into practice in thousands of workplaces across this State.<sup>365</sup>

- 18.14 Network of Community Activities also suggested in its submission that flexible parental leave should be deemed separate from maternity leave, and that it should be able to be accessed for caring duties for a child up to 16 years. Parental leave could also be available for small amounts of time, such as two-hourly blocks to allow parents to attend school functions during working hours.<sup>366</sup> In addition, in recognition of the role many grandparents now play as carers, Network also suggested that 'grandparent leave' be made available where grandparents are primary carers for children up to 16 years of age.<sup>367</sup>
- 18.15 Several submissions called for a review of existing leave provisions and suggested a range of options in which parents and grandparents could access 'parental leave', particularly to cover periods when children were sick.<sup>368</sup> This has become increasingly important as changed hospital practices aim to reduce length of hospital stays, so that children are discharged when they are not fully recovered.<sup>369</sup>
- 18.16 Currently, the nature of parents' work can limit the possibilities for flexibility. The Committee notes that many family-friendly initiatives are offered in the corporate sector, where parents already have greater ability to provide financially for their children's out-of-school needs.<sup>370</sup> Southern Youth and Family Services commented in its submission about the lack of access to flexible working arrangements for low-income workers:
- ...work place flexibilities often only occur in jobs which are of a medium to higher income level. Shift workers, lower income jobs often do not provide that flexibility. In community organisations the Government funding provided is inadequate to be able to offer too much flexibility as relief funds for essential service coverage is not available.<sup>371</sup>
- 18.17 Parents also need to be able to take phone calls from children during and after school hours. Network of Community Activities suggested that some workplaces have a designated staff person to take calls from children after school if their parents are not available, and to alert the parents if there is any need for concern. This would limit the need for parents to rely solely on childcare outside of their formal care arrangements, especially with children in the higher end of the 9-14 age group.<sup>372</sup>

### School holidays

- 18.18 Different issues arise with respect to extended periods when children are not at school. While NSW school students have approximately 10 weeks a year of school holidays, as well as several pupil free days, the average annual leave period for full

<sup>365</sup> Submission no. 51, Wollongong City Council, p. 2.

<sup>366</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, pp. 10-11.

<sup>367</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>368</sup> See, e.g., Submission no. 22, Youth Unit of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia, p. 7.

<sup>369</sup> Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 46.

<sup>370</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p. 10.

<sup>371</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, p. 16.

<sup>372</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p. 11.

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time workers is only four weeks. As a result, parents are faced with the need to find suitable care and supervised activities for children for those periods when they are unable to take leave.

- 18.19 Concern was expressed in some submissions about the impact on children being placed in vacation care for the entire school holidays. For example, Ku-ring-gai Council noted that the majority of children attending vacation care programs are attending due to the work commitments of their parents or guardians:

For 9 and 10 year olds attending OOSH services, the formal childcare time constitutes a large sector of their non-school time. It is not uncommon for children to be enrolled for the full two weeks of a vacation care program run by Council and be quite tired by the end of the holidays, not enabling children to have a break from the school hours routine. Children in full time vacation care continue to have limited time to spend with their parents.<sup>373</sup>

- 18.20 The Commission also expressed concern about children being in extended child care, noting that parents' concerns about their children's safety while they are at work may mean that children are enrolled in structured activities every day so that their parents know where they are. Research cited by the Commission suggests that this may limit children's time for spontaneous play, thereby restricting their development of motor ability, social skills and emotional resilience.<sup>374</sup>

**Welfare to Work**

- 18.21 Undoubtedly, parents are in a much better position to provide a supportive environment for their children when they have the tools to properly manage the work/family balance. However, parents who are on income support also have to manage the requirements of the Commonwealth Government's *Welfare to Work* legislation, a particular issue for lone parents. The ABS has noted that the lower number of lone mothers in the workforce suggests that they may be facing greater difficulty in balancing their roles as carer and breadwinner.<sup>375</sup>
- 18.22 Pursuant to the *Welfare to Work* participation requirements, parents receiving a Parenting Payment may be expected to work - or look for work - at least 30 hours per fortnight, once their youngest child turns seven.<sup>376</sup> Two specific areas of concern raised in evidence were the increased stress levels felt by parent due to their inability to spend quality time with their children, and the need for children to be left on their own after school while their parents were at work.<sup>377</sup>
- 18.23 Fairfield City Council noted in its submission that the participation requirement devalues the importance of this period in a child's life:

The push to ensure that mothers return to work when their youngest child turns eight, devalues the importance of this period in a child's life. It not only puts additional

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<sup>373</sup> Submission no. 57, Ku-ring-gai Council, p. 7.

<sup>374</sup> Manwaring, B. & Taylor, C. (2007) *The Benefits of Play and Playwork: recent evidence-based research (2001-2006) demonstrating the impact and benefits of play and playwork*, The Community and Youth Workers' Union (CYWU), Birmingham. Cited in Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 16.

<sup>375</sup> The proportion of lone mothers in part-time employment almost doubled, from 15% in 1987 to 27% in 2004: Australian Bureau of Statistics 2006. *Australian Social Trends 2006, 4102.0*, pp. 124 and 126.

<sup>376</sup> However, exceptions do apply to participation requirements where parents cannot find suitable child care: Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.23.

<sup>377</sup> Submission no. 56, Unions NSW, p. 1.

financial pressures on families, but with the limited care options for children 9-14 years, it places families in difficult positions.<sup>378</sup>

- 18.24 Sole parents and those who have children with a disability face particular difficulties with complying with *Welfare to Work* requirements. As UnitingCare Burnside noted:  
...many sole parents are more constrained for time than dual parent households. For low-income sole parents, arranging sustainable care for children, particularly school aged children, when they enter the workforce is often difficult and expensive. This is compounded by the hours required by many entry-level positions.<sup>379</sup>
- 18.25 UnitingCare Burnside also noted that mandatory workforce participation, can be particularly challenging for parents who have children with a disability.<sup>380</sup> Similarly, the Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development suggested that the policy needed to take greater account of the unpredictable and time consuming demands made upon parents of children with a disability.<sup>381</sup>
- 18.26 Several submissions called for a review of the *Welfare to Work* legislation, due to its adverse impact on children and young people. Thus, Fairfield City Council stressed that work-related policies need to give equal consideration to financial and social implications, to ensure “a balanced society which values the role that parents have in Australia’s future.”<sup>382</sup>
- 18.27 The Committee notes that the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations advised in their submission that the Commonwealth Government is reviewing all employment services, including the impact of participation requirements for parents who experienced difficulty in meeting the *Welfare to Work* requirements.<sup>383</sup>

## Employment of children and young people

- 18.28 A number of submissions to the Inquiry discussed the employment of children and young people 9-14 years. The nature of children and young people’s employment, the legislative framework for child employment, safety in the workplace and awareness of legal rights in the workplace are all addressed in this section.

### Children and young people at work

- 18.29 A June 2006 survey of child employment by the ABS found that, during the previous 12 months, 175,100 children aged 5-14 years had worked at some time, representing 6.6 per cent of all children in this age group. Eleven percent of children aged 10-14 years worked, compared with 1.8 per cent of those aged 5-9 years.<sup>384</sup> The ABS survey also found that in the twelve months up until June 2006:

<sup>378</sup> Submission no. 35, Fairfield City Council, p. 5.

<sup>379</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 22.

<sup>380</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>381</sup> Submission no. 32, Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development, p. 5.

<sup>382</sup> Submission no. 35, Fairfield City Council, p. 6.

<sup>383</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, p.23.

<sup>384</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year book Australia 2008, 1301.0*, pp. 243-246.

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Of the 175,100 children who had worked during the period, 54 per cent had worked for an employer, 33 per cent had worked in a family business or farm and 16 per cent had worked for themselves [children may have worked in more than one type of job].<sup>385</sup>

- 18.30 The most common occupation for boys during school terms was leaflet or newspaper deliverer (24 per cent); while farm, forestry and garden worker was the most common occupation in their main holiday job (26 per cent). The most common occupation for girls in their main job during both school holidays and school terms was sales worker (17 per cent and 20 per cent respectively).<sup>386</sup>
- 18.31 Research by the Commission revealed that work for children usually begins within the family before extending to neighbours and the local community and finally into formal employment.<sup>387</sup> From a study of 1,567 children aged 12–16 years the Commission discovered that age 14 is a time of substantial change, with employment in fast food and sales work becoming significant categories of work. Between two and eight per cent of 14 year olds are employed in accommodation and food services, with a similar proportion in sales work. These figures increase significantly for 15 year olds.<sup>388</sup>
- 18.32 The Commission's research also showed patterns of the likelihood of children and young people in New South Wales working: those from English-speaking backgrounds were 50 per cent more likely than those from non-English-speaking backgrounds; those from areas with relatively high median incomes 40 per cent more likely than those from low income areas; and those living in remote areas 70 per cent more likely than those in urban areas.<sup>389</sup>
- 18.33 Research by the NSW Teachers Federation indicated that students like working because it:
- helps them to become more independent and to manage more responsibilities, including money;
  - teaches new skills, particularly leadership and how to interact and deal with different types of people;
  - provides the opportunity to make new friends from different age groups; and
  - helps with future career ambitions or plans.<sup>390</sup>
- 18.34 The ABS found that, although 27 per cent of children aged 10-14 years worked six or more hours per week in school terms, working between one and two hours per week was by far the most common (45 per cent) for those aged 10-14 years, just as it was for children aged 5-9 years. Not surprisingly, children were more likely to work longer hours in school holidays than in school terms, with 43 per cent of children aged 10-14 years usually working six or more hours per week in school holidays.<sup>391</sup>
- 18.35 It is clear from the research that the majority of children combining part-time work with study believe that their job does not adversely impact on their homework or

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<sup>385</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>386</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year book Australia 2008, 1301.0*, p. 243-246.

<sup>387</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People. 2009. *ask the children, I want to work*, p. 7.

<sup>388</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>389</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 6-7.

<sup>390</sup> NSW Teachers Federation, *students@work* website.

<sup>391</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Year book Australia 2008, 1301.0*, pp. 243-246.



educational performance.<sup>392</sup> However, the Committee notes that some children and young people were often working late hours and were sometimes too tired to get up for school.<sup>393</sup>

### Pay and conditions

18.36 The wages and conditions of employment of children and young people in the middle years are regulated by a myriad of state and federal laws and awards. The only universal provision relating to the employment of children and young people in Australia is a general ban on employing school age children during school hours.<sup>394</sup> With effect from 1 January 2010, the NSW minimum school leaving age will be the age at which Year 10 of secondary education is completed, or the age of 17 years, whichever occurs first.

18.37 Some major employers of children and young people have set their own minimum age of employment. For example, McDonalds<sup>395</sup> and KFC both have a minimum age requirement of 14 years; whereas for Hoyts Cinemas it is 15.<sup>396</sup> By way of contrast, the Shop Distributive and Allied Employees' Association does not have a minimum age for casual employees, as long as the work does not interfere with their schooling.<sup>397</sup>

18.38 Concern was expressed to the Committee about some high school students being pressured to work by employers during school hours, in breach of the *Education Act 1990*.<sup>398</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers of the University of Western Sydney informed the Committee that:

I know from direct experience in our high schools that children get text messages on their mobile phones saying, "We are short staffed right now, come." Those children get up out of their classrooms, leave and go to their place of work. They are walking out of school; they are truanting in fact.

Employers are sending a message saying they are needed and if they say to the employer they cannot go the response is "If you do not want to come, you do not have a job." It is very difficult to get hard data on that but I know from school principals, and from my own interviewing of kids in schools, that it happens.<sup>399</sup>

18.39 Working conditions and rates of pay are covered in New South Wales by either the State or Commonwealth Industrial Relations Schemes. However, irrespective of which scheme used, the NSW *Industrial Relations (Child Employment) Act 2006* sets minimum pay and conditions for workers under 18 years of age based on State Awards, and provides child workers with access to unfair dismissal protections.<sup>400</sup>

<sup>392</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People. p. 11.

<sup>393</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 3.

<sup>394</sup> *ibid.*, p. 17.

<sup>395</sup> McDonalds website; KFC website.

<sup>396</sup> Hoyts website.

<sup>397</sup> Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees' Association website.

<sup>398</sup> See *Education Act 1990* s. 22.

<sup>399</sup> Professor Margaret Vickers, University of Western Sydney, Transcript of Evidence, 15 April 2009, p. 1.

<sup>400</sup> *Industrial Relations (Child Employment) Act 2006* Part 2. The *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* prescribes employment conditions for certain industries such as entertainment, exhibition, still photography and door-to-door sales. In this case, employers must be authorised by the Children's Guardian to employ children under 15 years - or 16 years if modelling - and must comply with a

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18.40 In his December 2008 report *Making the working world better for children*, Professor Andrew Stewart recommended a nationally consistent approach to child employment laws. At the very least, he argued, child employment laws should:

- set a minimum age for the performance of certain types of work;
- protect the integrity of the educational system, by minimising conflicts between working arrangements and schooling obligations;
- set other limits on working hours in order to protect a child's welfare and development; and
- impose special duties on those for whom work is performed, in relation to matters such as supervision.<sup>401</sup>

18.41 The Committee notes that the Workplace Relations Ministers' Council is currently working towards the realisation of a national workplace relations system for the private sector.<sup>402</sup>

**Safety**

18.42 Children in the 9-14 age group are in the first stages of their working life, and their wellbeing and safety in the workplace ought to be paramount.<sup>403</sup> The *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* requires all employers to provide safe systems of work, safe equipment and training for employees.<sup>404</sup> However, a survey conducted by the Commission found that 40 per cent of the children and young people surveyed had sustained some form of work-related injury, with half of those requiring treatment. Moreover, just under half had suffered some form of verbal harassment, while one in five had to endure physical harassment.<sup>405</sup>

18.43 The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Education and Training Inquiry *Combining school and work: supporting successful youth transitions* noted that lack of knowledge about rights means that children and young people are dependent upon their employers complying with workplace legislation:

Studies in New South Wales show that two in every five students who work part-time suffer some form of injury and a disturbing 20 per cent require intensive medical treatment. As the NSW Teachers Federation notes, "school students are not vocal in the face of unfair working conditions...[and are] especially susceptible to exploitation if their employers are not acting in good faith".<sup>406</sup>

18.44 In his 2008 report, Professor Andrew Stewart made the important point that workplaces, equipment and tools that are safe for adults are not necessarily safe for children and young people:

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defined Code of Practice. *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* Chapter 13 and the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection – Child Employment) Regulation 2005* Schedule 1.

<sup>401</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People. p. 6.

<sup>402</sup> Workplace Relations Ministers Council. 2009. *Communiqué from Australian, State, territory and New Zealand Workplace Relations Ministers' Council, 11 June 2009*, p. 1.

<sup>403</sup> See Submission no. 79, NAPCAN, p. 9.

<sup>404</sup> See *Occupational Health and Safety Act 2000* s. 8.

<sup>405</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People. p. 12.

<sup>406</sup> Maslen, G. 2009. '24/7 teens', *About the House*, no. 36, March 2009, p. 22. On this point, see also Mr Reynato Reodica, Youth Action and Policy Association, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, pp. 28-29.

Children are particularly vulnerable in the workplace as their incomplete physical development makes them especially susceptible to exposure to chemical and biological hazards and musculoskeletal disorders associated with weight-bearing activity. Psychological development issues also make them susceptible to injury due to poor risk assessment, vulnerability to peer or work pressure and poor judgment.<sup>407</sup>

- 18.45 He concluded that national occupational health and safety standards might be developed in relation to work performed by young people. Alternatively, existing NSW legislation could be supplemented by a code of practice such as that released by Workplace Health and Safety Queensland, which identifies particular workplace hazards for children and young people, and provides guidance as to how particular risks associated with child employment can be managed.<sup>408</sup>
- 18.46 The Committee notes that there is no specific provision at either the Commonwealth or state level covering the occupational health and safety of children and young people in the workplace. National model occupational health and safety laws are currently being drafted, and the Committee believes that this provides an opportunity for the laws to be broadened to specifically address the safety of children and young people in the workplace.
- 18.47 The Committee further believes that, as a starting point, the existing NSW legislation should be amended to protect children and young people in the workplace, and that WorkCover should develop and implement a code of practice that ensures their safety.

**RECOMMENDATION 51:** The Committee recommends that the *Occupation Health and Safety Act 1990* be amended to include specific reference to children's safety in the workplace and that a Code of Practice be developed and implemented.

### Awareness of rights

- 18.48 As noted above, there is potential for children and young people to be exploited in the workplace through lack of awareness of their legal rights.<sup>409</sup> Surveys undertaken by the Commission indicated that children and young people frequently endure various forms of exploitation such as being:
- underpaid award entitlements;
  - forced to work unpaid overtime;
  - expected to attend with no guarantee of being given any work;
  - engaged for lengthy periods of unpaid 'trial work'; or

<sup>407</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People. p. 30.

<sup>408</sup> *ibid.*, p. 31.

<sup>409</sup> See, e.g., NSW Teachers Federation, *students@work* website; and Submission no. 102, Canterbury City Council, pp. 3-4.

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- engaged to supply labour as a self-employed contractor, despite little if any evidence of having an independent business.<sup>410</sup>

18.49 Members of Young People Big Voice of the Centre for Children and Young People noted that they were aware of many examples of young people being underpaid by businesses or being told that they must accept food or goods in exchange for overtime and weekend/holiday loading:

**Mr Ahri Tallon:** I want to talk about young people in the workforce. There needs to be a better eye kept on franchises especially, and the AWAs or the situations they had with young people. I had a job and did not know what was going on. They just told me to sign this and I signed it and then I was kind of ripped off.

**Mr Tully Rodwell:** I worked for \$5.80 or \$6 an hour. Whenever I worked overtime I got paid food.

**Chair**<sup>411</sup>: Eventually how did you deal with those situations?

**Mr Ahri Tallon:** Got sacked.

**Chair:** Got sacked when you took it up?

**Mr Ahri Tallon:** They would expect you to come into work to find out what times you were working and then they could change the times when you do not know about it.

**Mr Tully Rodwell:** I got too old and they had other people that I had trained took over all my shifts so I just quit because I was a trainer. I trained all the new people and the young ones are on \$5.80 an hour whereas I should have been on about \$10 an hour, and they gave my shifts away because it was cheaper.<sup>412</sup>

18.50 Beverly Hills Girls High School also expressed concern to the Committee about the increased opportunity for children to be exploited in the workforce by being overworked and underpaid by programs described as 'work placement' or 'work orientation'.<sup>413</sup> However, the Committee notes that engaging children and young people on an unpaid trial basis to assess their suitability for employment breaches the 'no net detriment' requirement under s 20 of the *Industrial Relations (Child Employment) Act 2006*.<sup>414</sup>

### Information about work

18.51 One means of overcoming the lack of awareness of workplace rights is the provision of appropriate information for the 9-14 age group. Thus Ku-ring-gai Council recommended that education be provided to 14 year olds about workplace rights and conditions:

Youth workers mentioned children in the 14 years age group would be nearing or obtaining their first part-time job so education to children from schools or other services

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<sup>410</sup> Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p.12.

<sup>411</sup> Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP.

<sup>412</sup> Mr Ahri Tallon and Mr Tully Rodwell, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, pp. 14-15.

See also Submission no. 64, Centre for Children and Young People, p. 4.

<sup>413</sup> Submission no. 93, Beverley Hills High School, p. 8.

<sup>414</sup> However, this applies only where an award regulating the particular work was in place, and not where no employment relationship existed to trigger the operation of the award: Stewart, A. 2008. *Making the working world better for kids*, NSW Commission for Children and Young People. p. 32.

about their workplace rights, taxes and other work matters would empower young people who are vulnerable to unscrupulous employers.<sup>415</sup>

- 18.52 The Commission for Children and Young People agreed that work preparation skills should be a priority, and made available more broadly in schools and TAFE colleges, after further consultation with NSW Board of Studies.<sup>416</sup>

### Committee comment

- 18.53 Evidence to this Inquiry also suggested that a potential for exploitation of young people in the workplace exists and that there is a need for them to be better informed about their rights in the workplace, particularly the protection offered to them under statutory and industrial award requirements. While this information is covered in some elective courses available to older students, the Committee believes that consideration should be given to including work preparation information in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus for Years 7 and 8.

**RECOMMENDATION 52:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People liaise with the NSW Board Of Studies about including workplace and employment education in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus for Year 7 students.

- 18.54 The Committee notes that the Commission for Children and Young People also suggested trialling and evaluating the inclusion of material in the PDHPE syllabus for Years 5 and 6 on employment-related matters such as safety and conditions at work. It was noted the need to consult with students to establish their interests and needs:

...when we spoke with young people in the early years of high school about work education, they often wanted to know seemingly simple things such as what time do you start work. Younger children in Years 5 to 6 could be interested in quite basic matters about work, so it is important that we ask them what content they would find helpful.

Such a trial could usefully involve parents, as children in this age group tend to undertake work in the context of a family business or similar arrangements.<sup>417</sup>

### Committee comment

- 18.55 As mentioned earlier, many children and young people make their first forays in the world of work during the middle years. For some, this is through helping out in the family business. For others it begins as casual work such as babysitting, doing odd jobs for family and neighbours or delivering papers, before evolving into more formal casual and part time work when they reach about 14 years of age.
- 18.56 The Committee also sees merit in information about employment related matters being incorporated into the PDHPE syllabus for Years 5 and 6, to ensure that children who are helping out in the family business, doing odd-jobs for family or neighbours or who undertake delivery runs are aware of the potential dangers that

<sup>415</sup> Submission no. 57, Ku-ring-Gai Council, p. 8.

<sup>416</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, p. 9.

<sup>417</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, p. 12.

they may encounter when doing these jobs, and are provided with guidance on who they can approach for help, if needed.

**RECOMMENDATION 53:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Commission for Children and Young People liaise with the NSW Board Of Studies about including information about 'light work' and/or odd jobs and employment-related matters such as safety and conditions at work in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education syllabus for Years 5 and 6.

18.57 The internet is a primary source of information about rights and safety in the workplace, with several existing NSW Government sites targeting young workers, such as the Office of Industrial Relations and the WorkCover Authority.<sup>418</sup> In addition, the Youth Action and Policy Association has produced a teaching resource for use in conjunction with the Work Education, Commerce and PDHPE syllabus. This resource provides an introduction to workplace issues for high school aged students, with particular emphasis on young women:

Young people may have a limited understanding of the rights they have in the workplace, have lower paid jobs requiring only basic skills and are more likely to put up with poor pay and conditions instead of looking for another job.

For young women in particular, these issues can be heightened. Young women may be less confident in negotiating better pay and conditions with their employers and can be exposed to increased incidences of bullying and harassment.<sup>419</sup>

18.58 The NSW Teachers Federation also provides interactive on-line information and support to students, parents and carers, teachers and employers on balancing academic and working lives. The site also contains links to the NSW Office of Industrial Relations and WorkCover.<sup>420</sup>

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<sup>418</sup> See for example, NSW Office of Industrial Relations website, *Know the deal*; WorkCover Authority of New South Wales website, *Young workers*; and Youth NSW website, *Your rights at work*, which provides links to various other sites.

<sup>419</sup> Youth Action and Policy Association NSW, *Girls@work: Getting a fair go: teaching resource*, p. 4.

<sup>420</sup> NSW Teachers Federation, *students@work* website.

# Chapter Nineteen - Better Ways of Delivering Services

## Introduction

- 19.1 This chapter outlines some key principles that would strengthen service provision for children and young people 9-14 years. These include increasing the participation of children and young people in planning and developing services, as well as an increased focus on prevention and early intervention. The chapter also refers to the importance of providing services to families and intervening at a younger age.

## Participation of children and young people

Young people... say that if we are to engage them in participatory processes that it should be respectful, but it should be genuine and focused on change, that it should be about an attempt to make a difference in policy and practice, and it should involve giving them access to information. We also know that children and young people are asking for more participational opportunities, or opportunities for participation, not because they want their way but because they want to have a say - and there is an important difference.<sup>421</sup>

- 19.2 A growing body of research suggests that children's participation contributes to the well being of the wider communities by making policy more sensitive to social needs, and therefore more likely to be successful. When children participate, policy and practice with and for children becomes more relevant, effective and sustainable:

The active involvement of program beneficiaries leads to better development decisions, better development programs and more sustained results.<sup>422</sup>

- 19.3 In a Youth Advisory Council survey of over 2,000 young people in New South Wales, more than half of the respondents said they would like to have a say in decision-making at the place where they study, and in the ways that services are provided to young people in their local area. A similar percentage also identified they would like to let government know about the things that are important to them.<sup>423</sup>

- 19.4 This section examines principles of youth participation developed by the United Nations and included within key NSW Government policies and plans. The section also considers opportunities for young people's participation at local government level and suggests strategies for further ensuring consultation with young people in planning and decision-making processes at both state and local levels of government.

## The nature of participation

- 19.5 Children have frequently told the NSW Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) that they want to participate in both formal and informal decision-making processes. One participant in the Commission's consultations for NSW Health's *Health Futures Project* articulated this in the following terms:

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<sup>421</sup> Professor Anne Graham, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p.3.

<sup>422</sup> Canadian International Development Agency. 2006. *RBM and children's participation: a guide to incorporating child participation results into CIDA programs*, CIDA, p. 2.

<sup>423</sup> NSW Youth Advisory Council. 2004. *NSW Youth participation survey, final report*.

Children should have a say in how they receive advice about their health and which services they receive. This is because they would feel more comfortable and would be more likely to use these services. [Boy, 14 years]<sup>424</sup>

19.6 Children in the middle years have also informed the Commission that they want to be more involved in formal decision-making processes at school and in their communities. In consultations conducted between August and November 2005 with around 100 children and young people aged 4-18 years on the subject of their environment, children said that they wanted to be consulted about planning and development decisions.<sup>425</sup> As part of its work with organisations to help them become safe and friendly for children, the Commission encourages them to consider the views of children involved in decision-making.<sup>426</sup>

19.7 The rights to provision, protection and participation afforded to children under the United Nations *Convention on the Rights of the Child* forms the basis of research conducted by the Centre for Children and Young People at Southern Cross University.<sup>427</sup> The Centre has found that the translation of participation into meaningful practice is challenging for adults, because they must learn to trust young people's view of the world and its problems and the solutions which they propose. Professor Anne Graham of the Centre for Children and Young People cautioned that:

We have to be prepared that their accounts might differ from ours and what we expect, sometimes what they have to say might be complex, or contradictory, or ambiguous and sometimes it might be painful. The question for us as adults as we try to influence policy and practice around what we do is: Can we live with that and can we utilise that well? ... We can have all the research in the world telling us that children's participation is important in forming the way we might do things in the future, but if we are not trusting their accounts we have a problem in where to take it towards policy.<sup>428</sup>

19.8 Miss Sarah Hort of the Centre for Children and Young People described the hazards of tokenism in youth consultation mechanisms, represented at rung three on the Hart's *Ladder of Youth Participation* referred to in Chapter 1 of this Report:

Rung three is tokenism and this occurs when young people appear to be given a voice, but in fact have little or no choice about what they do or how they participate. When rungs one to three occur young people can feel disenfranchised and silenced. An example of this type of participation is some student representative councils that can feel like tokenism. Young people generally have respect for the processes if they feel their views are being respected.<sup>429</sup>

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<sup>424</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p. 5.

<sup>425</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p.17.

See also Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth & NSW Commission for Children and Young People. 2008. *Involving children and young people in research, compendium of papers and reflections from a think tank co-hosted by the Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth and the NSW Commission for Children and Young People on 11 November 2008*. The think tank highlighted the need to better understand the nature and impacts of participatory research in relation to children and identified four major areas for action.

<sup>427</sup> Professor Anne Graham, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p.2.

<sup>428</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>429</sup> Miss Sarah Hort, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2008, p. 7.



- 19.9 In its submission, the Centre for Children and Young People recommended that the Inquiry should consider how children and young people can be supported to participate in the work of the Committee itself and, more broadly, in the development and evaluation of social policy, programs, services and initiatives concerning them.<sup>430</sup>
- 19.10 A number of other submissions identified that participation of children and young people should occur in planning and implementing a range of relevant services, such as out of school hours care and urban planning.<sup>431</sup> Canterbury City Council noted the importance of providing resourcing and training to services to allow for genuine participation of children and young people, and stressed that the skills young people gain from this process will enable them to take a more active role in many areas of their lives.<sup>432</sup>

### Current opportunities for participation

- 19.11 A range of initiatives has been developed at all levels of government to encourage young people to participate in government decision-making. In 2007, then-Premier lemma announced *Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation*, which seek to support and encourage young people to participate in government decision-making, in implementing the NSW State Plan, and in providing input to the development of programs and services that impact on their lives. Government decision makers were directed to observe the principles where relevant and appropriate.<sup>433</sup>
- 19.12 The *NSW Youth Action Plan* has been developed to inform young people, their families and communities about the results which the NSW Government seeks to achieve for young people and the key actions it will implement over four years to achieve these results. The Plan identifies a range of initiatives that support the participation of young people, including the NSW Youth Advisory Council; the Student Representative Council network; and the Commission itself. The Plan also includes plans to encourage and facilitate young people's participation in decisions about the design and delivery of health services, through a Health Clinician and Consumer Engagement Policy.<sup>434</sup>
- 19.13 In 2006 the NSW Government released the State Plan, *A New Direction for NSW*, which sets strategic priorities for the next 10 years, after an extensive consultation program. In addition, the State Plan is to be reviewed and revised every two to three years, with the first full review to be conducted in 2009.<sup>435</sup> During the development of the initial plan, the Commission arranged consultations with young people and prepared a submission on the discussion draft as part of the development of the plan. As a result, several of the Commission's recommendations are reflected in the final plan, including an emphasis on prevention and early intervention, and the inclusion of participation in community activities.<sup>436</sup>

<sup>430</sup> Submission no. 64, Centre for Children and Young People, p. 1.

<sup>431</sup> See Submission no. 90, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, p.17; and Submission no. 3, Centre for Work and Life at the Hawke Research Institute, p.2

<sup>432</sup> Submission no. 102, Canterbury City Council, p. 8.

<sup>433</sup> Premier of New South Wales, Premier's memorandum No. 2007-07. 2007. *Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation*.

<sup>434</sup> The NSW Youth Action Plan also notes that young people have legal rights under the *Children and Young Persons (Care and Protection) Act 1998* to take part in decisions that specifically impact on their lives: NSW Government. *NSW youth action plan: the way forward: supporting young people in NSW*.

<sup>435</sup> Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. 2008. *Report on State Plan Reporting*, p. 42.

<sup>436</sup> NSW Commission on Children and Young People 2006, *Annual Report 2006/07* p. 55.

- 19.14 The NSW Legislative Assembly's Public Accounts Committee has noted that the review of the State Plan will present an excellent opportunity to take community engagement in New South Wales to a new level, with room for increased public participation and involvement in shaping future development of the State Plan, in particular by providing adequate opportunities for participation by young people and parents.<sup>437</sup>
- 19.15 A consultation draft of the 2009 State Plan was recently released for public comment. The Committee notes that the New South Wales Government is conducting community forums during August to identify local priorities for inclusion in the 2009 State Plan.<sup>438</sup> The Committee believes that these forums, together with other aspects of the consultation process, will provide an excellent opportunity for young people to participate in the development of the 2009 State Plan.

**RECOMMENDATION 54:** The Committee recommends that the Department of Premier and Cabinet, in its review of the State Plan, consult with the Commission for Children and Young People to ensure participation by young people is explicitly acknowledged in the State Plan and embedded in the policy development process.

### Committee comment

- 19.16 Children and young people in the middle years have identified that they wish to have more meaningful input into decisions that affect them, including in formal decision-making processes at school and in their communities. In addition, there is a growing body of research that suggests that children's participation contributes to the wellbeing of communities by making policy more sensitive to social needs and therefore more likely to be effective.
- 19.17 While the NSW Government has a statement of *Best Practice Principles for Youth Participation*, the Committee considers that much more can be done at the departmental level to actively engage young people in decision-making processes.
- 19.18 The Committee believes that there is a need for individual NSW government departments to systematically develop strategies to increase the participation of children and young people, drawing upon international developments in the field of childhood studies. Children and young people should be consulted in the development of these strategies, through mechanisms such as the Commission for Children and Young People's consultative process.
- 19.19 The Committee considers that relevant departments should develop individual plans to increase participation, which:
- draw upon international developments in the field of childhood studies;
  - are informed by the views of children and young people; and
  - are monitored and evaluated.

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<sup>437</sup> Legislative Assembly, Public Accounts Committee. 2008. *Report on State Plan Reporting*, p. 54.

<sup>438</sup> NSW State Plan website. *Welcome to our community forum*.

**RECOMMENDATION 55:** The Committee recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People work with relevant NSW Government departments to develop individual plans to increase the consultation and participation of children and young people across these departments.

### Local Government

- 19.20 Local governments undertake a range of processes to engage children and young people. While councils in New South Wales are not required to establish a formal youth advisory structure such as a youth advisory committee, a review by the NSW Youth Advisory Council of council social plans, including councils' websites conducted in 2007 suggests that 51 councils (or 33.5 per cent of all councils) have a youth advisory structure. The review also identified that a range of processes are used by councils to consult with young people when developing their social plans.<sup>439</sup>
- 19.21 In evidence to the Committee, Commissioner Calvert highlighted the work of the Commission with Wollongong City Council, experimenting with ways in which it can include children in decision-making, and increase their participation in the council's work and activity. The Commission is also trialling a set of indicators for a child-friendly community with a number of councils:
- We hope that from those two pieces of work we will be able to produce some tools and resources for councils that will help them to adapt their practices so they are more participatory of children and more inclusive of children, and also where they, in effect, can become more child friendly... We would then back that up with time to work with some of the peak organisations of councils, such as the Local Government and Shires Associations and so on, to provide training and support to councils to use those tools.<sup>440</sup>
- 19.22 Port Stephens Council identified a lack of opportunities for youth participation in regional New South Wales. Its submission noted, in particular, the lack of opportunities to gain skills in leadership and mentoring, and the lack of organised consultative opportunities for young people to express their views in planning and decisions, which impact upon their community.<sup>441</sup>
- 19.23 Similarly, Ku-ring-gai Council reported that there exists:
- ... a scarcity of opportunities for children's views to be formally heard in matters concerning their lives. Limited consultation of children aged 9-14 years occurs in services focusing on children of that age group. Sometimes a gathering of children's viewpoints occurs in student councils at high school however this is usually conducted with children 12 years and over.<sup>442</sup>
- 19.24 Ku-ring-gai Council concluded that it is necessary to provide accessible formal and informal opportunities for children aged 9-14 years of age to provide their views on service provision relevant to them; and for all levels of government to provide

<sup>439</sup> There was a disparity between metropolitan councils and non-metropolitan councils, with 49 per cent of youth advisory structures were located in the metropolitan area, although metropolitan councils only represent 33 per cent of all NSW councils: *Review of NSW local government social plans report*.

<sup>440</sup> Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, p. 43.

<sup>441</sup> Submission no. 10, Port Stephens Council, p. 4.

<sup>442</sup> Submission no. 57, Ku-ring-gai Council, p. 2.

accessible child-friendly opportunities to consult with children 9-14 years in relation to major children's policy directions.<sup>443</sup>

- 19.25 The Committee notes that some NSW Government programs providing funding to councils have youth participation as a key component. For example, Waverley Council reported that participants are actively involved in planning and evaluating every program of the *Better Futures* funded project, and that these evaluations have been critical in planning and delivery of programs to the 9-13 year age group.<sup>444</sup>

### Committee comment

- 19.26 Children and young people are directly affected by many of the decisions made at the local government level and there is much to be gained by their participation at this level. From the evidence presented to this Inquiry, there is clearly a need for more opportunities to be developed that will encourage the participation of children and young people in local government processes to ensure that their views are taken into consideration.

**RECOMMENDATION 56:** The Committee recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People continue to work with local councils to increase the consultation and participation in council processes of children and young people, including children in the 9-14 age group.

### Child impact assessment

- 19.27 Evidence to the Inquiry recommended the introduction of child impact statements to ensure that all levels of government are considering the current and future needs of children when making legislative or planning decisions.<sup>445</sup>
- 19.28 Child impact statements are a means whereby government departments, decision makers and outside observers evaluate the effects of new policy, legislative proposals or other decisions may have on children and young people. They are similar to the environmental impact statements, family impact statements, economic impact statements or regulatory impact statements which are already used in Australia to monitor, predict and mitigate the extent to which decisions affect relevant policy areas. Child impact statements instead have a focus on the rights, welfare and interests of children.
- 19.29 The Committee notes Art 2(1) of the *Convention on the Rights of the Child* (CROC) obliges State parties to give primary consideration to the best interests of the child in all actions which concern children. This applies irrespective of whether they are carried out by public or private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities or legislative bodies.<sup>446</sup> To comply with Art 2(1), the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child recommends systems of child impact assessment and

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<sup>443</sup> Submission no. 57, Ku-ring-gai Council p. 2.

<sup>444</sup> Submission no. 53, Waverley Council, p. 5.

<sup>445</sup> See Ms Robyn Monro-Miller and Ms Pauline O'Kane, Network of Community Activities, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 35; and Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p. 6.

<sup>446</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2003. *General Comment No. 5 General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)*. United Nations, Geneva, para. 45.

evaluation be incorporated into all levels of government decision making. The UN Committee defines child impact assessment as a process for “predicting the impact of any proposed law, policy or budgetary allocation which affects children and the enjoyment of their rights.”<sup>447</sup>

- 19.30 Child impact statements position the rights or interests of children at the forefront of their decision-making processes. Developing the statement may involve activities such as identifying possible impacts, consulting with children and young people and stakeholders, and assessing and analysing the extent and effect of the impacts. This process should occur at the earliest possible stage of policy development, and may have the effect of making children’s rights considerations a routine part of all processes of government, or mainstreaming these considerations.
- 19.31 The Committee notes that the Office of the Minister for Children in Ireland has argued that even while existing policy impact assessment processes used to gauge impact in areas such as equality and gender are often seen to have minimal effect, there is nonetheless an argument for child impact assessment. The Office notes that:
- Even if tokenistic to begin with, the process of drawing up such statements requires policy-makers to consider children as a separate group, increases their visibility and, if supported by Government, sends a signal that children’s needs are important in decision-making<sup>448</sup>.
- 19.32 The effect of incorporating this kind of analysis in the policy decision-making process is to make the consideration of children’s welfare and rights a routine part of policy and decision-making processes.<sup>449</sup> Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People describes this as embedding children’s rights and issues in the minds of decision and policy makers.<sup>450</sup>

## Models

- 19.33 Child impact statements have been developed in a number of forms in other jurisdictions around the world. The Swedish Government requires child impact assessments to be developed in connection with all government decisions affecting children.<sup>451</sup>
- 19.34 The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People (SCCYP) has developed a children’s rights impact assessment model, which it uses to exercise its law, policy and practice review functions, and actively encourage other bodies to use the model to assess the impact of their decisions, policies and legislation on children’s rights.<sup>452</sup> The assessments made by SCCYP using this model are made public, and SCCYP argue that they become a tool for change by identifying best practice, problematic

<sup>447</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child. 2003. *General Comment No. 5 General measures of implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (arts. 4, 42 and 44, para. 6)*. United Nations, Geneva, para. 45.

<sup>448</sup> Office of the Minister for Children. 2006. *The Development and Implementation of Child Impact Statements in Ireland*, Department of Health and Children, Dublin, Ireland, p. 6.

<sup>449</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>450</sup> Paton, L. and Munro, G. 2006. *Children’s Rights Impact Assessment: The SCCYP Model*, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, Edinburgh, Scotland, p. 10.

<sup>451</sup> Ministry of Health and Social Affairs. *Rights of the child in Sweden*, Ministry of Health and Social Affairs, Stockholm, Sweden.

<sup>452</sup> Paton, L. and Munro, G. 2006. *Children’s Rights Impact Assessment: The SCCYP Model*, Scotland’s Commissioner for Children and Young People, Edinburgh, p. 9.

practice, or forming the basis for further action in cases of severe negative impact on children's rights.<sup>453</sup>

19.35 The Scottish model calls for the direct involvement of children and young people in the assessment process by seeking their views on any given proposal,<sup>454</sup> and explicitly draws on a rights-based approach which places the attainment of rights - such as those in CROC - as the centre of activity. This is distinct from a welfare or needs-based approach, which, while considering the interests and wellbeing of children, may not incorporate those empowerment, autonomy and development principles enshrined in CROC.

19.36 A model of periodic legislative assessment by non-government organisations was implemented in the United Kingdom for three years from 2004. The National Children's Bureau and the Children's Legal Centre undertook child impact assessments for several pieces of proposed legislation per year.<sup>455</sup> This analysis drew upon the principles embodied in CROC, the United Kingdom *Human Rights Act 1998* and the outcomes for children and young people set out in s 2(2) of the *Children Act 2004 (UK)*.

### Committee comment

19.37 The Committee considers the information that child impact statements could provide to decision makers has the potential to facilitate a greater understanding of the consequences that decisions may have on children and young people.

19.38 Additionally, the process of developing the child impact statement at the policy or legislative development stage has the potential to mainstream the consideration of children's rights and interests within the development and decision making stages of government policies, legislation and projects.

**RECOMMENDATION 57:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Government develop a model of child impact statements that would be required for all decisions which may affect children and young people.

### Prevention and early intervention

Despite increasing evidence that the 9-14 year age period is a prime early intervention opportunity for future problems such as substance abuse, family conflict that may result in homelessness and early school leaving...there is a scarcity of early intervention services for children and young people in the middle years to access.<sup>456</sup>

### Introduction

19.39 As identified throughout this Report, early intervention programs are required to prevent or minimise the impact of behavioural problems, mental health issues, child abuse and neglect, crime, homelessness and antisocial behaviour. Effective prevention and early intervention programs will enhance the wellbeing of children and young people 9-14 years.

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<sup>453</sup> Paton, L. and Munro, G. 2006. *Children's Rights Impact Assessment: The SCCYP Model*, Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People, Edinburgh, p. 10.

<sup>454</sup> *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>455</sup> National Children's Bureau. *Child Impact Assessment*, National Children's Bureau, London, U.K.

<sup>456</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 13.

19.40 This section refers to current models of early intervention and prevention programs and services in New South Wales and considers their adequacy in addressing mental health and behavioural problems of children and young people in the middle years. In particular, the section considers the necessity to change the focus of services to ensure that intervention services are able to accommodate both the specific needs of the young person as well as being family- oriented where this could be helpful.

### **The middle years prevention gap**

19.41 Evidence to the Inquiry suggests that there exist substantial gaps in the provision of early intervention programs for this age group. The UnitingCare Burnside submission noted that:

This means that school, family or mental health issues are often not addressed until intensive support is required in the teenage years. This is of particular concern for disadvantaged children and young people because of a lack of access to other education and support services in the early years, for example early childhood prevention and early intervention services that are well placed to identify and respond to learning difficulties and risk factors within the family.

An increase in early intervention services for children and young people in the middle years is required in NSW, together with more targeted services to address risk factors that lead to educational disengagement, family breakdown or even homelessness.<sup>457</sup>

19.42 In its review of early intervention strategies for children and young people 8-14 years, the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) highlighted the need for early intervention for this age group, having regard to the high rates of mental health problems, substance use and child protection notifications.<sup>458</sup> DoCS noted, however, that studies examining the effectiveness of early intervention strategies predominately target infancy and early childhood, and the importance of intervening in late childhood and early adolescence has been overlooked.<sup>459</sup>

19.43 In discussing early intervention, the NSW Government submission commented that interventions delivered during the transition to adolescence are necessary in order to capture three groups of vulnerable children and young people:

- those who are currently experiencing problems but who did not receive an intervention during early childhood;
- those who received an intervention in early childhood but who continue to experience problems;
- those who are not currently experiencing problems but are at risk for developing problems during adolescence.

19.44 Substantial shifts are required to provide an increased focus on prevention and early intervention, while still maintaining support for children and young people in crisis. The NSW Government has made a commitment to embedding early intervention services in all government services as part of the State Plan, which includes an

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<sup>457</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 3.

<sup>458</sup> NSW Department of Community Services, Centre for Parenting & Research. 2007. *Literature review: early intervention strategies for children and young people 8 to 14 years*, NSW Department of Community Services, Ashfield, November 2007. p. iii.

<sup>459</sup> *ibid.*

identified need to shift resources to support early intervention and prevention within government agencies.<sup>460</sup>

19.45 One community-wide benefit of effective early intervention programs is that they are cost-effective. The NSW Government also discusses this in the State Plan:

There is a growing recognition that stopping a problem from occurring or acting early to stop it from getting worse offers improved, more cost effective social, economic and environmental outcomes for society.<sup>461</sup>

19.46 The Committee considers that a focus on prevention and early intervention for children and young people in the middle years is paramount. Therefore, the Committee has made a number of recommendations in the Report to enhance early intervention for this age group. These include, for example, recommendations to increase access of children and young people in this age group to sport and recreational activities, resilience programs, school counsellors, as well as to a *Brighter Futures*-type of program.

## Focusing on families

Family can... be a major strength in young people's lives, but it can also be their greatest source of concern and distress.<sup>462</sup>

19.47 As discussed in Chapter 1 of this Report, an array of changes occur in the middle years, ranging from physical maturation to social and emotional development. Children and young people aged 9-14 years become more independent from their parents. At the same time, connectedness with family remains important in helping children and young people to adjust to the changes that are occurring in their lives. Children also increasingly want to participate in community and contribute to family and community life.

19.48 Children and young people in the middle years are also highly susceptible to emotional upheavals caused by family conflict, disruption, breakdown, and other family-related problems such as child and substance abuse, domestic violence and mental health issues. According to Kids Help Line, 90 per cent of family relationship contacts to its counselling service in 2006 were from children and young people aged between 10 and 18.<sup>463</sup>

19.49 Evidence presented to the Inquiry stressed that services to children and adults should take into consideration the family as a whole. This approach was described in the following terms:

Whatever you do with youth has to be holistic. It has to take in the family; it has to take in the community. When we start dealing with kids in isolation we start alienating families. The minute we alienate families we have lost the cause.<sup>464</sup>

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<sup>460</sup> NSW Government. 2006. *State Plan: a new direction for NSW*, Premier's Department, November 2006, p.76.

<sup>461</sup> NSW Government. 2007. *State Plan: a new direction for NSW, 2007 update*. F4: Embedding prevention and early intervention into government services, p. 1.

See also Ms Jane Woodruff, UnitingCare Burnside, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 12.

<sup>462</sup> Kids Help Line, *Family Relationships 2006*, pp. 1 and 2.

<sup>463</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>464</sup> Ms Noeline Olive, Casino Neighbourhood Centre, Transcript of evidence, 5 August 2009, p. 9.



19.50 In its Research and Practice Note on *Risk, protection and resilience in children and families*, DoCS notes that services and interventions that address child, family and community, rather than just the child, potentially have a greater influence on outcomes.<sup>465</sup> Commissioner Calvert suggested to the Committee that service providers tend to see the adult as a person requiring assistance, and not as someone who has responsibility for a child or young person:

They need to say... what is it that I can do as an agency or as a service provider to respond to the needs of children? So, there are two things. One, to see the adult more than as adult status, they may also be parents, and you have to take that into account; secondly, if they are parents, you also need to think about how you provide services or you need to assess if they are required and what sort of services and support those children need.<sup>466</sup>

19.51 Concerns were expressed to the Committee when working with children and young people, whose parents have limited English language skills, that fail to involve the parents can increase their feelings of isolation:

... working with the family as a whole ... is crucial in terms of approaching these issues, because otherwise you sometimes can exacerbate some of the intra-family tensions. Just working with the children and facilitating their inclusion in society can also mean that they leave the parents behind. So, often working at both ends I think serves its purposes.<sup>467</sup>

19.52 Adopting a whole-of-family approach to service provision can be particularly important for children and young people who are disadvantaged. Wesley Mission commented in its submission that children from disadvantaged backgrounds:

... need more social support than those who are growing up in a more stable, nurturing and affluent environment. These supports are best provided to the family unit within a structure which enables the entire community to develop and benefit from them. The emphasis on family intervention recognises that children are part of the family system and intervention in isolation from that unit is less likely to be successful.

...The primary factor supporting resilience in children is having a nurturing and secure family unit. Families suffering disadvantage need support to provide this for their children and to cope with their own distress. Services such as Health and Education need to be sensitive to the support needs of these families and the financial pressures which even common health issues such as asthma can place on families.<sup>468</sup>

19.53 The Committee was informed of examples of different models for providing services to children/young people and family members concurrently. There are different types of concurrent service provision including:

- services where children and young people are the primary target group, but which provide some services concurrently to their family members;
- family based services which offer programs for children, young people and parents; and

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<sup>465</sup> NSW Department of Community Services. 2007. *Risk, protection and resilience in children and families*, p.6.

<sup>466</sup> Ms Gillian Calvert, NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2009, p. 44.

<sup>467</sup> Mr Jorge Aroche, STARTTS, Transcript of evidence, 8 August 2008, p. 21.

<sup>468</sup> Submission no. 61, Wesley Mission, p. 3.

- adult-focused services, which also address the needs of clients' children to some extent.

19.54 The Marrickville South Interagency *8–12 school holiday program* is an example of a service where children and young people are the primary target group, but where some services are provided concurrently to their family members. In its submission to the Inquiry, Marrickville South Interagency noted that this model of the holiday program for children in the middle years has an ongoing family work component and a broad impact on the family as a whole.<sup>469</sup>

19.55 An example of a family-based service is the Burnside Family Learning Centre, which provides literacy and learning support for children who have identified difficulties with literacy and numeracy, as well as support for their families. The Centre has compulsory attendance of parents at weekly tutoring sessions so that they are aware of the educational goals and know what their child is being asked to learn.<sup>470</sup>

19.56 The above examples are models which include adults in services targeted at children and young people. Some evidence given to the Inquiry also suggested that programs that address adult problems such as drug and alcohol abuse, domestic and family violence and mental health illnesses could more adequately service the needs of clients' children. The NSW Women's Refuge Movement Child Support Workers expressed concern with the lack of real support for children aged 9-14 years that addressed their needs separately from those of their mother's experience of domestic violence:

If a woman approaches a health service for counselling... it should be mandatory to enquire about her children and have... an accredited young person's service to provide support and assistance with any issues for that child, as an individual, as well as looking at the family as a whole... At present there are some services provided for young people but they are not across the board and some offer little more than a place to hang out. Currently they are often accessed as a last resort and a result of petty crime rather than addressing the cause before it manifests in unacceptable behaviour.<sup>471</sup>

19.57 The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (the Commission) informed the *Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW* (the Wood Inquiry) of "promising initiatives which could be extended", such as the federally funded COPMI initiative (*Children of Parents with a Mental Illness*); PUPS (*Parenting Under Pressure*), a home-based drug treatment service developed by Professor Sharon Daw from Griffith University; and the national *Healthy Start* initiative of the Parenting Research Centre in Melbourne and the Faculty of Health Science, University of Sydney. However, the Commission also noted that:

While there are innovative examples in many fields of child-sensitive adult services, they tend to be few and far between. They are often based on short term funding, are poorly evaluated and are lacking in strategies to 'scale up'.

A whole-of-government policy aimed at addressing the wellbeing of vulnerable children wherever their parents receive services is required. To achieve this there will need to be

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<sup>469</sup> The program involved a partnership between ANGLICARE, Holy Trinity Church, Marrickville Council, Marrickville Child, Adolescent and Family Health Team, CONNECT Marrickville, Inner West Aboriginal Community Company, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre and South Marrickville PCYC: Submission no. 30, Marrickville South Interagency, pp. 4-5.

<sup>470</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, pp. 3 and 13.

<sup>471</sup> Submission no. 19, NSW Women's Refuge Child Support Workers, pp. 12-13.

culture change from 'shifting risk' to 'sharing risk.' Funding models must allow for family-centred services. And a major professional development strategy is required to build the capacity of traditionally adult-focused services which are ideally located to protect and improve the wellbeing of vulnerable children.<sup>472</sup>

### Committee comment

- 19.58 The evidence presented to the Inquiry noted the importance of providing services for children and young people in the middle years that take into account the family. This can include different models of concurrent service provision to children and young people aged 9-14 years, as well as to their families. There is also a need to reorient adult services to be more inclusive of children and young people. UnitingCare Burnside stated in its submission that "family based services increase protective factors at home that contribute to resilience" and recommended that "strategically located, family-based services be provided to build the resilience of children and young people in the middle years."<sup>473</sup>
- 19.59 The Committee believes that a coordinated approach involving the whole family can be very effective in many circumstances where family situations are impacting upon the wellbeing of children and young people. The Committee recommends that family-based approaches to the provision of services to children and young people in the middle years should be strengthened. This would be consistent with the *National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children* emphasis on working with families to protect children.

### Families with complex needs

- 19.60 The Committee was informed that there are a number of mechanisms in place among Government agencies designed to assist families with complex problems. These include a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between DoCS and DET; a MOU between DoCS and the Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care; as well as the *Housing and Human Services Accord*.<sup>474</sup>
- 19.61 From a child protection perspective, the Wood Inquiry made recommendations in relation to families with multiple needs, recommending that each responsible agency identify its 'high end users', so that an integrated case management response can be provided to these families, which would include participation by relevant non-government organisations.<sup>475</sup> This should include the adoption of mechanisms for identifying new families and for enabling existing families to exit with suitable supports in place. Specialists in substance abuse, mental health, domestic violence and other similar areas should assist DoCS caseworkers in case allocation, planning,

<sup>472</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People. 2008. *Submission to the Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW*, p. 39.

<sup>473</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 3.

<sup>474</sup> Mr Peter Walsh, NSW Department of Community Services, Transcript of evidence, 2 July 2008, pp. 29-30. The Housing and Human Services Accord is a key part of the NSW Government's Reshaping Public Housing reforms and is a formal agreement between human service agencies – both government and non-government – to work in partnership to support the most vulnerable and disadvantaged in the community: Housing NSW website, *Housing and Human Services Accord*.

<sup>475</sup> Referred to by the NSW Department of Community Services as Frequently Reported Families and who, for the Department, are estimated to number between 2,500 and 7,500 families: Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW. 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p. 387.

assessments and interventions, by attending DoCS Community Service Centres on a regular basis.<sup>476</sup>

- 19.62 The NSW Government has indicated that it will commence a *Frequently Encountered Families* case coordination project in selected locations on a local basis, before implementing the project more broadly. This model will be based on existing coordinated case management projects, and will focus on both high end users and those who are but not yet high end users, but who are known to multiple agencies and where it is considered that earlier intervention may prevent significant future harm.<sup>477</sup>

### **Intervening at a younger age**

- 19.63 Evidence presented to the Inquiry suggests that children and young people are being exposed to a wide variety of influences at a younger age. For example, the early sexualisation of girls may occur as a result of contemporary social influences. According to Ms Lee-Ann Emzin of Lismore City Council:

Nine to 14 is where they have got a little bit more independence and a little more freedom. At nine you think you are going on 21. These days I see the difference in children who are nine. They used to be babies at nine, with the girls playing with dolls and boys with trucks, but it is different now. The world has changed.<sup>478</sup>

- 19.64 A number of problems, such as mental health and behavioural issues, are becoming apparent at a younger age, so that the community needs to start building resilience and supporting mental health at a much earlier age.<sup>479</sup> Mission Australia informed the Committee that it is receiving referrals for children as young as nine years old who are experiencing family breakdowns, withdrawal from support networks, and displaying risky behaviours such as sexual activity and alcohol and drug use.<sup>480</sup>
- 19.65 Southern Youth and Family Services also has seen both increased incidences and increased intensity of problems such as eating disorders, gang involvement, and violence in the home, schools and on the streets among 9-14 year olds.<sup>481</sup> These behaviours made it difficult for youth services to effectively and safely support their client.<sup>482</sup>
- 19.66 Evidence to the Inquiry provided examples of services that could be extended to include a younger age group. For example, reviewing the age criteria for services such as the Adolescent and Family Counselling Program was raised for consideration by Mission Australia in its submission:

Targeting children in early stages of adolescence will reduce increasing levels of mental health problems through a greater focus on preventative therapies, rather than crisis interventions... Implementing early intervention strategies for children and young people at an earlier age may reduce risky behaviour, mental health problems and

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<sup>476</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p.387.

<sup>477</sup> NSW Government, 2009. *Keep them safe, a shared approach to child wellbeing*, p. 89.

<sup>478</sup> Ms Lee-Ann Emzin, Lismore City Council Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2009, p. 20.

<sup>479</sup> Professor David Bennett, Centre for the Advancement for Adolescent Health, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 8.

<sup>480</sup> Submission no. 83, Mission Australia, p. 2.

<sup>481</sup> Southern Youth and Family Services, Correspondence in response to questions, 4 May 2009, p. 1.

<sup>482</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

provide greater motivation for young people to utilise their social development and inter-relational skills.<sup>483</sup>

- 19.67 Some evidence to the Inquiry commented about other programs that could be extended to include a younger age group. For example, Southern Youth and Family Services identified that Community Health for Adolescents in Need (CHAIN) is a service that could be expanded to a younger age group:

This service is targeted to young people aged 12 to 24 years who have a range of needs and who include young people with drug and alcohol issues, mental health issues, primary health care needs, poor diet, inability to access and maintain treatment and other such problems. The focus is on improving their health care, self care and access to health services. Some of the services provided include practical assistance and support, counselling information and referral coupled with health education, access to clinics such a free dental service, hair and skin care, exercise and healthy eating education and support and access to GP's [through Headspace].<sup>484</sup>

### **Committee comment**

- 19.68 Evidence to the Inquiry suggests that problems such as mental health and behavioural problems are becoming apparent at a younger age, and that there are gaps in service provision for this age group. This points to the need to ensure children and young people in the middle years have access to services and early intervention programs that may have traditionally only been available for older young people, or that special programs/services are developed for children and young people in the middle years.

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<sup>483</sup> Submission no. 83, Mission Australia, p. 2.

<sup>484</sup> Southern Youth and Family Services, Correspondence in response to questions, 4 May 2009, p. 2.

## Chapter Twenty - Coordination and Funding

...it is important for families 'to only have to tell their story once'. In the current service system, families who have reached a crisis and are desperate for help are often 'being referred on to other services because they don't meet the criteria'. This means they have to tell their story over and over again. These frustrations can compound tensions within the families rather than helping to alleviate them.<sup>485</sup>

### Introduction

20.1 Although an interagency approach supporting children and their families has been identified as having the potential to increase resilience of children and young people,<sup>486</sup> barriers exist to agencies and departments working together effectively, at a both the systems level and the local level. These include difficulties with communication, co-ordination and partnerships between government departments, agencies and community members. A range of issues was identified in evidence to the Inquiry about agencies working together effectively. These included the need for:

- agencies at a local level to work in partnership and in a coordinated manner;
- integrated models of service delivery - 'one stop shops';
- greater community involvement; and
- improved planning mechanisms at a local and state level, including a whole-of-government approach.

20.2 This chapter considers the need for much closer collaboration between services, government agencies and the community to ensure that the needs of 9-14 year olds are universally addressed. The chapter discusses the advantages of whole-of-government policies and planning approaches in relation to young people's issues, and considers the adequacy of current funding models to support children and young people in the middle years in the light of funding deficiencies identified in evidence to the Inquiry.

### Collaboration and communication

20.3 The need for greater collaboration and communication between services and service sectors in general has been widely identified in the literature.<sup>487</sup> The Committee heard about the need for improved cooperation between services and government departments:

There must be improved cooperation between community services and government departments. These relationships should not be forced but instead be allowed to form naturally over time. For example, over the past 30 years we have formed a large number of formal and informal partnerships which are very successful. We share information, training, staff, policies, provide support for each other in submissions, expressions of interest, interview panels etc. These relationships work well because we have a level of mutual respect and agreements that we will not compete unnecessarily.

Through these connections with other services we are able to work effectively together to achieve the best possible outcomes for the clients and minimise the level of intrusion in their lives. This requires a level of trust and a mutual understanding of each other's

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<sup>485</sup> Submission no. 76, Uniting Care Burnside, pp. 18-19.

<sup>486</sup> Submission no. 36, Federation of Parents and Citizens of NSW, pp. 4-5.

<sup>487</sup> See, e.g., Families Australia, *Meeting the needs of vulnerable children and families - October 2008*.

service. This understanding and respect is developed over time and cannot be forced.<sup>488</sup>

- 20.4 Evidence presented to the Inquiry not only highlighted the importance of services working in partnership, but also the need for a whole-of-community approach involving the community, children and young people. The Youth Unit of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church noted that resilience in young people comes from feeling connected to a community.<sup>489</sup>
- 20.5 The Committee notes that there are a range of co-ordination and planning mechanisms already in place in New South Wales. For example, the Communities Division of DoCS is responsible for co-ordinating the implementation of the *NSW Youth Action Plan*, although evidence to the Inquiry suggests that the implementation processes for the Youth Plan need to be strengthened.<sup>490</sup>
- 20.6 The *Better Futures* program has been located in the NSW Department of Community Services and has a co-ordination role for service provision for 9-18 year olds.<sup>491</sup> The program appears to have had a greater role in co-ordinating service provision at a local level than ensuring a whole-of-government approach to service provision at a departmental level, in a manner similar to *Families NSW*. The *Better Futures* program is discussed in detail in Chapter 11 of this Report.

### Integrated service provision

- 20.7 The Committee notes that the resilience literature indicates that multi-faceted strategies, addressing underlying risks and protective factors, are more effective than those that are single issue-focused. Where services are easily accessible to the parents, for instance through co-location, the benefit to families increases.<sup>492</sup> A number of submissions identified the need for a 'one stop shop', to provide a range of services to meet the varied needs of children and young people and their families simultaneously:
- Children and families that are socially excluded are most likely to benefit from being able to access a suite of services through an integrated service model. Co-location and co-ordination of services enables children and families to experience a "one-door, no-wrong door" approach to service delivery.<sup>493</sup>
- 20.8 The Wood Inquiry recommended that services should be integrated, multi-disciplinary and co-located, wherever practicable, and that child and family services should be established in locations of greatest need, by outreach if necessary.<sup>494</sup> The

<sup>488</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, p. 19.

<sup>489</sup> Submission no. 22, Youth Unit of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia, pp. 7- 9.

<sup>490</sup> Ms Fiona Robards, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, Transcript of evidence, 17 March 2009, p. 8.

<sup>491</sup> In August 2009 the NSW Minister for Youth announced that the Better Futures program would be managed by the NSW Commission for Children and Young People. Hon Graham West MP, NSW Minister for Youth, 2009. *New Commissioner for Children and Young People Appointed*, media release, 5 August 2009.

<sup>492</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p.115.

<sup>493</sup> Submission no. 76, Uniting Care Burnside, pp. 18-19.

<sup>494</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p.387.

Committee notes that this recommendation was supported by the NSW Government in its response to the Wood Inquiry Report.<sup>495</sup>

- 20.9 As was identified in Chapter 12 of this Report, the Committee also supports the development of integrated, multi-disciplinary and co-located services, but considers that it is crucial that these co-located services include services for children and young people 9-14 years and their parents/carers.

### **Policy, planning and service delivery**

- 20.10 It is apparent from evidence given to the Inquiry that a greater emphasis on policy, planning and service delivery for 9-14 year olds is required, This includes a stronger whole-of-government approach:

We need a holistic approach to supporting 9-14's not piecemeal and not to be deemed as an innovative program - instead, to be recognised as an essential program for the support of children and families.<sup>496</sup>

- 20.11 The Committee notes that there are some structural impediments to the development of policy for children 9-14 year olds, such as the traditional division between service planning for children and that for young people. The Commission commented about policy development based on age categories:

The ... problems facing young people's policy is that it is based firstly on separate ages of children, such as "early years" or "youth", so it doesn't capture the interconnectedness of children's development; and secondly it is based on siloed services to children, such as education, health or disability, so it is based on needs in isolation from each other and doesn't see the whole child.<sup>497</sup>

- 20.12 These problems highlight the need for policy and planning that takes into account more closely children and young people's developmental phases. The Commission suggested a planning approach based on identifying the desired outcomes, a 'population' view rather than a 'service' view.<sup>498</sup>

- 20.13 The Commission also stressed that planning should be whole-of-government, not limited to the human service agencies, and should engage community stakeholders:

There would also need to be a genuinely cross-government, not just human services planning mechanism in which agencies engage at a senior level, and genuine engagement with the range of key community stakeholders, not just service providers.<sup>499</sup>

- 20.14 This was echoed in other evidence to the Inquiry:

To address disadvantage requires a strategic whole-of-government approach coordinated with other State, Federal and local government initiatives to address personal, social and societal barriers to education. Disadvantage cannot be addressed by programs in schools alone, but a more resilient and educated young person can find a way to overcome life circumstances.<sup>500</sup>

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<sup>495</sup> New South Wales Government, 2009. *Keep them safe, a shared approach to child wellbeing*, p. 64.

<sup>496</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p.10.

<sup>497</sup> NSW Commission for Children and Young People, Questions answered after hearing, 15 April 2009, p. 2.

<sup>498</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>499</sup> *ibid.*, p. 3.

<sup>500</sup> Mrs Laura Williams, South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services, Transcript of evidence, 11 June 2008, p. 54.



- 20.15 The resilience literature also provides an additional rationale for undertaking whole-of-government planning and programs. Problems such as low birth weight, child behavioural disorders, low literacy, non-completion of school, juvenile drug use and teenage pregnancy which may fall under the jurisdiction of different government departments, share a common set of risk and protective factors. These risk and protective factors include: the quality of early parent-child attachment, peer and school connectedness, availability of social support for families and, parental poverty.<sup>501</sup>
- 20.16 Thus initiatives which focus on common underlying risk and protective factors are likely to provide outcomes that relate to the work of a range of government departments. It also suggests that a whole-of-government response - which can draw on sectors such as housing, health, education and child welfare agencies - will be more effective.<sup>502</sup>

### Committee comment

- 20.17 Evidence to the Inquiry supports the need for a whole-of-government approach to service delivery for this age group, particularly in disadvantaged communities. Therefore one of the Committee's key recommendations is the development of a whole-of-government planning process for children and young people from 0-18 years.<sup>503</sup> This would identify a small number of key programs/approaches with the potential to impact on multiple outcomes for different age groups (such as 0-8 years, 9-14 years), based on a review of the literature and also taking into consideration promising programs that are yet to be well-documented. The Committee notes that in some cases these programs may be already established, such as *Brighter Futures* and *Families NSW* for the younger age group.
- 20.18 The plan should have a significant focus providing programs and services to disadvantaged children and young people, particularly Indigenous children and young people and also include an emphasis on providing early intervention programs.
- 20.19 The Committee considers that the whole-of-government plan should take into account the role of non-government organisations and link to the relevant outcomes in the NSW State Plan. Given that the evidence about 'what works' for this age group is less developed than for the 0-8 age group, there should be a strong focus on building an evidence base through program evaluation. The Committee considers that developing a plan that extends from 0-18 years will assist in overcoming the disjuncture arising from separate planning processes for 'children' and 'young people'.
- 20.20 The planning process should also incorporate strategies to address issues of funding within a whole-of-government approach, with the aim of ensuring programs and services receive adequate resourcing to achieve desired outcomes.

### **RECOMMENDATION 58:** The Committee recommends that the Premier,

<sup>501</sup> Special Commission of Inquiry into Child Protection Services in NSW, 2008. *Report of the special commission of inquiry into child protection services in NSW*, conducted by Hon James Wood, vol. 1, p.115.

<sup>502</sup> *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 115.

<sup>503</sup> The Committee notes that existing planning processes relevant to such a plan may need to be taken into consideration when establishing the upper age limit for this plan. For example, the proposed plan for NSW Kids will be 0-16 years, and the age range for the youth health plan is 12-25 years.

through the NSW Department of Premier and Cabinet, facilitate a cross-government planning process, involving all relevant government departments, to develop a stronger whole-of-government approach to supporting the care, development and wellbeing of children and young people 0-18 years.

The resulting whole-of-government plan should:

- identify priority key programs/approaches that are likely to impact on multiple outcomes for different age groups of children and young people;
- have a significant focus on providing programs and services to disadvantaged children and young people;
- include a focus on programs and services for children and young people in the middle years.

The Committee further recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People be consulted on the proposed whole-of-government plan.

## Funding

NGO's, youth, welfare and community services are being asked to achieve unrealistic outcomes based on time limit funding. This is an enormous issue for service delivery and only further disadvantages children and young people when services are removed from already under-resourced communities when the funding period ends.<sup>504</sup>

20.21 The inadequacy of current funding models to support children and young people in the middle years was frequently raised in evidence to the Inquiry. The key concern was that a funding gap exists for this age group because current funding criteria exclude children and young people aged 9-14 years;<sup>505</sup> concerns were also expressed that what funding was available was inflexible and insufficient to meet demand, often threatening the viability of services. Furthermore, the lack of long-term and recurrent funding to address on-going needs such as provision of equipment suitable for this age group and maintenance of premises was also an issue.

20.22 Ms Frances Trimboli of YWCA NSW told the Committee that her organisation had to have a cap-in-hand approach to secure funds for this age group:

We find it really difficult to find specific funding for that age group. Obviously there is a great deal for the early intervention programs nought to five, the Department of Community Services Families NSW nought to eight and the young people's age group, which is usually 12 to 25. So you can see there is definitely a gap for children nine through to 12 in a number of areas, whether it be after-school activities or recreational programs during school holidays because it is still an age group that needs support and supervision.<sup>506</sup>

<sup>504</sup> Submission no. 48, Regional Youth Development Officers' Network, p. 11.

<sup>505</sup> Ms Frances Trimboli, YWCA NSW, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2009, p. 18. See also Submission no. 43, City of Sydney, pp. 1-2.

<sup>506</sup> Ms Frances Trimboli, YWCA NSW, Transcript of evidence, 6 August 2009, p. 18.

- 20.23 Southern Youth and Family Services also commented that “there has been almost no new money for the younger age group 9-14 years from the NSW Government in a long time. There has been some Out of Home Care Funding but that is about it in New South Wales.”<sup>507</sup>
- 20.24 In addition, the under-funding of youth services and the inadequacy of funding for out-of-school hours services are barriers to these services providing programming specifically designed for 9-14 year olds, as is discussed in Chapters 3 and 4 of this Report. Obtaining funding to conduct school holiday programs for this age group is very difficult if services are not providers of approved vacation care services and are therefore unable to receive Commonwealth Government Child Care Benefit payments on behalf of eligible families. This is discussed in Chapter 4.
- 20.25 Other evidence to the Inquiry identified inadequacies relating to funding in high needs areas for children, young people and families. According to the submission from Randwick City Council:
- Recurrent funding is insufficient to keep up with cost of delivering services plus services are being subjected to unrealistic pressure by funding bodies to accommodate new clients without making the necessary funding adjustments.
- Current services are already at capacity. Service providers are not able to take on more clients, which is a very frustrating situation resulting in many people requiring help being turned away.<sup>508</sup>
- 20.26 The Police and Community Youth Club Newcastle discussed the need for funding for basic items such as facilities and equipment:
- Much of the Newcastle PCYC’s facilities and equipment is outdated and is in dire need of repair or replacement. Refurbishment would not only provide a happier, attractive and friendly environment for youth, but will also provide a safe environment (as many of the areas [are] on the verge of becoming occupational health and safety hazards). Funding is integral to be able to continue to provide effective services for children and youth in the area.<sup>509</sup>
- 20.27 A number of submissions to the Inquiry identified issues associated with retaining skilled personnel and meeting costs associated with administrative support, insurance, transport, facilities and equipment.<sup>510</sup> Particular mention was made of the cost of compliance and accountability:
- High demands on community agencies for administration, data collection and other accountability processes. Many Government driven accountability processes have now become onerous, not related to the level of funding and staff capacity, many parts of it are unnecessary and are reducing the time spent on doing the job required. Similarly tendering processes have also become overly onerous.<sup>511</sup>
- 20.28 Southern Youth and Family Services also noted that most community agencies have not received adequate funding to manage the demands on their services, the increased expectation of quality of casework and support, increased monitoring,

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<sup>507</sup> Southern Youth and Family Services, Correspondence in response to questions, 4 May 2009, p. 3.

<sup>508</sup> Submission no. 46, Randwick City Council, p. 4.

<sup>509</sup> Submission no. 15, Police and Community Youth Club Newcastle, p 8.

<sup>510</sup> Submission no. 18, Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre, pp. 3-4. See also Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, pp. 17-18.

<sup>511</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, p. 6.

reporting and other work. This caused a reduction in service hours and at times a loss of staff positions.<sup>512</sup>

20.29 Evidence to the Inquiry also raised problems associated with time-limited funding, such as successful pilots not receiving continued funding allocations, despite ongoing needs.<sup>513</sup> Thus, Members of the North Coast Region of the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW identified that a number of programs had had great short-term success, but once a program ended, the problem soon reasserted itself.<sup>514</sup> Southern Youth and Family Services argued for moving away from providing short term, non-recurrent funding to community agencies, considering that, "It does not build capacity in the sector, does not deliver good outcomes and uses valuable time and energy."<sup>515</sup>

20.30 Another issue raised in this Inquiry related to place-based funding. In its submission, Network of Community Activities commented about the incompatibility of localised planning models with blanket models of funding:

One of the failings of work to address the needs of this age group to date has been the absence of localised planning models for 9-14 year olds. Often where funding is required a blanket model has been imposed. Example - Out of School Hours Service to be eligible for funding must open a minimum of 52 weeks a year and be available for 5-12 year olds.<sup>516</sup>

20.31 Network of Community Activities made recommendations in its submission about funding initiatives for 9-14 year olds based on needs identified at a local level:

A Pool of Government funds could be provided by State Government to contribute grants for special initiatives to address the needs of 9-14 year olds that will be based on the unique needs at a local level developed in consultation with local children, families and services.<sup>517</sup>

20.32 The Committee considers that the flexibility of place-based planning and funding is important in providing services for this age group. The Committee also considers that while pilot programs can have an important role in identifying programs that work, there is a need for long term funding for programs to bring about sustainable change, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

20.33 In its submission, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) included a case-study of a successful trial of a whole-of-government approach to targeted intervention and support of rural/remote communities to deliver better outcomes for children and young people in a number of interconnected areas, namely health, education, families and communities. Although involving a diverse range of areas in the Murdi Paaki region of far west New South Wales, the trial consistently focused on improving educational outcomes of children and young people as well as developing their resilience:

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<sup>512</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, pp. 19-20. See also Submission no. 98, Community First Step, pp. 4-5.

<sup>513</sup> Submission no. 76, UnitingCare Burnside, p. 14; and Submission no. 48, Regional Youth Development Officers' Network, p. 11.

<sup>514</sup> Submission no. 36a, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW, p. 3.

<sup>515</sup> Submission no. 54, Southern Youth and Family Services, pp. 19-20.

<sup>516</sup> Submission no. 49, Network of Community Activities, p. 4.

<sup>517</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

A key premise of the ... trial was that all jurisdictions agreed to share responsibility to improve service delivery for Indigenous Australians in the region, based on community identified priorities. Indigenous communities across the region agreed to four key regional priorities, the following three may be of particular interest to the committee:

- improving the health and well being of children and young people;
- improving educational attainment and school retention; and
- helping families to raise healthy children.<sup>518</sup>

20.34 Some communities in Murdi Paaki have achieved very tangible benefits in education, health, law and justice, and economic development. In 2007, an Australian National Audit Report on service delivery cited Murdi Paaki as one of the most successful COAG trials, having identified:

- improved literacy for Indigenous students in Years 3 and 5;
- an overall reduction in a number of crime indicators, including an 8.3 per cent decrease in domestic violence; and
- significant health improvements.<sup>519</sup>

#### Committee comment

20.35 The Committee notes that the middle years is a critical time in the development of children and young people and has the potential to be a turning point for better or worse in the lives of children and young people. Evidence to the inquiry has identified that unlike children 0-8 years, there is minimal funding available for programs specifically designed for this age group. Gaps in services and areas of improvement have been identified across a wide range of areas particularly relevant to the welfare and development this age group, such as the provision of sport and recreational activities outside of school and access to tutoring and homework assistance.

20.36 One of the Committee's key recommendations is the establishment of a funding stream to provide programs and services for the 9-14 age group. The Committee has also recommended the development of a whole-of-government plan that includes a focus on the 9-14 age group. The provision of a funding stream would facilitate the development of services and approaches for the 9-14 age group identified as priorities in this plan and would support the implementation of a number of other recommendations in this Report. The Committee considers that core components of such a funding stream should include as a minimum:

- sport, arts and other recreational activities outside of school hours; and
- a *Brighter Futures*-type program for 9 –14 year olds.

20.37 The Committee considers that the flexibility of place-based planning and funding is important in providing services for this age group. While pilot programs can have an important role in identifying programs that work, there is a need for long-term funding for programs to bring about sustainable change, particularly in disadvantaged communities.

**RECOMMENDATION 59:** The Committee recommends that the NSW Government provide a state-wide funding stream for programs and services for

<sup>518</sup> Submission no. 88, Commonwealth Department of Education Employment and Workplace Relations, p.25.

<sup>519</sup> *ibid.*, p.26.

9-14 year olds and their families with a major focus on those programs and services identified as a priority in a whole-of-government plan for children and young people.

The Committee further recommends that the Commission for Children and Young People be consulted on any proposed state-wide funding stream for programs and services for 9-14 year olds.

## Appendix One – Glossary and Acronyms

AAPVI	Australian Association for Parents of Vision Impaired
AASCP	Active After-school Communities Program
ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
AECG	Aboriginal Education Consultative Group Inc.
ACARA	Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
ACMA	Australian Communications and Media Authority
ACWA	Association of Child Welfare Agencies
ACON	AIDS Council of NSW
AIHW	Australian Institute of Health and Welfare
ARACY	Australian Research Alliance for Children and Youth
ATDO	Aboriginal Transport Development Officers
CALD	Cultural and Linguistic Diversity
CAMHS	NSW Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service
CCB	Child Care Benefit
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CoS	City of Sydney
CROC	United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child
CSGP	Community Services Grants Program
CYWU	Community and Youth Workers Union.
DADHC	New South Wales Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care
DEEWR	Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
DET	Department of Education and Training
DGO	District Guidance Officers – a school counselling position within the NSW Department of Education and Training
DIPNR	Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources
DoCS	Department of Community Services
DVA	Department of Veterans' Affairs
FaHCSIA	Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs
FAQ	Frequently Asked Questions
FRESH	A school-located holiday program for children aged 8-12 in Sydney.
GLD	Gifted and Learning Disabled
HACC	Home and Community Care
HREOC	Human Rights and Equal Opportunities Commission

Appendix One – Glossary and Acronyms

HSLO	Home School Liaison Officer
I & ES	Inner and Eastern suburbs of Sydney
ICT	Information and communication technology
IEC	Intensive English Centre
IHSYH	Innovative Health Services for Homeless Youth
IPSP	Inclusion and Professional Support Program
LAC	The Looking After Children case management system
LBOTE	Language Background other Than English
L.M.A.S.	Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support
MHA	Mental Health Association
Middle years	'Middle years' may be used to describe the 9-14 age group. Other terms are 'middle childhood', 'late childhood', 'early adolescence', 'pre-adolescence', 'pre-teens' and 'tweens'.
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
Murdi Paaki	Region of western NSW including the communities of Bourke, Brewarrina, Broken Hill, Cobar, Collarenebri, Coonamble, Dareton, Enngonia, Goodooga, Gulargambone, Ivanhoe, Lightning Ridge, Menindee, Quambone, Tibooburra, Walgett, Weilmoringle and Wilcannia.
NAPCAN	The National Association for Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect
NAPLAN	National Assessment Program - Literacy and Numeracy
NCOSS	Council of Social Services NSW
NDS	National Disability Services
NGO	Non-government organisation
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OOSH	Out- of-School-Hours Care
OSHC	Out-of-School-Hours Care
OoHC	Out-of School-Hours Care
P&C	Parents and Citizens Committees
PAH	Partnership Against Homelessness
PANOC	Physical Abuse and Neglect of Children
PCAL	Premier's Council for Active Living
PCYC	Police and Community Youth Club
PDHPE	Personal Development, Health and Physical Education
PISA	Programme for International Student Assessment
RYDON	Region Youth Development Officers Network
SAAP	The Supported Accommodation Assistance Program
SCAN	Strategic Carers Action Network
SCCYP	The Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People
SES	Socio- Economic Status.



SPANS	The NSW Schools Physical Activity and Nutrition Survey
Spyns	South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services
SRC	School Representative Council
STARTTS	NSW Service for the Treatment and Rehabilitation of Torture and Trauma Survivors
Tween	A term used, among several others, to describe the 9-14 years age group. See also 'middle years above'
VIEW	Voice, Interest and Education of Women
YAC	Youth Advisory Council
YAPA	Youth Action and Policy Association
YPBV	Young People Big Voice

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## Appendix Three - List of Submissions

<b>No.</b>	<b>Organisation</b>
1	Trinity Catholic College
2	Warialda Community Care Incorporated
3	Centre for Work and Life at the Hawke Research Institute, University of South Australia
4	Education Foundation Australia
5	Peer Support Australia
6	Holroyd City Council
7	The Smith Family
8	Discipline of Speech Pathology, The University of Sydney
9	Autism Spectrum Australia
10	Port Stephens Council
11	Ballina Shire Council
12	Ms Nicola Ross
13	Public Interest Advocacy Centre
14	Richmond Valley Council
15	Police and Community Youth Club Newcastle
16	Council of Social Service of NSW (NCOSS)
17	The Association for Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA)
18	Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre
19	NSW Women's Refuge Child Support Workers
20	Mid-Western Regional Council
21	Barnardos Australia
22	Youth Unit of the NSW Synod of the Uniting Church in Australia
23	Speech Pathology Australia, NSW Branch
24	Ms Judy Finlason
25	Lismore DGO Group
26	Parentline
27	Marrickville Youth Resource Centre
28	Australian Association for Parents of Vision Impaired (AAPVI)
29	Maari Ma Health Aboriginal Corporation
30	Marrickville South Interagency
31	Australian Children's Television Foundation
32	Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development
33	Rutledge Solutions Pty Ltd
34	GLD Support Group, NSW Association for Gifted and Talented Children
35	Fairfield City Council
36	Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW
37	National Disability Services (NDS)
38	Carers NSW
39	Mental Health Association NSW Inc. (MHA)
40	Scouts Australia NSW
41	Australian Drug Foundation
42	Spyns Inc
43	City of Sydney
44	Youthsafe

- 45 Campbelltown City Council
- 46 Randwick City Council
- 47 Central Illawarra Youth Services
- 48 RYDON
- 49 Network of Community Activities
- 50 Australian Council for Educational Research
- 51 Wollongong City Council
- 52 Australian Institute of Family Studies
- 53 Waverley Council
- 54 Southern Youth and Family Services
- 55 Singleton Seventh Day Adventist Church
- 56 Unions NSW
- 57 Ku-ring-gai Council
- 58 [Name Withheld]
- 59 Lake Macquarie Adolescent Support
- 60 Miss Kaliopi Andrew
- 61 Wesley Mission
- 62 Immigrant Women's Speakout Association
- 63 Lachlan Shire Council
- 64 Centre for Children and Young People
- 65 BoysTown
- 66 United Services Union
- 67 Brewarrina Shire Council
- 68 NSW Teachers Federation
- 69 Strathfield Council
- 70 New South Wales Parents Council
- 71 Gloucester Youth Advisory Committee
- 72 beyondblue: the national depression initiative
- 73 NSW Council for Intellectual Disability
- 74 Blue Mountains City Council
- 75 Mosman Municipal Council
- 76 UnitingCare Burnside
- 77 The Children's Hospital at Westmead and the Australasian Faculty Rehabilitation  
Medicine
- 78 YMCA of Sydney
- 79 NAPCAN
- 80 Mt Druitt Blacktown Youth Service Network (MBYSN)
- 81 Catholic Education Commission
- 82 Vision Australia
- 83 Mission Australia
- 84 Clarence Valley Council
- 85 Rosemount Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services
- 86 AbSec
- 87 NSW Government
- 88 Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- 89 Baha'i Council for New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory
- 90 NSW Commission for Children and Young People
- 91 St Luke's Grammar School

Appendix Three - List of Submissions

- 92 Ashbury Public School
- 93 Beverly Hills Girls High School
- 94 Castle Hill High School
- 95 St Francis De Sales School
- 96 Hebersham Public School
- 97 Freeman Catholic College
- 98 Community First Step
- 99 Monkey Baa Theatre for Young People Ltd
- 100 Lismore Outside School Hours Care Centre
- 101 Albury City Council
- 102 Canterbury City Council
- 103 Queensland Commission for Children and Young People and Child Guardian
- 104 Northern Territory Government
- 105 Assyrian Resource Centre
- 106 Saint Mary's High School
- 107 Miss Sarah Hort
- 108 Parks Community Network
- 109 SA Department of Education and Children's Services
- 110 [Confidential Submission]
- 111 NSW Office for Children - Children's Guardian

## Appendix Four – List of Witnesses

11 June 2008

Jubilee Room, Parliament House

Organisation	Name	Position
Association of Children's Welfare Agencies.	Mr Andrew McCallum	Chief Executive Officer
Barnardos Australia.	Mrs Louise Voigt	Chief Executive Officer
UnitingCare Burnside	Ms Jane Woodruff	Chief Executive Officer
	Ms Anne Hirst	Coordinator, Family Learning Centre
	Ms Catherine Vanisi	Service user, Family Learning Centre
	Miss Racé Milic	Service user, Family Learning Centre
Carers NSW.	Ms Elena Katrakis	Chief Executive Officer
Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development	Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch	Systems Advocacy Officer
Autism Spectrum Australia.	Dr Trevor Clark	Director, Education & Research
	Mr Anthony Warren	Director, Children and Young Families
Network of Community Activities	Ms Robyn Monro-Miller	Executive Officer
	Ms Pauline O'Kane	Development Coordinator
Australian Children's Television Foundation NSW	Ms Jenny Buckland	Chief Executive Officer
Scouts Australia NSW	Mr Grant De Fries	Chief Commissioner,
	Ms Susan Metcalf	Board Member, State Executive Committee
South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services	Mrs Laura Williams	Youth Resource and Development Worker
Marrickville Youth Resource Centre.	Ms Julie Robinson	Director
Newcastle Police and Community Youth Club	Mr Lee Shields	Club Manager
	Ms Loren Riddell	University Student
Marrickville South Interagency	Ms Lucinda Malcolm	Family Support Worker
	Ms Vivienne Martin	Facilitator, Schools as Communities Centre
Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations of NSW	Ms Dianne Giblin	State President
	Ms Maren Wilson	Policy Officer

**2 July 2008****Jubilee Room, Parliament House**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Ashbury Public School	Mr Lawrence M. Mr Sam M. Mr Edmund B. Miss Georgia B. Miss Rose C. Ms Giulia Ferraina	Student Student Student Student Student Teacher
Beverly Hills Girls High School	Miss Milena M. Miss April B. Mr Armaine R. Miss Meredith B Miss Grace C. Ms Helen Antoniadis	Student Student Student Student Student Teacher
Hebersham Public School	Miss Taone P. Miss Katrina S. Mr Jamie H. Mr Byron M. Ms Betty Papandreou.	Student Student Student Student Teacher
Castle Hill High School	Miss Eliza F. Miss Sofie P. Mr Lachlan S. Mr Tom W. Ms Deborah Boss	Student Student Student Student Teacher
St Luke's Grammar School	Miss Sophie-Nicole M. Mr Mitchell R. Ms Julie Oates	Student Student Head of Middle School
St Francis De Sales Primary School	Miss Natalia M. Mr Aden S. Miss Tara Y. Mr Justin F Mr John Khilla.	Student Student Student Student Teacher



Freeman Catholic College	Miss Claudia B.	Student
	Mr Robert A.	Student
	Mr Mitchell G.	Student
	Miss Stephanie N.	Student
	Miss Alice B.	Student
	Ms Diana Arida.	Teacher
Department of Community Services	Mr Peter Walsh	Director Research
	Mr Paul Murphy	Director, Strategy and Planning
Department of Education and Training	Ms Robyn McKerihan	General Manager, Access and Equity
	Ms Marianne Millan	Director, Strategic Initiatives
Australian Council for Educational Research	Dr Andrew Dowling	Principal Research Fellow,
Commission for Children and Young People	Ms Gillian Calvert	Commissioner
Catholic Education Commission of NSW	Mr Ian Baker	Director of Education Policy and Programs
	Ms Annette Crothers	Assistant Director Programs
	Ms Margaret Chittick	Senior Professional Officer
	Ms Carolyn Hadley	Senior Education Officer

**5 August 2008****Richmond Valley Council Chambers, Casino**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Kyogle Council, Kyogle	Ms Margo Rutledge	Community Projects Officer
Casino Youth Services	Ms Elizabeth Shelley	Youth Coordinator
Casino Neighbourhood Centre	Ms Noeline Olive	General Manager
Adult Community Education Inc, North Coast	Ms Lynnette Smith	Centre Manager
Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre	Ms Gretchen Young	General Manager
Dharah Girinj Aboriginal Medical Service	Mr Jeffrey Richardson	Chief Executive Officer
Richmond Valley Council	Ms Joanne Petrovic	Community Projects Officer
Junbung Elders	Ms Nora Caldwell	Chairperson
Casino Family Support Service	Mr Tony Butcher	Family Support Worker
Uniting Church Casino	Rev Peter Boughey	Uniting Church Minister

**6 August 2008****Invercauld House, Goonellabah**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University	Dr Anne Patricia Graham	Director
	Miss Jennifer Parke	Facilitator, Young People Big Voice
	Miss Brooke Avery	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Mr Ben Cooper	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Mr Ben Stevens	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Miss Maia Ryall	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Miss Sarah Hort	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Miss Tully Rodwell	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Miss Casey Cleaver	Member, Young People Big Voice
	Mr Ahri Tallon	Member, Young People Big Voice
Trinity Catholic College	Br Peter Carroll	Principal
Lismore City Council	Ms Lee-Ann Emzin	Aboriginal Community Development Officer
Ballina Shire Council.	Mr Roberto Kenk	Social Planning Co-ordinator
YWCA New South Wales	Ms Frances Trimboli	Regional Manager
Northern Rivers Social Development Council	Mr Brett Paradise	Reconnect Regional Manager
Community Connections North Coast Inc.	Mr Don Jackson	Client Services Manager
Pathways Foundation	Mr Daniel Prokop	Spokesperson

**8 August 2008****Fairfield City Council Chambers**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
BoysTown	Ms Wendy Protheroe	General Manager, Counselling Services
Fairfield City Council	Ms Amanda Bray	Manager, Community Life
	Ms Carolyn Bourke	Outreach and Marketing Coordinator, Fairfield City Library
Fairfield Business Education Partnership Inc.	Ms Carol Richardson	Manager

Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre	Ms Dale Donadel	Manager
Assyrian Resource Centre	Mr Ashur Isaac	Community Youth Worker
Vietnamese Community in Australia	Mr Peter Pham	Links to Learning Coordinator
Parks Community Network.	Ms Tairyn Vergara	Manager
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre	Ms Ricci Bartel	Coordinator
Community First Fairfield	Ms Elaine Hirst	General Manager
STARTTS	Mr Jorge Aroche	Executive Director

**17 March 2009**

**Room 814-815, Parliament House**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
Waverley Council	Ms Maree Girdler	Divisional Manager, Integrated Planning
	Ms Margaret Brown	Project Officer, Supporting Young People's Connection to Activities.
NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health	Professor David Bennett	Head
	Ms Fiona Robards	Coordinator
Network of Community Activities	Ms Robyn Monro-Miller	Executive Officer
	Ms Pauline O'Kane	OOSH Development Co-ordinator
Catholic Education Commission NSW	Mr Ian Baker	Director, Policy and Programs
	Ms Lorraine Walker	State Coordinator, Student Welfare Programs
	Ms Geraldine Gray	State Coordinator, Special Learning Needs
Council of Social Service of NSW	Ms Alison Peters	Director
	Mr Dev Mukherjee	Senior Policy Officer
Youth Action and Policy Association	Mr Reynato Reodica	Executive Officer
Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations.	Ms Dianne Butland	Executive Member
Parenting and Family Support Centre, University of QLD	Professor Matthew Sanders	Director
Barnardos Australia.	Louise Voigt	Chief Executive Officer

**15 April 2009**

**Room 814-815, Parliament House**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
University of Western Sydney	Professor Margaret Vickers	Professor of Education

Participants in Consultation at Lismore

**5 August 2008**

**Invercauld House, Goonellabah**

<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Associated School</b>
North Coast Parents and Citizens Association	Ms Karen Armstrong	Casino High School
	Mr Gary Phelps	
	Ms Helen McLeod	
	Ms Toni York	Casino West Public School
	Ms Deanna Hartin	
	Ms Jenny King	Casino West Public School and Casino High School
	Ms Debbie Clarke	
	Ms Leanne Collison	
	Ms Leonie Aafjes	Kadina High School
	Ms Janelle Jeffrey	Kadina High School and Alstonville High School

## Appendix Five – Site Inspections

### **CASINO - Tuesday 5 August 2008**

The Committee held a public hearing at Richmond Valley Council Chambers, Casino.

The Committee held an informal lunch meeting with representatives of local government and community organisations at Richmond Valley Council Chambers, Casino.

The Committee visited local community services including Adult Community Education Inc, Casino Youth Services, and Ngunya Jarjum Aboriginal Child and Family Network.

### **LISMORE – Tuesday 5 August 2008**

The Committee held a roundtable consultation with representatives from Parents and Citizens Associations in the Lismore/Casino area at Invercauld House Conference Centre, Goonellabah.

The Committee visited a local community service, Lismore Out of School Hours Care Centre based at Lismore Public School.

### **LISMORE – Wednesday 6 August 2008**

The Committee held a public hearing at Invercauld House Conference Centre, Goonellabah. A consultation was also held with youth representatives from the Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

The Committee held an informal lunch meeting with representatives of local government and community organisations at Invercauld House Conference Centre, Goonellabah.

The Committee visited Ballina District Community Service Association.

### **FAIRFIELD – Friday 8 August 2008**

The Committee held a public hearing at Fairfield City Council Chambers, Wakeley.

The Committee held an informal lunch meeting with representatives of Local Government and community organisations at Fairfield City Council Chambers, Wakeley.

The Committee received presentations from Junction Works Inc., a local provider of services to young people, and Powerhouse Youth Theatre, a local cultural organisation for young people, in lieu of visiting their services.

The Committee visited Cabramatta Community Centre where it received a briefing the services available in the Centre. The visit included afternoon tea with a group of culturally and linguistically diverse young people and representatives of community organisations.

## Appendix Six – Committee Minutes

### Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 5)

29 November 2007 at 1.05 pm

Room 1136 Parliament House

#### Members Present

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Rev Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.05 pm

#### 5. Proposed Committee Inquiries for 2008

- Resilience and the Middle Years; and
- Young People and Parenting Services.

Resolved on the motion of the Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, seconded by the Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

‘That the Committee conduct an inquiry to examine the needs of children in the middle years between about nine years and 13-14 years, in particular the factors that assist children to develop resilience and

‘That the secretariat draft Terms of Reference including:

- the definition of the age-group;
- opportunities to develop resilience;
- vulnerable categories of children;
- gender issues.

It was agreed that the secretariat would circulate a list of proposed dates for the first hearing of the inquiry to be held as soon as possible in 2008, commencing with advertising of the inquiry, in March 2008.


It was suggested that some relevant literature be circulated to Committee Members.

The Committee adjourned at 1.30 pm.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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### Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 6)

Thursday 28 February 2008 at 1.15 pm

Room 1102, Parliament House

### **Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

### **6. Terms of Reference for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years:**

Resolved on the motion of Ms Marie Andrews MP, seconded by Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

‘That the draft Terms of Reference be adopted’.

### **7. Advertising of Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

Resolved on the motion of Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, seconded by Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

‘That the Committee advertise the Children and Young People 9-14 Years Inquiry, calling for submissions by the deadline date of 5 May 2008, and that the Secretariat be authorised to publish material relating to the Inquiry in a range of relevant smaller publications and in relevant email mail-outs with the assistance of the Commission for Children and Young People.’

### **8. Plan for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years:**

The Chair informed Members that the proposed plan included two full day hearings; two regional trips (one overnight) and one metropolitan visit. The Committee might need to make additional visits at a later date after considering evidence presented to the hearings. The Hon Kayee Griffin MLC suggested that an additional metropolitan meeting could be useful.

The Chair outlined the proposal that the Committee set aside a half day of its two-day public hearing program to receive evidence from Student Representative Councils. The Secretariat would work with the Parliamentary Education and Community Relations section to access Student Representative Councils. A wider range of young people would be consulted with during the regional visits and it is likely that the Commission will conduct consultations in the preparation of its own submission.

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC suggested that the Committee contact the Government’s Youth Advisory Committee. A letter will be sent inviting them to make a submission to the Inquiry. She also suggested that the Report should include information about interstate programs relevant to the age group. One approach would be for the Secretariat to identify relevant interstate Ministers and key researchers, for example, Mr Hugh McKay, who was known to be doing related research in this area. The Hon Rev Fred Nile MLC suggested contacting agencies equivalent to the Commission for Children and Young People in each State.

### **Timetable**

Members confirmed that the proposed hearing dates of Wednesday 11 June and Wednesday 2<sup>nd</sup> July were acceptable to them.

Members also agreed to conduct a regional overnight visit on Tuesday 5 and Wednesday 6 August.

Members agreed to conduct a metropolitan visit on Friday 8 August 2008.

Members agreed to conduct a regional one-day visit on Wednesday 13 August and noted that the Hon Catherine Cusack MLC was not likely to be available on that date.

Members agreed that Tuesday 18 November at 10 am would be suitable for a deliberative meeting to discuss the draft Report.

### **Locations**

Members agreed that the focus of the inquiry should be broad across all socio-economic groups and although it would be necessary to consider socio-economic disadvantage this should not be the primary focus. With regard to Indigenous disadvantage, the Hon Catherine Cusack MLC suggested that the Committee could ask the Legislative Council's Social Issues Committee to contribute suggestions and information based on the recommendations of its Inquiry titled 'Overcoming Indigenous Disadvantage'.

Options for locations to visit were as follows:

### **Lismore/ Casino – Overnight Regional Visit on 5 and 6 August 2008**

Members agreed that the Lismore/Casino area was very suitable for the overnight regional visit because of its proximity to the Centre for Social and Policy Research at Lismore. This area includes an area of severe social disadvantage around Casino. Mr Steve Cansdell MP suggested that Corakai would be valuable to visit to study the problems of the area. Members agreed that the location was easily accessible via flights in and out of Lismore.

### **Proposals for a One-Day Regional Visit**

- **Albury**

Albury may be suitable because it included areas of disadvantage as well as having an active council and cross-border issues which would be of particular interest. It was also easily accessible for a one-day visit.

- **Dubbo**

Dubbo may be another option but it may be over consulted. Walgett had an Aboriginal Medical Service and exit flights were possible up to 8.30 pm at night. Dr McDonald MP suggested that Bourke was accessible for a one-day trip. The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC suggested Moree would also be suitable.

### **Proposal for a Third One-Day Regional Visit**

The Chair invited Members to consider conducting a third one-day regional visit. Members agreed that it would be helpful if the Secretariat would investigate travel arrangements to Albury, Bourke and Moree including the possibility of chartering a plane for a one-day trip. Mr Steve Cansdell MP suggested Albury for a third regional one-day visit. The Hon Kayee Griffin MLC supported the proposal to do a third regional day visit. The Hon Fred Nile MLC expressed the view that a western NSW location was needed and that Broken Hill warranted consideration.

The Chair asked the Secretariat to look at options for flights, communities and socio-economic profiles to identify an appropriate third site for a visit of inspection and that it should propose areas in the north, west and south of NSW. Areas could include southern NSW, Albury, Bourke, Walgett, Broken Hill and Moree. She suggested that the most likely time for the third day visit would be in the previously suggested period of 16 to 19 September. The Secretariat will check Members' availability during this period.

Resolved on the motion of the Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded by the Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

'That the Committee endorses the proposed plan for the Children and Young People 9-14 Years Inquiry including the proposed dates for public hearings, consultations and site visits, subject to any necessary changes'.



Resolved on the motion of Dr Andrew McDonald MP, seconded by the Hon Catherine Cusack MLC:

‘That the Committee authorises the Secretariat to contact relevant organisations and arrange all relevant briefings and consultations in relation to the Inquiry’.

#### **9. Correspondence in relation to the above Inquiry**

Resolved on the motion of Dr Andrew McDonald MP, seconded by Hon Fred Nile MLC:

‘That the Committee write to the Premier and all relevant Ministers and interested parties in order to obtain information in relation to the Children and Young People 9-14 Years Inquiry.’

#### **10. Any Other Business**

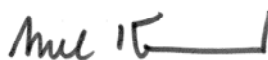
The Hon Kayee Griffin MLC suggested that the Committee look at options for metropolitan visits at the next meeting and supported the need to focus on a multicultural location in the west or south west of Sydney. The Hon Fred Nile MLC asked whether the research for the Inquiry into Middle Years would take account of the impact of video games in relation to violence and murder committed by young people and reported in the media. The Chair referred to the excellent work conducted by INSPIRE in New South Wales in researching videogames in relation to socially dysfunctional young people.

The Hon Kayee Griffin MLC suggested that the Secretariat contact the Local Government and Shires Association and the PCYCs. The Association would be asked to draw the Inquiry to the attention of its members through its bulletin that is distributed to all NSW councils.

The meeting concluded at 1:50 pm



Chair



Committee Manager

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### **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 8)**

Thursday 10 April 2008 at 1.15 p.m.

Parliament House

#### **Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Rev the Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.15 p.m.

#### **4. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

##### **(i) Submissions**

Members agreed that summaries forwarded as submissions be sent to them at the end of each week by email.

**(ii) Visits of Inspection**

Members noted the two regional Committee visits, and the proposed metropolitan visit to Fairfield.

Members agreed to hold Thursday 18 September 2008 for a possible additional regional visit of inspection.

Dr Andrew McDonald MP gave his apology for the Albury visit of inspection on Wednesday 13 August 2008.

Members agreed that the deliberative meeting to discuss the final Draft Report be moved from 18 November 2008, and that the Secretariat shall contact Members to confirm their availability.

Moved by Mr Steve Cansdell MP, seconded by Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That the Consultation Plan be adopted with the amendments as agreed above.’

Discussion on the schools invited to consultations ensued. Members asked that the Secretariat draft a plan for the next deliberative meeting, which would include visits to schools in regional areas.

The Hon Fred Nile MLC requested that Christians Schools Australia be invited to participate.

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC enquired whether letters had been sent to Commissions in other States inviting them to provide information to the Inquiry.

**(iii) Travel Proposal for the Speaker’s Approval**

Moved by Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded by Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

‘That the Chair submit a travel proposal to the Speaker for the Committee’s regional visits’.

The Hon Catherine Cusack MLC and Mr Steve Cansdell MP informed the Committee that they would make their own travel arrangements for the Lismore/ Casino visit.

**(iv) Invitations to Submit**

Moved by Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded by Hon Fred Nile MLC:

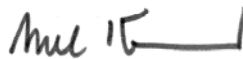
‘That the Committee invite and accept submissions to the Inquiry as the need arises, prior to the finalisation of the Report of the Inquiry’.

The Committee adjourned at 1.45 p.m.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 9)**

Thursday 5 June 2008 at 1.15 p.m.

Parliament House

**Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.20 p.m.

### **Apologies**

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC.

## **5. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 years**

### **Publication on Website of Submissions**

Moved Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, seconded by Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That Submissions 1 - 86 be published on the Committee’s website, with the following exceptions:

- the identity of the author of Submission No. 58 be suppressed prior to publication;
- the Appendix to Submission No. 13 be treated as confidential; and
- two specified articles provided as supplementary material with Submission No. 52, be treated as confidential.’

### **Schedules for Public Hearing 11 June 2008**

Schedule was forwarded to members this week. Catering will not be required for lunch break during hearing.

### **Schools Involvement**

List of schools appearing at Public Hearing on 2 July 2008 was distributed to members.

### **Exclusion of Media and Public from Student Presentations**

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded by Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

‘That all members of the public, except those whom the Committee considers to be connected to any of the schools or the students making presentations to the Committee, shall be excluded from attending the student presentation sections of the hearing on 2 July 2008.’

Also, that the Secretariat inform media that schools will be appearing at the hearing and if they are interested in speaking to schools or students, they must do so outside of the hearing, subject to agreement by the school.’

### **Regional and Metropolitan Visits**

Dr Andrew McDonald MP will be an apology for Albury visit on 13 August 2008.

Mr Steve Cansdell MP will not require transport for Lismore visit on 5 & 6 August 2008.

Secretariat to confirm with members regarding transport for Fairfield visit on 8 August 2008.

### **Regional and Urban Advertising**

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded by Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

‘That the Committee advertise the Inquiry on Children and Young People 9-14 Years in urban and regional media outlets as required’.

The Committee adjourned at 1.40 p.m.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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## **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 10)**

Wednesday 11 June 2008 at 9.00 a.m.

Jubilee Room, Parliament House

### **Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC

### **Apologies**

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC.

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.00 a.m.

### **2. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

The Chair referred Members to the prepared questions distributed with the folders for the ensuing public hearing. She invited Members to address additional questions to witnesses as they wished.

### **3. Other Business**

#### **Apologies for Future Meetings**

The Chair informed Members that she may not be able to attend the next public hearing. The Deputy Chair, Dr Andrew McDonald MP, confirmed that he would be available to act as Chair if necessary.

The Hon Fred Nile MLC gave notice to the Committee that he will not be able to attend the Albury Regional Visit on 13 August 2008. Dr Andrew McDonald MP confirmed his inability for that date.

### **4. Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

The Chair opened proceedings at 9.15 a.m.

Mr Andrew McCallum, Chief Executive Officer, of the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies (ACWA) was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Mrs Louise Voigt, Chief Executive Officer, Barnardos, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Ms Jane Woodruff, Chief Executive Officer, Uniting Care Burnside, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Ms Anne Hirst, Co-ordinator, Uniting Care Burnside Family Learning Centre; Ms Catherine Tuna Vanisi, Service User, Uniting Care Burnside Family Learning Centre; Ms Race Milic, Service User, Uniting Care Burnside Family Learning Centre were sworn and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Elena Katrakis, Chief Executive Officer, Carers NSW, was sworn and examined. Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Ms Belinda Epstein-Frisch, Institute for Family Advocacy and Leadership Development was affirmed and examined. Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Dr Trevor Raymond Clark, Director, Education and Research, Autism Spectrum Australia, and Mr Anthony John Warren, Director, Children and Young Families, Autism Spectrum Disorder, Autism Spectrum Australia were affirmed and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Robyn Monro-Miller, Executive Officer, Network of Community Activities, was sworn and examined. Ms Pauline O’Kane, Development Coordinator, Network of Community Activities was affirmed and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Jennifer Margaret Buckland, Chief Executive Officer, Australian Children’s Television Foundation, was affirmed and examined. Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Mr Grant Raymond De Fries, Chief Commissioner, Scouts Australia New South Wales and Ms Susan Kathleen Metcalf, Board Member, State Executive Committee, Scouts Australia New South Wales were sworn and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Vivienne Jacqueline Martin, Facilitator, Schools as Communities Centre, Marrickville South Interagency; Ms Julie Ann Robinson, Director, Marrickville Youth Resource Centre; Mr Lee Thomas Shields, Club Manager, Newcastle Police and Community Youth Clubs; Ms Loren Anne Riddell, University Student, University of Newcastle were affirmed and examined.

Ms Laura Ann Williams, Youth Resource and Development Worker, South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services and Ms Lucinda Margaret Sophie Malcolm, Family Support Worker, Marrickville South Interagency were sworn and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Maren Lee Wilson, Policy Officer, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales and Ms Dianne Christine Giblin, State President, Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations of New South Wales were affirmed and examined. Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

### **Supplementary Evidence**

Ms Laura Ann Williams, South Penrith Youth and Neighbourhood Services tabled the *‘Getting It Together, Making a Difference with School-Community Partnerships Manual’* for schools and community-based agencies.

Mr Lee Shields, Newcastle Police and Community Youth Clubs, undertook to send the Annual Report which included statistics for the Hunter Region on crime reduction.

### **Publication of Evidence on Website**

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded Mr Stephen Cansdell MP:

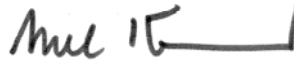
‘That the Committee make the transcripts of the proceedings available on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The Chair closed the meeting at 4.30 p.m.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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### **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 11)**

Wednesday 2 July 2008 at 9.30 a.m.

Jubilee Room, Parliament House

#### **Members Present**

Dr Andrew McDonald MP (Acting Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC.

The Acting Chair opened the deliberative meeting at 9.30 a.m.

#### **Apologies**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Hon Fred Nile MLC.

#### **4. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

##### **(i) Regional visits**

**Lismore:** The Acting Chair advised Members that there had been an alteration to the flight times and a new itinerary with changed flight times was distributed.

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That all members of the public, except staff from the University and those whom the Committee considers to be connected to any of the young people making presentations to the Committee, shall be excluded from attending the hearing to be held at the Centre for Children and Young People in Lismore on Wednesday 6 August 2008.’

##### **(ii) Publishing submissions.**

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That Submissions 87-90 be published on the Committee’s website’.

Moved Mr Steve Cansdell MP, seconded Hon Catherine Cusack MLC:

‘That Submissions 91-97 be published on the Committee’s website using only the given names of the students involved’.

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That the transcript of evidence which is published on the Committee website be amended to remove the swearing in/affirming of the students, and any family names of children and young people referred to in the evidence.’

(iii) Hearing procedures 2 July 2008 – Schools

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That the accompanying teachers from each school be sworn in.’

## **6. Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

The Acting Chair opened the proceedings at 10.00 am.

### **Ashbury Public School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Lawrence M, Sam M, Edmund B, Rose C, Georgia B, and Giulia Ferraina.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **Beverly Hills Girls High School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Milena M, April B, Armaine R, Meredith B, Grace C, and Helen Antoniadis

In her opening statement, Miss Campbell drew the attention of the Committee to the last paragraph beginning with ‘This information’ on page 5 of the written submission. She requested that a correction be made. Instead of ‘13 per cent’, this should be ‘13 out of 15’. Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **Hebersham Primary School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Taone P, Katrina S, Jamie H, Byron M, and Betty Papandreou.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **Castle Hill High School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Eliza F, Sofie P, Lachlan S, Tom W, and Deborah Boss.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **St Luke’s Grammar School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Julie Anne Oates, Sophie-Nicole M, and Mitchell R.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **St Francis De Sales Primary School**

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

John Khillia, Natalia M, Aden S, Tara Y, and Justin F.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **Freeman Catholic College**

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

Diana Arida, Claudia B, Robert A, Mitchell G, Stephanie N, and Alice B.

Evidence concluded, the Acting Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public, as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

### **Supplementary Evidence**

Beverly Hills Girls High School provided a copy of the SRC's questionnaire titled 'The Needs of Children and Young People in NSW in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century';

Tom Woodman, Castle Hill High School, Castle Street, Castle Hill tabled a hard copy of the school's presentation.

At 11.45 am the Chair adjourned the hearing for a lunch break.

The Committee reconvened at 12.45 pm.

Peter Walsh, Director, Research, and Paul Murphy, Director, Strategy and Planning, both from the Department of Community Services, were affirmed and examined:

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Robyn Mckerihan, General Manager, Access and Equity, Department of Education and Training, was sworn and examined; and Marianne Millan, Director, Strategic Initiatives, Department of Education and Training, was affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Andrew Dowling, Principal Research Fellow, Australian Council for Educational Research, was sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Gillian Calvert, Commissioner for Children and Young People, Commission for Children and Young People, was affirmed and examined.

The Acting Chair asked Ms Calvert whether she gave permission to make her written submission public. Ms Calvert agreed. Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Ian Baker, Director of Education Policy and Programs, Annette Crothers, Assistant Director Programs, Margaret Chittick, Senior Professional Officer, and Carolyn Hadley, Senior Professional Officer, Catholic Education Commission of New South Wales, were sworn and examined.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

### **Publication of Evidence on Website**

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

'That the Committee make the transcripts of the proceedings available on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.'

The Acting Chair adjourned the hearing at 3.30 pm.

Acknowledgements to Schools

Moved Mr Steve Cansdell MP, seconded Hon Catherine Cusack MLC:



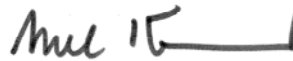
'That the Committee send some form of acknowledgement to the schools in recognition of their excellent contribution to the Inquiry'.

Invitation to Kids Help Line

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC requested that the Kids Help Line give evidence to the Committee. Moved Mr Steve Cansdell MP, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

'That the Committee invite the Kids Help Line to appear before the Committee '.

The Acting Chair closed the meeting at 3.40 pm.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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### **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 12)**

Tuesday 5 August 2008 at 10.00

Council Chambers, cnr Walker Street and Graeme Place, Casino

#### **Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Dr Andrew McDonald MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC.

The Chair opened the deliberative meeting at 10.00 a.m.

#### **Apologies**

Ms Marie Andrews MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

#### **4. Other business**

The Committee noted that the planned visit to Albury had been cancelled.

#### **5. Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

The Chair opened the proceedings at 10.25 am.

The Committee was welcomed to country by Aunty Nora Caldwell of the Junbung Aboriginal Elders.

The following witnesses were affirmed and examined:

Margo Rutledge, Community Projects Officer, Kyogle Council; Elizabeth Shelley, Youth Coordinator, Casino Youth Services; Noeline Olive, General Manager, Casino Neighbourhood Centre; Lynnette Smith, Centre Manager, Adult Community Education Inc, North Coast; Gretchen Young, General Manager, Mid Richmond Neighbourhood Centre; Jeffrey Richardson, Chief Executive Officer, Dharah Girinj Aboriginal Medical Service; Joanne Petrovic, Community Projects Officer, Richmond Valley Council; and Nora Caldwell, Chairperson, Junbung Elders.

The following witnesses were sworn and examined:

Tony Butcher, Family Support Worker, Casino Family Support Service; and Peter Boughey, Uniting Church Minister.

Evidence concluded, the Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

**Publication of Evidence on Website**

Moved Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, seconded Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

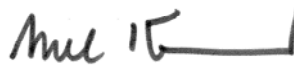
‘That the Committee make the transcripts of the proceedings available on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The Chair closed the hearing at 11.45 a.m.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 13)**

Tuesday 5 August 2008 at 7.15 p.m.

Invercauld House, Goonellabah

**Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Dr Andrew McDonald MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC.

The Chair opened the meeting at 7.25 p.m.

**Apologies**

Ms Marie Andrews MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

**Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

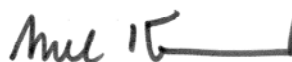
The Chair opened the proceedings at 10.25 am.

The following persons from Parents and Citizens Associations in the Lismore/Casino area constituted a Roundtable to whom the Committee put questions:

Ms Karen Armstrong, Casino High School; Mr Gary Phelps, Casino High School; Ms Leonie Aafjes, Kadina High School; Ms Jenny King, Casino High School and Casino West Public School; Ms Toni York, Casino West Public School; Ms Deanna Hartin, Casino West Public School; Ms Debbie Clarke, Casino West Public School and Casino High School; Ms Leanne Collison, Casino West Public School and Casino High School; Ms Helen Mcleod, Casino High School; and Ms Janelle Jeffrey, Kadina High School and Alstonville High School.

At the conclusion of the Roundtable, the Chair thanked the representatives and obtained their approval for the use of the material gathered in the course of the Roundtable as the basis of a supplementary submission to the Committee’s Inquiry from the Federation of Parents and Citizens Associations.

The Chair closed the hearing at 8.30 p.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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## **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 14)**

Wednesday 6 August 2008 at 9.30 a.m.

Invercauld House, Goonellabah

### **Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP, Dr Andrew McDonald MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC.

The Chair opened the meeting at 9.30 a.m.

### **Apologies**

Ms Marie Andrews MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

## **2. Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

The Chair opened the proceedings at 9.35 am.

Anne Graham, Director, Centre for Children and Young People and Head, School of Education, Southern Cross University, Lismore, affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the Chair asked the witness whether she gave permission to make her written submission public as well as what she had said at the hearing. The witness agreed and withdrew.

Moved Mr Steve Cansdell MP, seconded Dr Andrew McDonald MP:

‘That the Committee make public the evidence of the witness and publish the transcripts of witness’ evidence on the Committee’s website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The following persons were affirmed and examined:

Jennifer Parke, Facilitator of Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Brooke Avery, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Ben Cooper, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Ben Stevens, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Maia Ryall, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Sarah Hort, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Tully Rodwell, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; Casey Cleaver, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore; and Ahri Tallon, Young People Big Voice, Centre for Children and Young People, Southern Cross University, Lismore.

Evidence concluded, the Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

**Publication of Evidence on Website**

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Dr Andrew McDonald MP:

‘That the Committee make the transcripts of the proceedings available on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The Chair adjourned the hearing at 10.45 a.m.

The hearing resumed at 11.15 a.m.

The Committee was welcomed to country by Uncle Herb Roberts of the Widjabul tribe of the Bundjalung nation.

Peter Carroll, Principal, Trinity Catholic College; and Lee-Ann Emzin, Aboriginal Community Development Officer, Lismore City Council, were sworn and examined.

Roberto Kenk, Social Planning Co-ordinator, Ballina Shire Council; Frances Trimboli, Regional Manager, YWCA New South Wales; Brett Paradise, Reconnect Regional Manager, Northern Rivers Social Development Council; Don Jackson, Client Services Manager, Community Connections North Coast Inc.; and Daniel Prokop, Spokesperson, Pathways Foundation, were affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

**Publication of Evidence on Website**

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Mr Steve Cansdell MP:

‘That the Committee make the transcripts of the proceedings available on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The Chair closed the hearing at 12.25 p.m.



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Chair



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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 15)**

Friday 8 August 2008 at 9.30 a.m.

Fairfield City Council Chambers, 86 Avoca Road, Wakeley

**Members Present**

Hon Carmel Tebbutt MP (Chair), Dr Andrew McDonald MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP; Hon Fred Nile MLC.

## Apologies

Ms Marie Andrews MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC and Hon Kayee Griffin MLC.

### 3. Public Hearing for Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years

The Chair opened the proceedings at 9.30 a.m. She acknowledged the Daruk people as the Traditional Custodians of Land, and paid respect to the Elders, both past and present, of the Daruk Nation and extended respect to other Aboriginal people present.

Wendy Protheroe, General Manager, Counselling Services and Kids Helpline, BoysTown, sworn and examined.

The Chair asked the witness whether she gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what she had said at the hearing. The witness agreed. Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded Dr Andrew McDonald MP:

‘That the evidence presented by BoysTown be made public and to publish the transcript of the witness’s evidence on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

Carolyn Bourke, Outreach and Marketing Coordinator, Fairfield City Council; Dale Donadel, Manager, Chester Hill Neighbourhood Centre; Ashur Isaac, Youth Worker, Assyrian Resource Centre; Peter Pham, Links to Learning Coordinator, Vietnamese Community of Australia; and Carol Richardson, Executive Officer, Fairfield Business Education Partnership, were sworn and examined.

Jorge Aroché, Executive Director, STARTTS; Ricci Bartel, Coordinator, Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre; Amanda Bray, Manager, Fairfield City Council; Elaine Hirst, General Manager, Community First Step; and Tairyn Vergara, Manager, Parks Community Network, were affirmed and examined.

Evidence concluded, the Chair asked the witnesses whether they gave permission to make their written submission public as well as what they had said at the hearing. The witnesses agreed and withdrew.

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded Dr Andrew McDonald MP:

‘That the evidence presented by the roundtable participants be made public and to publish the transcript of the witnesses’ evidence on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

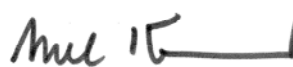
### Supplementary Evidence

Wendy Protheroe, General Manager, Counselling Services and Kids Helpline, BoysTown, undertook to send further information about any significant differences in the needs of the older and younger age groups contacting Kids Helpline.

At 12.45 p.m. the Chair closed the hearing.



Chair



Committee Manager

**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 16)**

Thursday 30 October 2008 at 1.15 p.m.

Parliament House

**Members Present**

Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, Mr Robert Coombs MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

**4. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

**Publishing submissions**

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded Ms Marie Andrews MP:

‘That submissions 98-109 and supplementary submissions 10a and 36a be published on the Committee’s website’.

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC requested a hard copy of the supplementary submission received from the Australian Council for Educational Research.

**Questions Taken on Notice**

The Chair noted that the responses to questions taken on notice for all public hearings have been received, forwarded to members and published on the Committee’s website. These were from UnitingCare Burnside, Department of Community Services, Australian Council for Educational Research and Boystown.

At 1.25 p.m. the Chair adjourned the meeting and Legislative Assembly Members withdrew to attend a division in the House.

At 1.30 p.m. the Chair re-opened the meeting.

**iii) Transcripts published on website**

Members noted that transcripts for all hearings had been published on Committee’s website.

**Certificates sent to school students**

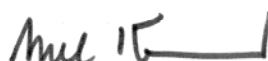
Members noted that certificates for students had been sent, as moved by Mr Steve Cansdell MP following the Committee hearings of 2 July 2008.

**Report**

The Chair referred Members to the chapter outline distributed.

He informed Members that in view of the scope of the Inquiry and the public response, he had discussed the current timetable with the Committee Manager, Mr Mel Keenan, and had concluded that the Committee will aim to table the Report in the first Parliamentary Session of 2009. The Committee noted the Chair’s recommendation.

Hon Catherine Cusack MLC requested that a specific section be included on the taking of evidence from children and young people.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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## **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No 17)**

Friday 28 November 2008 at 10:00 a.m.

Parliament House

### **Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair); Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair); Ms Marie Andrews MP; Mr Geoff Corrigan MP.

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.20 a.m.

### **Apologies**

Mr Steve Cansdell MP; Hon Catherine Cusack MLC; Hon Fred Nile MLC.

### **Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

#### **Advice of Associate Professor Anne Graham**

The Chair referred to the memorandum previously distributed, including Associate Professor Graham's Curriculum Vitae. He informed Members of certain dates in the proposed timetable, namely:

meeting in the week beginning 16 February 2009 to determine witnesses to invite to a further hearing;

public hearing in the week beginning 16 March 2009;

Committee deliberative meeting on 5 June 2009; and

tabling of the 9-14 Years Report by 26 June 2009 (end of Session).

Moved Hon Kayee Griffin MLC, seconded Mr Geoff Corrigan MP:

‘That the Chair submit to the Speaker a proposal to engage Associate Professor Anne Graham as a consultant to provide confidential advice on the draft Report and recommendations’; and

‘That the Committee conduct further public hearings, as considered necessary, to take evidence from the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and from representatives of other relevant organisations’.

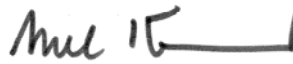
#### **(ii) Letter from Mr Chris Jeffery.**

Moved Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, seconded Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

‘That the Committee accept Mr Jeffery's submission, but consider it confidential’; and

‘That the Committee write to Mr Jeffery advising him of same.’

The Chair closed the meeting at 10.50 a.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No. 18)**

Wednesday 18 February 2009 at 12:00 p.m.

Waratah Room, Parliament House

**Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair), Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Mr Geoff Corrigan MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Hon Fred Nile MLC.

The Chair opened the meeting at 12.07 p.m.

**Apologies**

Ms Marie Andrews MP

**4. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 Years**

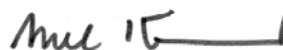
The Chair referred to the Committee's resolution to conduct further public hearings, as considered necessary, to take evidence from the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and from representatives of other relevant organisations.

Moved Hon Fred Nile MLC, seconded Hon Kayee Griffin MLC:

'That the Committee endorses the attendance at the public hearing on 17 March 2009 of the organisations indicated in the draft timetable distributed to Members.'

The Chair also informed Members that the Australian Bureau of Statistics was due to release in April a report on children arising out of the 2006 census, which would be used to update the figures currently available for the Inquiry Report.

The Chair closed the meeting at 12.41 p.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee on Children and Young People (No. 19)**



Wednesday 25 February 2009 at 11:00 a.m.

Parkes Room, Parliament House

**Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair), Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 11.00 a.m.

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Ms Andrews, Mr Corrigan and Ms Cusack.

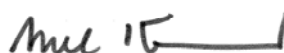
**2. Inquiry into children and young people 9-14 years**

The Committee noted that the submission from the Children's Guardian had only just been received.

Resolved, on the motion of Rev Nile, seconded by Mr Cansdell:

'That Submission No 111 be published on the Committee website.'

The Chair closed the meeting at 12.30 p.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 20)**

Tuesday 17 March 2009 at 11.00 a.m.

Room 814/815, Parliament House.

**Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair), Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC

Ms Andrews joined the meeting at 12.40 p.m.

The Chair opened the meeting at 11.04 a.m.

**Apologies**

Apologies were received from Mr Corrigan and Ms Cusack.

**4. Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 years**

The Chair discussed the procedure for asking questions.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11.13 a.m.

**7. Public hearing for the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 years**

The Chair declared the meeting open at 11.15 a.m.

Ms Maree Girdler, Division Manager, Integrated Planning, and Ms Margaret Brown, Project Officer, Better Futures, Waverley Council, were affirmed and examined

The Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from Waverley Council and asked whether the witnesses wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Ms Girdler and Ms Brown agreed.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witnesses agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Clin Prof David Bennett, Head, and Ms Fiona Robards, Co-ordinator, NSW Centre for the Advancement of Adolescent Health, were affirmed and examined.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing.

The witnesses agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Ms Robyn Monro Miller, Executive Officer, and Ms Pauline O’Kane, OOSH Development Co-ordinator, Network of Community Activities, gave evidence on former oath.

The Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from the Network of Community Activities and asked whether the witnesses wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Ms Monro Miller and Ms O’Kane agreed.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witnesses agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Mrs Lorraine Denise Walker, State Co-ordinator Student Welfare Programs, and Mrs Geraldine Mary Gray, State Co-ordinator Special Learning Needs, Catholic Education Commission NSW, were sworn and examined.

Mr Ian George Baker, Director, Education Policy and Programs, also gave evidence on former oath.

The Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from the Catholic Education Commission and asked whether the witnesses wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Mr Baker, Mrs Walker and Mrs Gray agreed.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witnesses agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

The Chair informed Members that witnesses scheduled to appear for the NSW Teachers Federation would be unable to attend and the Committee would send questions on notice in writing. Mr Cansdell said that he would like to include some questions to the list of questions to be sent to the Federation.

The Chair adjourned the hearing at 12.52 p.m. to reconvene at 2.15 p.m.

The meeting resumed at 2.18 p.m.

Ms Alison Peters, Director, and Mr Dev Mukherjee, Senior Policy Officer, Council of Social Service of NSW, were affirmed and examined.

The Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from the Council of Social Service of NSW and asked whether the witnesses wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Ms Peters and Mr Mukherjee agreed.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witnesses agreed to provide a written reply.

### **Supplementary Evidence**

Ms Peters tabled three copies of the following publication:

Council of Social Service of New South Wales. 2009. *Towards Triple A Rated Community Services, Social and economic priorities for a fair and sustainable community: 2009-2010 State Budget.*

Evidence concluded, the witnesses withdrew.

Mr Reynato Reodica, Executive Director, Youth Action and Policy Association, was sworn and examined.

The Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witness agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew at 3.05 p.m. and the meeting adjourned for afternoon tea.

The Chair withdrew from the meeting at that time.

The meeting resumed at 3.30 p.m. The Deputy Chair took the chair.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Cansdell, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the Committee invite representatives of the NSW Teachers Federation to give evidence to the Committee at its hearing on 15 April 2009.’

Mrs Dianne Butland, Councillor, Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations, NSW, was affirmed and examined.

The Deputy Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from the Federation of Parents and Citizens' Associations and asked whether the witness wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Mrs Butland agreed.

The Deputy Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witness agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Professor Matthew Roy Sanders, Director, Parenting and Family Support Centre, University of Queensland was affirmed and examined.

The Deputy Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. She would like to ask a question on notice concerning the difficulties of insurance in relation to the use of open space by young people. The witness agreed to provide a written reply to further questions.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

Ms Louise Voigt, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Welfare, Barnardos Australia gave evidence on former oath.

The Deputy Chair noted that the Committee had received a submission from Barnardos Australia and asked whether the witnesses wished this to form part of their evidence and to be made public. Ms Voigt agreed.

The Deputy Chair noted that the Committee might wish to send some additional questions in writing. The witness agreed to provide a written reply.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew at 4.33 p.m.

The hearing having concluded, the Deputy Chair reconvened the deliberative meeting.

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Cansdell, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the evidence presented by the witnesses be made public and that the transcript of the evidence be published on the website after the necessary corrections have been made.’

The Deputy Chair closed the deliberative meeting at 4.35 p.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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## **Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 21)**

Wednesday 15 April 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Room 814/815, Parliament House.

### **Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair) Mr Steve Cansdell MP, Hon Catherine Cusack MLC, Mr Robert Furolo MP, Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.07 a.m.

### **Public Hearing Inquiry into Children and Young People 9 to 14 years in NSW**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Griffin, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the answers to questions taken on notice by witnesses before the Inquiry at the Public Hearings of 17 March 2009 be published on the Committee’s website.’

The Chair opened the public hearing at 10.09 a.m.

Professor Margaret Vickers, Professor of Education, University of Western Sydney was affirmed and examined.

### **Supplementary Evidence**

Professor Vickers tabled the following documents:

*Rethinking schools for a changing world*, an information kit and DVD produced by the Australian National Schools network Two Australian National Schools Network;

*Snapshot*, an information resource produced by the Australian National Schools Network to help teachers to work with refugee students.

Evidence concluded, the witness withdrew.

The Chair closed the public hearing at 12.50 p.m.

### **Deliberative Meeting**

The Chair opened the deliberative meeting at 1.04 p.m.

### **NSW Teachers’ Federation**

The Chair advised Members that representatives of the Federation were unable to attend at the hearing and proposed that the Committee resolve to forward to the Federation the list of questions distributed to Members.

Resolved on the motion of Ms Griffin, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the Committee forward to the NSW Teachers’ Federation the questions relating to the Inquiry into Children and Young People 9-14 years in NSW as agreed.’

Resolved on the motion of Mr Cansdell, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the letter to the NSW Teachers Federation note the Committee’s disappointment that representatives of the Federation were unable to appear at the hearing, and that the Committee looks forward to receiving a comprehensive written response to its questions.’

### **Inquiry into children and young people 9-14 years in NSW**

#### **(i) Transcript of previous hearing**

The Chair asked Members if they had any changes to be made to the transcript of the hearing of 17 March 2009. No changes were required.

#### **(ii) Revised timetable**

The Chair referred to the memo distributed, and recommended that the Committee delay tabling the Inquiry Report until the beginning of the second Parliamentary Session 2009. The suggested revised timetable is as follows:

Copy of the draft Report to Associate Professor Anne Graham on 6 July 2009;

Copy of the draft Report to the Chair on 27 July 2009;

Copy of the draft Report to Members on 17 August 2009;

Deliberative meeting to be held in the week of 24 August 2009 to consider the final draft Report; and

Report to be tabled in the week beginning 31 August 2009.

Resolved on the motion of Rev Nile, seconded by Ms Griffin:

‘That the Committee concurs with the revised timetable, and agrees to table the Inquiry Report in the first week of the Second Parliamentary sitting of 2009.’

On Ms Cusack’s suggestion, Members agreed that possible topics for future Committee Inquiries be included as an agenda item for the next Committee meeting.

#### **(iii) Consultant to the Inquiry**

The Chair referred to the memo distributed, including draft recommendations. Ms Cusack expressed her reservations about the process of discussing possible recommendations prior to the completion of the Chair’s draft Report.

Resolved on the motion of Rev Nile, seconded by Mr Cansdell:

‘That the Committee authorises the Chair to write to the Speaker seeking the Speaker’s final approval to engage Associate Anne Professor Graham as consultant to the Inquiry.’

The Chair closed the meeting at 1.37 p.m.



Chair

Committee Manager

**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 22)**

Tuesday 12 May 2009 at 1.30 p.m.

Waratah Room, Parliament House.

**Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair), Hon Fred Nile MLC, Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair), Ms Marie Andrews MP, Mr Robert Furolo MP

The Chair opened the meeting at 1.31 p.m.

**Apologies**

Mr Steve Cansdell MP and Hon Catherine Cusack MLC.

**Correspondence**

The Committee noted the following correspondence received.

i) Answers to questions taken on notice from the hearing on 17 March 2009 from Waverley Council, NSW Centre for Advancement of Adolescent Health, Federation of Parents & Citizens' Associations (NSW), and Catholic Education Commission NSW.

ii) Correspondence in response to questions relating to particular aspects of the 9-14 years inquiry, from NSW Teachers Federation, Southern Youth and Family Services, YOWI (Youth on Wheels Ink), and BAT Bus (Byron Area Travel).

vi) Correspondence from the Speaker approving the engagement of Associate Professor Anne Graham as consultant to the 9 to 14 Years Inquiry on 24 April 2009.

The Chair closed the meeting at 1.50 p.m.



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Chair

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Committee Manager

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**Minutes of Proceedings of the Committee On Children And Young People (No 23)**

Wednesday 26 August 2009 at 10.00 a.m.

Waratah Room, Parliament House.

**Members Present**

Mr Robert Coombs MP (Chair) Ms Marie Andrews MP

Hon Kayee Griffin MLC (Deputy Chair) Mr Steve Cansdell MP

Hon John Ajaka MLC Rev the Hon Fred Nile MLC

The Chair opened the meeting at 10.00 a.m.

## 2. Apologies

Mr Robert Furolo MP

## 6. Inquiry into the needs of Children and Young People aged 9-14 years in NSW

### (i) Consideration of Chair's Draft Report

The Committee considered the Chair's Draft Report recommendation by recommendation.

- Recommendations 1 to 26 agreed to without amendment.

Mr Cansdell arrived at 10.32 a.m.

- Recommendations 27 to 35 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 36

Resolved, on the motion of Reverend Nile, seconded by Ms Andrews:

'That the words "(one stop shops)" be inserted in Recommendation 36.'

- Recommendations 37 to 39 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 40

Resolved, on the motion of Reverend Nile, seconded by Ms Andrews:

'That the words "the feasibility of" be omitted from Recommendation 40.'

- Recommendation 41 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 42

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Ajaka, seconded by Mr Cansdell:

'That the word "emphasis" be omitted from Recommendation 42 and the words "current scheme" be inserted instead.'

- Recommendation 43

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Cansdell, seconded by Reverend Nile:

'That the words "the feasibility of" be omitted from Recommendation 43.'

- Recommendation 44 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 45

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Coombs, seconded by Mr Cansdell:

'That the words "the feasibility of" be omitted from Recommendation 45.'

- Recommendation 46

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Cansdell, seconded by Reverend Nile:

'That the words "the feasibility of" be omitted from Recommendation 46.'

- Recommendations 47 to 48 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 49

Resolved, on the motion of Reverend Nile, seconded by Ms Griffin:

'That the words "the feasibility of" be removed from Recommendation 49.'

- Recommendations 50 to 51 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 52

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Andrews, seconded by Mr Ajaka:

‘That the word “work” be omitted from Recommendation 52 and the words “workplace and employment” be inserted instead.’

- Recommendation 53

Resolved, on the motion of Reverend Nile, seconded by Mr Ajaka:

‘That the words “and/or odd jobs” be inserted after the words “light work” in Recommendation 53.’

- Recommendation 54 agreed to without amendment.
- Recommendation 55

Resolved, on the motion of Reverend Nile, seconded by Ms Andrews:

‘That the words “consultation and” be inserted before the word “participation” in Recommendation 55.’

- Recommendation 56

Resolved, on the motion of Mr Ajaka, seconded by Reverend Nile:

‘That the words “consultation and” be inserted before the word “participation” in Recommendation 56.’

- Recommendations 57 to 59 agreed to without amendment.

#### **(ii) Adoption of Report**

Resolved, on the motion of Ms Griffin, seconded by Mr Ajaka:

‘That the draft Report, as amended, be the Report of the Committee and that it be signed by the Chair and presented to the House’.

‘That the Chair and the Secretariat be permitted to correct stylistic, typographical and grammatical errors’.

#### **(iii) Publication of the Report**

Resolved, on the motion of Rev Nile, seconded by Ms Andrews:

‘That, once tabled, the Report be placed on the Committee’s website’.

#### **(iv) Correspondence**

Resolved on the motion of Mr Ajaka, seconded by Mr Cansdell:

‘That all correspondence to the Committee for the purposes of the Inquiry which has not already been published, be published on the Committee’s website.’

#### **(v) Tabling of the Report**

The Chair advised that the Report would be tabled in both Houses on Thursday 3 September 2009 and that it remained confidential until that time. He said that he would issue a press release and the Take Note Debate in the Legislative Assembly would be on the following Friday, 11 September 2009. The Take Note Debate in the Legislative Council would be held in due course. Hard copies of the Report would be distributed to selected parties, e.g., the Commission for Children and Young People, and an e-copy would be sent to all those who made submissions. The Speaker would send a copy of the Report to the Premier for responses from the various Government Departments.

#### **(vi) Acknowledgement of the work of the Secretariat**



Resolved on the motion of Ms Griffin, seconded by Rev Nile:

‘That the Committee acknowledges the significant amount of work done by the Secretariat throughout the Inquiry and reporting process.’

Ms Andrews noted the participation of children and young people in the Inquiry and greatly appreciated their contribution. She further noted that this was the first time, to her knowledge, that children and young people had taken part in a Committee Inquiry.

The Chair closed the meeting at 11.24 a.m.