

CHAPTER NINE

THE DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION: ANTI-VIOLENCE INITIATIVES AND THE CURRICULUM

This chapter examines a range of anti-violence initiatives and programs that are being developed or have been introduced in certain schools, regions or throughout the school education system. A range of staff development, whole school programs and programs for targeted groups of young people with problem behaviour are discussed. Issues relating to the school curriculum, retention rates and alternative approaches to education are also examined.

9.1 ANTI-VIOLENCE INITIATIVES AND PROGRAMS

In 1993, the then Minister for Education announced a \$5 million welfare package for schools, of which \$50,000 was to be allocated to each of the ten education regions of NSW to review and refocus anti-violence programs (Minister for Education, 1993). Staff increases were also included in the package, as discussed in Section 8.2.1. The Department of School Education was subsequently declared the national runner-up in the Australian Violence Prevention Awards for 1994 (Minister for Education, 1995a).

Behaviour management strategies may be offered as staff development programs, whole school programs, or as programs for targeted groups of students who may be demonstrating problem behaviour, or be at risk of suspension. Pre-suspension programs have been discussed in more detail in Section 8.3.5.

An anti-violence contact person was nominated for each education region and required to report on the progress of the regional initiatives. The Guidance and Welfare Unit in the Specific Focus Program Directorate was given the task of statewide mapping and reporting on the anti-violence initiatives occurring in regions in 1994. A preliminary report on these initiatives was released in April 1994 (NSW Department of School Education, 1994b). Subsequent regional returns, which include details of the expenditure of the anti-violence allocation and the use of additional staff, are currently being collated to enable a review of the evaluation of initiatives and the distribution of information on effective strategies.

As a key recommendation, the Committee believes sufficient resources must be available to schools to enable them to function as models of co-operative, tolerant and non-violent communities. Programs fostering tolerance and acceptance; providing skills in acceptable problem-solving behaviour; working to eliminate the destructive practices of bullying; and supporting students exhibiting problem behaviours are fundamental in attempting to meet this goal.

RECOMMENDATION 86

That the Minister for Education ensure sufficient resources are available to schools to enable them to function as models of cooperative, tolerant and non-violent communities. In achieving these goals schools are

- to provide programs which foster tolerance and acceptance;
- offer integrated programs which provide skills in acceptable problem solving behaviour;
- work to eliminate the destructive practices of bullying; and
- support students exhibiting problem behaviours through appropriate means and environments with the wellbeing of the student being paramount.

Information on the range of strategies discussed in this section is drawn largely from the preliminary report on anti-violence initiatives and discussions with relevant Departmental staff. While specific programs in individual regions may be singled out for discussion, other regions may be offering similar programs.

9.1.1 Staff Development Programs

The Committee heard that a range of programs is available to assist teachers in managing student behaviour. The anti-violence funding initiatives discussed above have allowed a number of regions to fund additional teaching and teaching aide positions, which have been divided into relief days. This arrangement allows relief staff to be provided enabling teachers to be released from their school duties to be trained in anti-violence programs.

The Committee believes regions should continue their commitment to staff development through in-service programs that develop staff skills in implementing constructive behaviour management strategies addressing student behaviour. The way that school staff respond to violent incidents and assaults on staff should also be examined, to ensure that responses do not exacerbate confrontational situations and that teacher injury and stress are minimised.

Established programs include:

■ Working Ideas for Need Satisfaction (WINS) Kit

The Kit offers opportunities for staff development in implementing strategies for a positive approach to behavioural change. The program is of benefit to teachers in both primary and secondary schools, and includes videos to provide modelling of strategies. It looks at the preventative areas of developing classroom rules, communication skills and program implementation. The Kit was favourably evaluated in 1992 by the Commonwealth Department of Employment, Education and Training (Hatswell Evidence, 22.02.94).

■ **Control Theory and Reality Therapy**

The concept of control theory as a positive form of intervention was supported in evidence to the Committee. Control theory, based on the work of Dr William Glasser in the United States, contends that all human behaviour is internally motivated. The use of authoritarian approaches to solve problems is therefore unworkable, with an approach that develops skills and behaviours for meeting individual needs considered more effective.

Reality therapy is a counselling method that helps students identify the sorts of behaviour they need to learn or use in situations they may have to confront. The counselling method is made up of three separate but closely interwoven procedures. The therapist must firstly become involved with the patient so that the patient can begin to face reality and see how their behaviour is unrealistic. Secondly, the therapist must reject the behaviour which is unrealistic but still accept the patient and maintain involvement. Finally, the therapist must teach the patient better ways to fulfil needs within the confines of acceptable behaviour (Glasser, 1965:21).

The Committee has heard, however, that rather than this behaviour management strategy being an integral part of classroom teaching, teachers may send disruptive students for counselling to remove them from their classroom. A more integrated approach giving teachers behaviour management was supported:

We need to train our staff on how to manage students, not to teach content
(Hatswell Evidence, 22.02.94).

The Metropolitan South West region offers a basic course for teachers and counsellors in Reality Therapy involving five days intensive training. The Hunter education region has offered training to approximately 200 regional principals. A large number have undertaken the training with an American educationalist brought to Australia for this purpose. Following their training, principals of two regional high schools ensured that every teacher received the training as part of a comprehensive attempt to change the culture of the school.

■ **Conflict Resolution**

In the Metropolitan South West region, teachers have been trained to offer programs targeting violent secondary students on long suspension. Courses also provide opportunities for teachers likely to have these students back in their class, and supportive teachers such as Year Advisers, to gain skills in handling conflict with students. The training aims to reduce the number of aggressive exchanges in the classroom, and avoid further suspensions. A staff debriefing training package is also being piloted to train School Executives to handle violent episodes, including both student violence and parent aggression, more effectively.

The South Coast region also offers a staff development program in conflict resolution skills. The Student Welfare Teacher - Anti-violence in the Metropolitan North Region has developed workshops for school staff on "Responses to Aggression". The workshops examine issues relating to school policies and the development of playground policies. Both student and teacher behavioural issues are addressed.

■ **Protective Assault Response Training**

Rivendell (see Section 10.7.5) offers an outreach program to school staff to improve the staff's understanding of behaviour and provide practical management strategies to deal with aggression. A two-day Protective Assault Response Training (PART) course is also available, concentrating on the prevention of assault. The Committee was informed that:

people who do not have the understanding, who do not have the management skills, are far more likely to create an assault incident (Black Evidence, 26.04.94).

Metropolitan South West region has initiated a PART project aiming to ensure all staff working with physically assaultive students in special schools have strategies to deal with assaultive incidents and that suspensions can be reduced.

■ **Behaviour Assistance Support Teams**

A number of regions have established regional behaviour teams with appropriate expertise in behaviour management strategies. These teams offer staff development opportunities to increase the skills of teachers, who then work to increase the social skills of students in their schools.

■ **Information and Resources**

A number of regions publish anti-violence strategies or other resource material to assist teachers and counsellors in developing programs. In the Metropolitan South West region for example, reports were published each term on the 1994 anti-violence strategy for schools and peak community groups. In the Metropolitan North region a support document entitled *Strategies for Managing Bullying and Threatening Behaviour* for primary schools has been printed and distributed.

9.1.2 Whole School Programs

Evidence presented to the Committee suggested a need for broader, whole school programs. The Committee supports the following initiatives and believes they are of value in addressing violent behaviour. Schools should examine strategies for the development of whole-school programs that encourage non-violence and result in safer schools. Many schools have now introduced vertical roll classes, involving students from various Years meeting every day, which provides the opportunity to address particular social skills.

■ **Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum**

The Committee heard that the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum which has now been introduced as a Key Learning Area offers great potential for addressing the issue of violence. Whereas Personal Development programs were previously optional, these courses are now progressively being mandated for the junior high school years. A draft

syllabus has been prepared for primary schools and is being trialed in some schools. The Committee has heard that the extension of the syllabus to all schools will provide an opportunity for the systematic teaching of courses such as conflict resolution and mediation skills.

■ Resources for Teaching Against Violence

The *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit (NSW Department of School Education, 1992b) is a set of materials developed to assist schools to address issues of violence. The kit comprises three sections:

- managing aggressive and disruptive student behaviour (including a model professional development module);
- effects of domestic violence; and
- violence against homosexual men and women.

The kit won an Australian Violence Prevention Award in 1993 and is currently being revised by the Guidance and Student Welfare Unit of the Department of School Education's Specific Focus Programs Directorate. A new segment on bullying has been prepared. The Committee has been informed that the new edition will be made available to all schools during 1995, with additional sections on sex-based harassment and dispute resolution to be distributed at a later date.

■ Preventative Program for Domestic Violence

The Committee received a submission from a Newcastle social worker outlining a preventative program and kit for domestic violence in primary schools which could address issues such as relationship building, communication, self esteem, conflict resolution, equality and gender within the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum (Submission 56). A steering committee has been established as a sub-committee of the Newcastle Domestic Violence Committee, and commitments have been given by police and Department of Community Services officers to be involved in the program and visit schools. Approval from the Department of School Education is yet to be granted.

■ Strategies for Safer Schools

Of the \$50,000 granted to each region for anti-violence initiatives, each region has allocated \$10,000 to participate in the development and presentation of a statewide Strategies for Safer Schools program, co-ordinated by the Department's Training and Development Directorate.

The Strategies for Safer Schools program is based on the principle that the management of behaviour is a shared partnership between teachers, students and families, and focuses on prevention with an emphasis on collaborative professional development.

Phase One of the program provides a process of gaining whole school community commitment to the program, examining current school practices, developing a plan based on school requirements and implementing and reviewing that plan over a period of one to two terms.

Phase Two involves a two hour unit each week for 10 weeks. Core units include preventing disruptive behaviour; increasing appropriate behaviour; and maintaining a positive classroom environment. The units have been designed so no outside training assistance is required, ensuring all schools can easily implement the program.

Both phases have been piloted in nine schools, primarily in the Metropolitan East region. A copy of the program has been distributed to all schools.

■ **Conflict and Dispute Resolution Project**

The Specific Focus Programs Directorate in association with the Metropolitan North, South Coast and Hunter regions, has been conducting a dispute resolution pilot project during 1994. The project has been developed in conjunction with Community Justice Centres, and an evaluation has been completed. A final report is being produced which will refer to the variety of conflict resolution projects across the state.

■ **Resolve Anti-violence Curriculum**

At Granville South High School a group of Year 9 students have trialed a ten week course developed by a special education lecturer at the University of Western Sydney, Jean Jenkin. The Resolve Curriculum examines social perceptions of violence, the origins and indicators of violence, statistical data on violence and the power of assertiveness and communication skills. Modules on violence and gender and violence in relationships are also included.

■ **Playground Programs**

The Committee has heard that some schools running playground programs aim to identify disruptive students and give them positive leadership tasks to involve them in an advantageous way (Black Evidence, 26.04.94). During the course of the Inquiry, the Committee members visited Liverpool West Public School. The school identified a high incidence of aggressive behaviour in the playground and introduced the Playground Program emphasising preventative strategies such as:

- lunchtime leisure activities;
- the teaching of playground games;
- the availability of play equipment;
- special needs groups;
- behaviour modification;

- a multi-purpose outdoor learning area; and
- a conflict resolution program.

The Committee was advised that the number of incidents of aggressive behaviour in the playground has decreased following the introduction of the program.

In the Western region small playground groups in a number of the region's schools are facilitated by student mediators with assistance from teachers' aides to target students in need of learning play skills.

The Committee believes that playground supervision is crucial in preventing violent incidents, and that schools should examine their practices in this regard. The Department of School Education should produce and disseminate information on standards of best practice to assist schools in this review.

RECOMMENDATION 87

That the Minister for Education ensure

- **the Department of School Education produce and distribute to all schools standards of best practice in playground supervision and programs; and**
- **schools review their playground supervision practices to minimise the potential for playground violence.**

■ **Life Skills and Community Issues**

The Hunter Regional Student Representative Council suggested that schools may become more relevant by offering alternatives such as living skills, including budgeting, in addition to social skills such as communication and conflict resolution (Submission 46). Education in civics and citizenship may also assist in the development of young people as positive, contributing members of society.

■ **Drug and Alcohol Education**

The Committee heard during a briefing with young male violent offenders in a Juvenile Justice Centre, that these young people believed their abuse of alcohol and other drugs had contributed to their offending behaviour. They suggested that, because young people have no knowledge of the physiological effects and harm caused by drugs, they are likely to accept anything offered to them that they are told will "make them feel good". This group advocated the introduction of drug education programs at the commencement of Year 7.

Drug and alcohol education is currently included in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum.

9.1.3 Programs for Targeted Groups

Research from the United States suggests that aggression at the age of eight years is the best predictor of aggression at age 19 years, irrespective of IQ, social class or parents' aggressiveness (Lefkowitz *et al*, 1977). Early intervention, with programs introduced prior to the age of eight or nine years, appears to be the best strategy to prevent violent, anti-social behaviour (Submission 31).

A range of programs and kits is available for counsellors and teachers working with individual students with behavioural problems. The Committee endorses the approach taken by the programs outlined below and encourages the continuation and expansion of programs for targeted groups of students displaying behavioural problems to encourage behavioural change.

■ Social Skills

The Committee has heard that communication skills are very important in addressing the effects that can result from children observing family violence:

some people who see violent behaviour modelled in front of them all the time may also come from families [where] ... they may never see ... a parent apologise (Davidson Briefing, 17.09.93).

Cognitive programs such as Talk Sense to Yourself and Stop Think Do teach students skills to control their behaviour. Several regions have also offered these as whole school programs.

The Dubbo Education Resource Centre in the Western region is co-ordinating a modification of the Stop Think Do program to target younger students in Kindergarten to Year 2 to ensure early intervention.

The Metropolitan West region is currently evaluating the Daily Social Skills Group program which has been offered in a number of schools. Targeted groups of violent and aggressive secondary school students are identified to participate in a daily session of 30 minutes duration which focuses on the teaching of social skills, with content developed by teachers within the schools.

■ Aggression Replacement Training

Dr Arnold Goldstein, who works with delinquent children in New York, has developed a system which teaches children social skills such as dealing with anger, fear, negotiation, accusations, as well as goal setting, decision-making and expressing affection. Moral education designed to raise a young person's level of fairness, justice and concerns with the rights and needs of others is also included.

■ Students at Risk (STAR) Program

During the Committee's visit to one boys' high school, the Committee was informed of the federally-funded Students at Risk (STAR) program. Groups of students are targeted for a

program which involves extra-curricular activities, family involvement through meetings and social nights designed to promote cultural activities.

■ **Behaviour and Attendance Programs**

The Behaviour and Attendance Programs were established in 1984 across the ten regions to pilot innovative programs to address behavioural and attendance problems in a preventative and remedial approach. The programs provide an alternative curriculum for secondary students experiencing or likely to experience behaviour or attendance difficulties. Most regions have now attached the allocated positions to other student welfare initiatives.

■ **Wilderness Programs**

Wilderness programs have been developed in the education system in recognition of the need to address youth violence. The South Coast Wilderness Enhanced Program, for example, involves programs for students with suspension records consistently reporting both physical and verbal violence against teachers and students. Wilderness programs aim to provide a "turnaround" experience for well-entrenched, non-compliant students who have previously received counselling and participated in available programs yet have not demonstrated a modification of their behaviour.

The program involves a hike of six days' duration, walking and abseiling and three days of canoeing. The wilderness experience attempts to change behaviour by creating confronting situations necessitating a change in thinking. Ensuring the peer group challenges any violent or aggressive behaviour occurring during the wilderness experience can be influential in changing this behaviour (Handley Evidence, 29.08.94).

The Head Teacher-Wilderness from the South Coast Region contended that intervention models like the Wilderness Enhanced Program, operating at 4% of the cost of some detention centres, provide valuable monetary and social savings (Submission 28).

The Department of School Education commissioned an independent evaluation of the program's first two years of operation. Approximately 84% of students who had completed the program were still at school, undertaking further education or employed. Other evaluations have examined attitude change, and found significant increases in rational thought and expression.

One of the common criticisms of the wilderness experience as a means of addressing violence is that after the wilderness experience students return to an unaltered home and school environment. The Committee heard that follow-up programs, involving students, their parents and the school, are vital to ensure continued success (Handley Evidence, 29.08.94).

9.2 THE CURRICULUM

9.2.1 School Retention and Curriculum Reform

Retention rates in NSW schools have risen by approximately 20% since 1988 to 71% in 1993 (Castles, 1994:60).

The Committee has heard that, although retention rates have increased, there is a diminishing proportion of students planning university studies:

schools are well adapted for preparing people for university but if young people do not have that as a career destination, the school may not articulate well with their interest. As a result I expect to see a persistent increase in some amount of violence in and around schools If schools humiliate, degrade and in general bore young people, I think they are going to find it difficult to control young people (Polk Evidence, 29.07.94).

A paper prepared for the NSW Police Service and discussed with the Committee during a briefing expresses concern regarding the social consequences when the expectation that school education is the key to realistic future education, training or employment is no longer realistic. The paper links the discontent, public disorder and crime that occurred in Melbourne with the release of results of final year exams at the end of 1991 and the limited offering of university and TAFE places in January and February of 1992 (Tabled document).

It was also suggested to the Committee that making certain subjects such as mathematics compulsory in the senior curriculum, irrespective of the interest or abilities of the students, is "not healthy in an educational establishment" (In camera Evidence, 08.11.93).

The Federal Government's school advisory body, the Schools Council, recently released a discussion paper, *The Role of School in the Vocational Preparation of Australia's Senior Secondary Students* (Schools Council, 1994). The Paper supports the development of structured pathways from the classroom to the workplace, and suggests that close links between industry and schools, including extended work experience programs, are essential to combat high youth unemployment. The Council is also considering alternative assessment procedures that would be more relevant to employers than the Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER).

The Committee believes there are fundamental questions which must be posed regarding the merits of a traditional generalist education and more narrow vocational education. The Committee recognises that the student population is changing, as more young people for whom an academic curriculum may not be appropriate remain in the education system. However, a commitment to a general education must be maintained in a changing society to give people knowledge and skills which extend beyond any particular job which may become obsolete. Young people need to understand the nature of society and their place in it so that they do not experience the alienation that can lead to violence and self-destructive behaviour. **A broad-based general education may be a much better preparation for life and work in a changing world than a narrow vocational education.** An emphasis on training and future employment as the only valuable outcome of the school system may serve to reinforce feelings of failure and resentment in students who are not successful in gaining meaning employment. However, the Committee believes that any education system should nurture the broadest possible range of abilities young people may have. The Committee recognises that vocational courses may be the best means by which a particular range of non-academic abilities can be nurtured, and therefore supports such initiatives as examples of the ways options available to young people can be broadened.

9.2.2 Educational Pathways

The NSW Department of School Education is attempting to provide a curriculum that is appropriate and relevant to the full range of students staying in the school system. A major element of this strategy is the introduction of vocational courses into schools to give students structured work placements. An example is Industry Studies, which includes metals, retail, and hospitality strands. The course aims to give students skills applicable to the workplace through a minimum of 80 hours' work experience, and enables them to gain credit for TAFE courses as well as demonstrating marketable skills to future employers.

The Department is also examining options for the broadening of educational pathways, allowing young people to access a variety of educational institutions. Four education and training pathways are available:

- the traditional, university-oriented HSC delivered by schools;
- the school-based HSC with both educational and vocational components;
- a TAFE-based HSC incorporating vocational components; and
- non-HSC vocational education delivered by TAFE or another provider which can lead to post-school vocational education and training (NSW Ministry of Education and Youth Affairs, 1993:14-17).

In 1995, some 21,000 students will participate in the Joint Secondary Schools TAFE program, with most enrolments expected in Office and Accounting, Hospitality and Travel, Automotive, Child Studies, Electrical and Electronics courses (NSW Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs, 1995:7).

The TAFE HSC pathway was introduced in 1994 and is offered through 15 TAFE colleges across NSW, allowing students to commence their HSC and study vocational subjects which count both towards the HSC and a vocational qualification. This pathway was offered across the areas of Microcomputing, Design, Tourism Guest Service and Horticulture, and was extended to include Rural Studies and Childcare in 1995 (Minister for Education, 1994b). Over 1,100 students were expected to enrol in studies for the HSC at TAFE Institutes in 1995, a 120% increase over the previous year (NSW Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs, 1995:7).

In addition, 11,000 students - a threefold increase from 1994 - were expected to undertake accredited vocational programs delivered by schools and industry, with new courses including Building and Construction, Rural Industries and Furnishing (NSW Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs, 1995:7).

It has been suggested that by the year 2000, more than 73,000 students, or approximately half of the student population, will undertake some form of vocational education as part of their HSC (NSW Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs, 1995:7).

Universities are also beginning to play a more active role in the provision of education and training services for senior secondary students. A number of joint facilities have been established or are under way, including the Orana Community College at Dubbo, where university and TAFE facilities provide open learning programs for geographically isolated

students. A second centre at Coffs Harbour will involve a senior secondary college, TAFE and the Southern Cross University. Joint facilities have also been negotiated at Ourimbah, and the former HMAS Nirimba site at Quakers Hill in Western Sydney. This site will become an education precinct comprising a TAFE campus, a campus of the University of Western Sydney, a Catholic high school and a Department of School Education high school (Minister for Education, 1994a).

The Committee supports the recognition of the diverse range of abilities and talents that young people may possess and the development of such abilities within the education system. Initiatives such as extended educational pathways go some way to meeting these broad objectives.

RECOMMENDATION 88

That the Minister for Education recognise the diverse range of abilities and talents that young people may possess and make provisions for developing such abilities within the education system, through initiatives such as extended educational pathways.

9.2.3 Assessing Competencies

A new approach to the School Certificate based on teaching students a set of work-related skills has been proposed in New South Wales. Competency areas identified for assessment included: collecting, analysing and organising information; communicating ideas and information; planning and organising activities; working with others and in teams; using mathematical ideas and techniques; solving problems; using technology; and cultural understanding (NSW Ministry for Education and Youth Affairs, 1995:9).

Recent moves to replace traditional report cards which record a student's ranking in class with statements which emphasise a student's abilities and achievements are in accord with the philosophy of these educational approaches. The Committee believes these initiatives should be fully evaluated.

RECOMMENDATION 89

That the Minister for Education ensure that the current initiatives being trialed in schools and TAFE colleges based on competency assessment are appropriately evaluated.

9.2.4 Mastery-based Learning

To address low-self esteem, students have to, among other factors, experience success. The Committee was informed of schools in Johnson City, New York, which have achieved school

retention rates of 96 to 97% while minimising discipline problems. Vandalism is rare, and 13 year olds achieve on a competency base test at the level of 17 year olds. All this has been achieved by mastery-based learning instruction, with students progressing through units only after they have mastered the unit's objective. Students are not graded, but are certified as having mastered the unit's objectives or as not having completed the unit, in which case special assistance is provided to reach mastery level. Such an approach to learning seeks to build a child's self-esteem (Submission 21).

A proposal to develop a schooling program for young Aboriginal students in Walgett shares this philosophy. The locally-designed initiative seeks to incorporate all tiers of education, and develop a flexible timetable operating from pre-school to Year 12, and incorporating TAFE courses in senior years. Students would be given the opportunity to progress at a rate suitable to their ability and achievement level, rather than age (Social Policy Directorate, 1993:66). Dubbo South High School, which the Committee visited, is moving towards this model with vertically-integrated curricula.

The Committee supports the continued introduction of initiatives based on the concept of mastery-based learning, providing they are appropriately evaluated.

9.2.5 Literacy

The Committee has heard that data from the Australian Council for Educational Research relating to literacy rates for students entering high school have not changed greatly in recent years.

However, as has been discussed, the frustrations under-achieving students face may be one factor contributing to aggressive behaviour. Research from the United States suggests that, while the role model provided by violent parents was a common factor in the background of many violent children, a lower level of intelligence may also limit their behavioural options (Lefkowitz *et al*, 1977). Data from Boys' Town pupils confirm these findings. Pupils are on average four years behind their age peers in reading comprehension. It was suggested to the Committee that the frustrations these students face in trying to cope with a high school curriculum may trigger violent behaviour (Submission 31).

The problem of poor literacy is exacerbated by the changing nature of employment in our society. There has been a reduction in the number of positions available to school-leavers with lower levels of attainment. This has contributed to increasing retention rates, as fewer options are available for these young people to enter the work-force in unskilled positions.

The Western Sydney Committee of the Inter-Departmental Committee on Youth Affairs suggested to the Committee that low self-esteem may be heightened by low levels of literacy. It called for early intervention programs, such as Reading Recovery, to receive additional funding (Submission 53).

The Committee strongly endorses the continued commitment of the Department of School Education to raising literacy rates and encourages the allocation of appropriate resources to literacy programs.

9.3 CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- Regional offices of the Department of School Education should continue their commitment to **staff development** through in-service programs that develop staff skills in implementing constructive behaviour management strategies addressing student behaviour, and in appropriately responding to violent incidents and assaults on staff.
- Schools should examine strategies for the development of **whole-school programs** that encourage non-violence and result in safer schools. **Playground supervision** is crucial in preventing violent incidents, and schools should examine their practices in this regard. The Department of School Education should produce and disseminate information on standards of best practice to assist schools in this review.
- The Committee encourages the continuation and expansion of programs operating in schools for **targeted groups** of students displaying behavioural problems to encourage behavioural change.
- The Committee recognises that the student population is changing, with more young people for whom an academic **curriculum** may not be appropriate remaining in the education system. A commitment to a general education must be maintained in a changing society to give people knowledge and skills which extend beyond any particular job which may become obsolete. However, any education system should nurture the broadest possible range of abilities that young people may have. Vocational courses and extended educational pathways may be the best means by which a particular range of non-academic abilities can be nurtured. Initiatives which emphasise a student's abilities and achievements should be fully evaluated.

CHAPTER TEN

THE DEPARTMENT OF SCHOOL EDUCATION: RESPONDING TO CAUSES OF VIOLENCE

This chapter examines the responses of the Department of School Education to specific forms of violence in schools and factors underlying this behaviour. Procedures for resolving complaints about discrimination against students are discussed, together with initiatives targeting sex-based harassment, bullying, racism and violence against homosexuals and lesbians. The issues of boys' education and gender equity strategies are also examined. The available support for students with learning disorders and other disabilities which may lead to violent behaviour is reviewed. The Department's role in home-school liaison and assistance for homeless students is also discussed.

10.1 PROCEDURES FOR RESOLVING COMPLAINTS ABOUT DISCRIMINATION AGAINST STUDENTS

The Committee is aware that in some schools, violence may stem from discriminatory attitudes held by some students. The NSW Department of School Education (1995) has recently distributed *Procedures for Resolving Complaints about Discrimination against Students* to all schools. The procedures state that the Department of School Education:

is committed to the provision of learning and working environments that are free from all forms of unlawful discrimination, harassment and vilification (Department of School Education 1995:1).

The document discusses forms of behaviour that are unlawful under the NSW *Anti-Discrimination Act* (1977), and Commonwealth Acts including the *Racial Discrimination Act* (1975); the *Sex Discrimination Act* (1984); and the *Disability Discrimination Act* (1992).

The procedures provide that principals and other senior departmental officers must ensure that all staff under their supervision are informed of these procedures. Principals must also ensure that:

- students, parents and others in the school community are aware of the details of these procedures and have access to them;
- the complaints procedures are incorporated into the range of strategies available within schools to assist students to resolve complaints; and
- an appropriate contact officer(s) for discrimination, harassment and vilification matters is appointed following consideration of expressions of interest from staff (Department of School Education 1995:2).

10.2 SEX-BASED HARASSMENT

The *Procedures for Resolving Complaints about Discrimination against Students* state that

Harassment is any form of behaviour that is not welcome, not asked for and/or not returned, and that offends, intimidates or humiliates someone on any of the above grounds. Sexual harassment is a type of sex-based harassment (Department of School Education 1995:2).

In evaluating the education outcomes for girls in New South Wales, the Quality Assurance Unit of the Department of School Education found that coverage of sex-based harassment in schools

appears to be haphazard, disjointed and unsystematic. When confronted with their harassing behaviour, Year 11 boys in one coeducational high school had responded 'but nobody ever told us it was wrong' (Department of School Education, 1994c:60).

While the methodology adopted for the evaluation did not allow for the extent of sex-based harassment to be quantified, the report concluded that:

- sex-based harassment ranged from verbal "put downs" and name calling to more overt and threatening behaviour;
- the majority of school executives said they did not believe that sex-based harassment exists in their school;
- teachers and students were, in the main, unaware of formal grievance procedures for resolution of allegations of sex-based harassment; and
- the majority of students were reluctant to report incidents of harassment because they believed little would happen as a result (Department of School Education, 1994c:75)

The evaluation also found that few teachers were able to articulate a strong understanding of gender equity issues in their teaching area, pointing to a lack of training and development opportunities (Department of School Education, 1994c:73).

The Commonwealth Gender and Violence Project, funded by the Department of Employment, Education and Training, reviewed the programs and resources available throughout Australia for addressing the relationship between gender and violence. The Project's Position Paper found that the NSW Department of School Education's *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* fails to

treat the causes or manifestations of violence in terms of gender and violence, gender and power, and the construction of masculinity (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993:21).

A new component is planned for the revised *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit containing resources to assist in addressing sex-based harassment.

The Gender and Violence Project's Position Paper concludes that few resources are aimed at teaching about sex-based harassment to primary students, although one South Australian primary school has developed a whole-school approach to sex-based harassment including single-sex units of work. While the girls' program examines sex-based harassment and how to deal with it, the boys' program focuses on anger management and conflict resolution (Ollis and Tomaszewski, 1993:27).

Representatives of Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) appearing before the Committee stressed the need for school counsellors to be trained in ways to encourage boys to be responsible for their behaviour, and teachers to be trained in narrative approaches that will encourage alternative masculinities in respectful ways, based on the work of Alan Jenkins and Michael White (Denborough Evidence, 29.06.94). The Committee believes in-service workshops on these issues for teachers and school counsellors providing counselling for boys regarding their behaviour towards girls would assist in addressing the problem of sex-based harassment.

To ensure the success of resources, policies or programs attempting to confront harassment, the Committee heard that a whole school approach is preferred, with an appropriate commitment to staff education and responsiveness. The Training and Development Officer of the Australian Guidance and Counselling Association stated that

when staff morale is low and there are a lot of problems, harassment is higher. If you are in a school which says they do not tolerate that sort of behaviour and have a high expectation for behaviour, the harassment does decrease (Hatswell Evidence, 22.02.94).

The Committee is aware of a number of programs already in operation in NSW schools aimed at decreasing sex-based harassment. Those brought to the Committee's attention include:

- James Busby High School: the school has developed an anti-harassment policy that outlines a wide range of undesirable or unwanted behaviour that can be considered a form of harassment. Sexual harassment is defined to include discrimination, jokes, unwanted contact, leering, gestures and drawings based on the gender of the victim. The school was a recipient of an Australian Violence Prevention Award for its Policy in 1993.
- Auburn Girls' High School: a unit entitled "Women in Society and Violence in Relationships" has been developed, in conjunction with the Auburn Community Health Centre, for the Year 10 Personal Development, Health and Physical Education Curriculum.
- Metropolitan West region: a Gender and Violence Prevention Officer has been seconded to this region for a period of one year. The Senior Education Officer-Girls' Education of the Specific Focus Programs Directorate is collaborating with this officer to develop programs for the elimination of sex-based harassment. The project will involve three primary schools and one special school in the region. Staff development inservice training has been conducted on the construction of gender and sex-based harassment. As a result of their different experiences and perceptions, it is likely that the schools participating in the pilot

will attempt to address sex-based harassment from a variety of perspectives. One school has found that students have relied on the anti-racism policy and grievance procedures to raise issues of sex-based harassment. This school will focus on developing an anti-harassment policy and appointing a Grievance Officer. A proposal for a student video on sex-based harassment to educate parents and the school community is also being considered, which could be used by other schools in the cluster or region. A second school will focus on mapping the problem of sex-based harassment to determine the extent of the problem and areas of need. Another school is focussing on boys' education and developing lessons on the construction of masculinity, and the fourth school is focusing on parent and community involvement in addressing the issue.

A report will be produced for distribution throughout the state, outlining these initiatives as examples of what individual schools can do to counter sex-based harassment. A proposal to develop a series of posters on unmasking sex-based harassment, and targeting teachers, secondary students and primary students is also under consideration.

The Committee believes that, in addition to the state-wide introduction of *Procedures for Resolving Complaints about Discrimination against Students*, schools should be encouraged to develop anti-harassment policies with input from the entire school community to achieve a sense of ownership and contribute to a change in the culture of the school. This approach must be supported with appropriate resource material and inservice training.

RECOMMENDATION 90

That the Minister for Education ensure regional education offices assist schools to recognise and address sex-based harassment by:

- offering appropriate information resources to schools;
- developing in-service workshops for teachers; and
- developing in-service workshops for school counsellors providing counselling for boys regarding their behaviour towards girls.

RECOMMENDATION 91

That the Minister for Education encourage schools to formulate a school anti-harassment policy, with appropriate attention to sex-based harassment by students and teachers, and appropriate input from students, teachers and parents.

10.3 BOYS' EDUCATION AND GENDER EQUITY STRATEGIES

Statistics consistently show that men are predominantly the perpetrators of violence. The way masculinity is constructed by society in general is a concern, with aggressive behaviour seen as a manifestation of strength, toughness and bravery, particularly for young men.

The Committee has heard much evidence on the gendered nature of youth violence, and of the cultural supports which lead to boys and young men seeing violence as a legitimate behavioural response. The Executive Officer of the Federation of Parents' and Citizens' Associations, for example, stated that:

All too often boys believe that they should be aggressive and fight in order to prove their superiority. They believe that boys should dominate and act with contempt against women and girls. They believe that boys must be strong, rugged and athletic ... that boys must keep their problems to themselves as communicating their needs and feelings is a sign of weakness. All too often the only strong emotion boys allow themselves is the emotion of anger. These attitudes and beliefs are, we believe, the precondition of the violence which occurs in our schoolyards (Johnson Evidence, 08.11.93).

Mr Peter West, a senior lecturer in Education at the University of Western Sydney, has conducted a study on growing up male in Western Sydney. He found that many boys have a fear of appearing to fall short of the masculine ideal, and this fear results in behaviour designed to prove their masculinity:

A whole range of male behaviour is dictated by this need to fit in, to play the part, and if that means belting the tripe out of other guys in the playground or on the football field, then that is the way it has to be (West, 1994:5).

These attitudes of conformity to gender stereotypes also affect boys' experiences of education. One kindergarten boy, when asked if he had come to school to learn to read, said "No. Only poofers read" (West, 1994:4). As this example demonstrates, these stereotypes and beliefs form early in a boy's development:

if boys are being taught to be in control, dominating and violent in some ways, sitting down and writing and expressing themselves emotionally through literacy will be more difficult (Denborough Evidence, 29.06.94).

The Executive Director of the Federation of Parents' and Citizens' Associations claimed there is a need to

identify the resentments, frustration and hostilities generated by what we see as the lack of congruity between the full human needs of boys and their desire to become effective learners on the one hand and the rigid demands of the male stereotype and the way those demands hijack behaviour into aggression, self-centredness and competitiveness (Johnson Evidence, 08.11.93).

In conjunction with the recognition of the centrality of gender construction in the development of children, there is now a growing realisation that the educational and social needs of boys

require attention. The Federation of Parents' and Citizens' Associations has called on the Director General of the Department of School Education to initiate research on a boys' education strategy involving every school.

The previous Government's Advisory Committee on Education, Training and Tourism inquired into boys' education in 1994. The Committee's *Challenges and Opportunities* discussion paper found that:

- 65% of students in special school and support classes are boys;
- boys under-perform compared with girls in literacy tests at both Year 3 and Year 6, and achieve lower grades in English at both the School Certificate and Higher School Certificate;
- girls have outperformed boys over at least the last 13 years on the basis of mean tertiary entrance scores; and boys are over-represented in the lower ranges and underrepresented at higher levels, although they continue to be slightly over-represented in the HSC top 1,000 (NSW Government Advisory Committee on Education, Training and Tourism, 1994:12-13).

The discussion paper recommended the development of a Gender Equity Strategy in Education to include programs for boys, girls and both boys and girls. A set of Gender Equity Principles was recommended to underpin the Strategy. The paper also called for the teaching of Gender Equity across the curriculum.

The paper recommended that the Strategy:

- develop programs to involve all parents, particularly fathers, as active participants in their children's education;
- develop opportunities for members of the wider community to be involved in the educational programs of schools to provide appropriate role models to both boys and girls;
- implement peer support programs for all children, starting with a transition to high school program in Year 6;
- bring current programs on sex-based harassment and violence under the umbrella of the Gender Equity Strategy;
- re-assess school discipline policies in light of the Gender Equity Principles and Strategy;
- encourage students to participate in student leadership programs such as Student Representative Councils;
- encourage and promote participation in cultural activities and the humanities; and

- introduce four units of English as an HSC subject (NSW Government Advisory Committee on Education, Training and Tourism, 1994:27-31).

A number of initiatives that include a focus on gender issues have been developed in schools. In the Metropolitan North region, a two day staff development course entitled "Educating Against Violence" was developed incorporating boys' education strategies, and offered through Education Resource Centres. The course targeted principals, executive staff and teachers with Personal Development, Health and Physical Education or student welfare roles. A four day Vision for Boys course is offered to school staff nominated as Boys' Co-ordinators.

Schools have been encouraged to submit proposals requesting access to support from specialist teachers and funding to develop and implement anti-violence programs and/or boys' education strategies. A Student Welfare Teacher - Anti-violence piloted boys' education strategies in a number of secondary schools. A program for the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum for Year 10 students was developed, covering the areas of non-violent relationships; gender awareness; and valuing girls and femininity. The program was partly adapted from an ACT personal development program for boys released in 1993 and resource material from the Western Education Centre in Victoria. Gender stereotyping is also being addressed in regional peer support programs, including single-sex groups.

Several primary schools in the region are also trialing programs involving boys' and girls' groups. Social skills programs are offered to groups of Year 3 students at Epping Public School, Years 4 and 5 students at North Sydney Demonstration School, and Year 6 boys at Ermington Public School. The programs have been adapted from the Boys and Relationships program from South Australia, and will be documented with the aim of distribution as exemplary Student Welfare programs.

A boys' program for Year 10 students has also been developed at Glebe High School. At Granville Boys' High School, a Mentor Program is being piloted with the co-operation of the University of Western Sydney. Boys are matched with a role-model from a profession or field in which they are interested. The Committee believes that providing boys with appropriate mentors is valuable in encouraging non-violent models of masculinity, and that such programs should be evaluated and, subject to the results of this evaluation, extended.

Discussion of a boys' education strategy has received some criticism on the grounds that resources may be diverted from girls' education, the approach is all about re-asserting the dominance of men in our society, and it fails to acknowledge very real problems of the male culture of our schools and the harassment of girls.

The Young Women's Electoral Lobby, for example, supported the position of the Federation, but stressed that

this must not divert money, resources or commitment from gender equity and special strategies for girls, which are very necessary but also, we believe, not sufficient (Jeffcoat Evidence, 10.02.94).

Representatives of Men Against Sexual Assault contended that:

any boys' education strategy should be grounded very strongly in an understanding of the construction of gender and a commitment that such an understanding should underpin all aspects (Denborough Evidence, 29.06.94).

The Committee believes these concerns can all be addressed by a strategy which does not solely focus on widening curriculum choices and increasing levels of attainment, but which has a strong focus on developing communication, social skills, an awareness of gender construction, removal of gender stereotypes and improving relationships. The *Challenges and Opportunities* discussion paper found that boys have fewer alternative dispute resolution skills than girls, a factor which would contribute to them resorting to violence.

The paper recognised the current commitment to the Girls' Education Strategy and urged that this commitment not be reduced. It considered that the recommended approach will deliver meaningful change for girls, as it should

bring about change in the attitudes of boys and a more equitable approach across the whole system to gender related bias in all forms (NSW Government Advisory Committee on Education, Training and Tourism, 1994:27).

The Committee endorses this approach, and believes any gender equity strategy should focus on the gendered nature of violence, overcoming gender stereotypes, and, for boys, encourage communication, conflict resolution and non-violent models of masculinity.

Representatives of Men Against Sexual Assault (MASA) informed the Committee in evidence that five key dominant messages traditionally given to boys about masculinity must be confronted. These include:

- the importance of dominance and control in being a successful man;
- the justification of violence to achieve such control;
- the attribution of responsibility for violence to other sources, such as alcohol or women;
- the rejection and denigration of the feminine both in terms of women and any feminine qualities within men; and
- the rejection and denigration of any homosexual expression (Denborough Evidence, 29.06.94).

A gender equity strategy should be designed to encourage messages of masculinity that are non-violent and nurturing, while maintaining the positive traits of masculinity, such as courage and self-confidence. The Committee heard priority areas for action in the development of boys' education include: gender construction, the elimination of sex based harassment and violence, improvement in learning outcomes, career choices and gender roles, studies of gender relationships and school structures (Denborough Evidence, 29.06.94).

RECOMMENDATION 92

That the Minister for Education evaluate mentoring programs for boys with a view to their possible extension as an interim measure to develop positive constructions of masculinity.

RECOMMENDATION 93

That the Minister for Education develop a gender equity strategy which includes:

- **an acknowledgment of the gendered nature of violence;**
- **strategies to eliminate gender stereotyping in schools;**
- **an appropriate focus on communication and alternative conflict resolution; and**
- **strategies to encourage alternative non-violent constructions of masculinity.**

10.4 BULLYING

The Committee is particularly concerned about bullying which in its prevalence and impact on students may well be the most serious form of violence in schools. It is an area that needs attention.

The need for schools in NSW to confront bullying has been graphically illustrated by several court cases in other jurisdictions where schools have been held liable for failing to protect victimised students.

As discussed in Chapter Three, the Committee heard evidence from Professor Ken Rigby of the University of South Australia, who has undertaken considerable research in the area of bullying. Professor Rigby contended that the most important strategy to counter bullying is to raise awareness in the community, particularly among teachers who are in a position to obtain and use available resources (Rigby Evidence, 29.07.94).

A number of programs are now available to assist schools in addressing bullying, including a program offered by the Australian Council for Educational Research and a program produced by Flinders University. In addition, the new component in the revised *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit discussed in Section 9.1.2, to be released in 1995, will deal with resources for bullying.

The Committee was informed that introducing the topic of bullying into teacher education and providing in-service workshops would also be valuable. Professor Rigby suggested that, for schools to assess the incidence of bullying and devise appropriate responses, teachers can use self-administered, anonymous questionnaires, which can also reveal students' willingness to work with staff in developing a co-ordinated response. Staff would then be able to discuss the results, evaluate the extent of the problem and work on formulating a policy involving students

and parents. Classroom discussions could then focus on encouraging children to formulate simple rules and policy statements (Rigby Evidence 29.07.94).

In the Metropolitan South-West region strategies to counter bullying have been incorporated into the training and development of Head Teachers-Welfare which is aimed at offering training to staff of Education Resource Centres. A specialised questionnaire has been developed for school staff to determine areas in which bullying is occurring and to identify appropriate interventions. The questionnaire has been trialed in a number of schools, with all regional schools being notified of its availability. Two secondary schools and two primary schools are currently undertaking the survey process.

Programs can also be introduced to assist victims of bullying. At Tumut High School in the Riverina region an anti-bullying program has been developed and assertiveness training is offered to victims. The Primary Protective Behaviours Program, designed by the Protective Behaviour Consultative Group, deals with both child abuse and bullying, and aims to empower children to stand up to bullying. The program has gained the support of the NSW Police Service and the Department of Community Services for use in primary schools.

10.4.1 Intervention

Rigby and Slee's research suggests that approximately 40% of students surveyed indicated that they would not look for help even if they were bullied every day of their lives by somebody bigger and stronger than they were. Of those that would seek help:

- one-half would tell a friend or friends;
- one in three would tell their mother;
- one in four would tell their father; and
- one in five would tell their teacher (Rigby Evidence, 29.07.94).

Younger children and girls indicated that they were more likely to disclose their experiences than those in the older age groups.

Approximately 50% of the disclosing group indicated the situation improved after disclosure; 40% suggested there had been no change; and 10% said the situation got worse (Rigby Evidence, 29.07.94).

There are a variety of approaches available to deal with school bullies. One school of thought suggests that bullies are hardened children who need to be controlled by sanctions or by punishment. An alternative view is that bullies are products of peer group dynamics who fail to appreciate the harm that they cause. This latter, "no blame", approach suggests that bullies need help to behave more responsibly, and techniques have been developed to encourage this behavioural and attitudinal change.

The "no blame" approach involves speaking to each individual in peer groups separately, outlining the circumstances and harm being caused and enlisting each person's support. The

"method of common concern" which has been developed in Sweden is being used in schools in South Australia. It includes talking with the bully, involving parents, and possible sanctions such as suspension (Rigby Evidence, 29.07.94).

In the United Kingdom, bullying courts consisting of two teachers and two students have been trialed. The parties involved appear before this panel, and the incident is discussed as a school matter in an attempt to find constructive solutions (Ludbrook Evidence, 01.11.93).

The Committee believes that bullying is a far more serious aspect of youth violence than has been recognised in the past, and that information and training should be offered to teachers to assist them in addressing the problem.

RECOMMENDATION 94

That the Minister for Education ensure regional education offices:

- offer appropriate information resources to schools to assist them in identifying and intervening appropriately when bullying occurs;
- develop in-service workshops for teachers to assist them in addressing bullying;
- direct schools to formulate a school policy on bullying, with appropriate input from students and parents; and
- develop or approve self-administered, anonymous questionnaires to offer to schools to assist them in evaluating the extent of the problem and in developing an appropriate, co-ordinated response to bullying.

10.5 RACISM

10.5.1 Anti-racism Policy Statement and Grievance Procedures

In 1992, the Department of School Education released an *Anti-racism Policy Statement*. The statement was that:

The NSW Department of School Education rejects racism in all its forms. It is committed to the elimination of racial discrimination -including direct and indirect racism, racial vilification and harassment - in its organisation, structures and culture, in its curriculum, and in the learning and working environments for which it is responsible (Department of School Education, 1992d:3).

The policy statement listed the responsibilities of various officers in implementing the policy, from the Director-General to individual teachers. Assistant Directors-General (Region) were required to allocate responsibilities for the implementation of the policy in regions; to promote exemplary programs and practices in anti-racist education; and to report annually to the

Director-General. Principals were required to ensure all staff, members of the School Council, parents, students, and community members were familiar with the Anti-racism Policy and Grievance Procedures and understood their rights and responsibilities under them.

Anti-racism Grievance Procedures were distributed. A training package for Anti-racism Contact Officers was also prepared, and a Whole School Anti-racism Project resource developed.

The introduction of *Procedures for Resolving Complaints about Discrimination against Students* has provided further reinforcement of these initiatives.

The Committee believes that the implementation of Anti-Racism policy and procedures should be reviewed, and that the annual reports by regions may provide the material for resources outlining exemplary practice for anti-racism initiatives.

RECOMMENDATION 95

That the Minister for Education collate and review regional reports on the implementation of the Anti-racism policy to produce standards of best practice for distribution to all schools.

10.5.2 Anti-racism Initiatives and Programs

During the course of its Inquiry, the Committee heard of a number of initiatives and innovative programs set in place to address racism in schools:

- Granville South High School: in 1992 an anti-racism project was developed involving an inter-school visit by Aboriginal students from Walgett. Students realised the broader problem of racism, and demonstrated that attitudinal and behavioural change is possible with adequately resourced programs; and
- Killara High School: a two day, Talking Tolerance to Teenagers program is offered for Years 9 and 10 using large and small group activities and varied techniques such as videos, a fun quiz, physical activities and group discussions. Approximately 30% of students in the school are from a non-English speaking background and face resistance to their participation in mainstream activities. The program has reportedly reduced prejudice and increased tolerance (Department of School Education, 1993d:68-69).

10.5.3 Community Liaison Officers

Community liaison is particularly important in attempts to involve ethnic communities in the education and welfare of their young people. The Department of School Education has attempted to establish links with the community through the appointment of Community Liaison Officers. Community Liaison Officers are community members of particular ethnic groups who work in association with large numbers of English as a Second Language (ESL) teachers and other teachers, and support various programs.

The Committee has heard that the Department of School Education recognises that international disputes between various ethnic groups may impact on students, and steps have been taken to address this issue. During recent international conflicts, staff were alerted to the strength of feelings that existed among ethnic groups in relation to these matters. The anti-violence measures announced in relation to the 1992-3 Education budget allocation included the appointment of an additional two Community Liaison Officers, and one was assigned to an area where these problems had impacted on relations between ethnic groups (Davidson Briefing, 17.09.93).

A training course has been carried out for Community Liaison Officers focusing on developing mediation and conflict resolution skills. The course also aimed to increase knowledge of working effectively with school staff and parents, and understanding of the school curriculum.

The Committee believes that the role of Community Liaison Officers is fundamental in involving ethnic communities in the education and welfare of young people, and in dealing with disputes. It also believes resources must be provided for adequate numbers of Community Liaison Officers.

RECOMMENDATION 96

That the Minister for Education allocate adequate resources to fund appropriate numbers of Community Liaison Officers to ensure ethnic communities are involved in the education and welfare of their young people, and potential ethnic disputes impacting on schools can be identified and addressed.

10.5.4 Language High Schools

The Committee was informed of the success of Tempe High School becoming a Languages High School. Like many high schools in suburban Sydney this school has a high proportion of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The school was not achieving a high standard in academic excellence in traditional curriculum subjects such as English. In recognising that students must master their own language before mastering English, the school has reduced the time spent on English language teaching since 1987, and more resources have been allocated to teaching community languages including Greek, Macedonian, Vietnamese and Arabic.

However, this strategy needs to be carefully monitored, to ensure that the mastery of English is fostered rather than ignored as fluency in English is fundamental to participation in mainstream Australian society. Instead of academic achievement in English suffering at Tempe High School, it has improved markedly. Students are now achieving results equal to the state average in every subject including English (Pisarski Evidence, 29.07.94). This strategy has both improved academic achievement and fostered school identity and pride which contributes to cultural tolerance and harmony.

The Committee recognises that violent offenders often have a history of under-achievement in school, and believes that providing young people with the means to succeed at school may be an effective crime prevention strategy.

The Committee believes that appropriately resourced language high schools should be developed, provided that they continue to demonstrate that the acquisition of English is facilitated.

RECOMMENDATION 97

That the Minister for Education support the continued development of appropriately resourced Language High Schools, in areas with high proportions of students from non-English speaking backgrounds, provided such schools continue to demonstrate the acquisition of English is also facilitated.

10.5.5 Aboriginal Culture and Community

The Department of School Education's *Programs of Excellence* (1993d) identifies a number of schools in NSW which offer students opportunities to learn about Aboriginal culture and heritage which the Committee also believes can promote pride, tolerance and harmony. Amongst those schools identified are:

- Camdenville Public School which offers a group of programs to support Aboriginal students and further the aims of Aboriginal Education;
- Dubbo West Public School which has a Year 4 Aboriginal Studies program that brings Aboriginal parents and community members into the classroom to discuss Aboriginal history and culture; and
- Narromine Public School's Kirinari Club which operates after school, providing educational, social and cultural experiences for Aboriginal students (Department of School Education, 1993d:66-80).

The Committee endorses these initiatives.

A number of regions are developing projects which aim to improve links with the Aboriginal community. These links are designed to enhance school community relations with Aboriginal

parents and students and to increase:

- Aboriginal parent participation in school programs and decision-making;
- the number of Aboriginal students completing post compulsory schooling; and
- the awareness and understanding of Departmental and school educational policies and services.

Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are involved in working with the Aboriginal community, such as in the case of recent allegations of racism at a secondary school in Casino.

In the Western region, Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are attempting to broaden liaison to include other Government Departments providing services which support Aboriginal education.

The Committee stresses the importance of fostering appropriate links with the Aboriginal community, and believes significant benefits can be gained through the appointment of adequate numbers of both male and female Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers.

RECOMMENDATION 98

That the Minister for Education ensure that, in areas with significant Aboriginal populations:

- strategies are in place to develop appropriate links between schools and the Aboriginal community; and
- adequate numbers of both male and female Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers are employed in schools to establish and maintain these links and increase awareness of Departmental practices and policies, support at-risk students, and encourage parental involvement in programs.

10.6 VIOLENCE AGAINST HOMOSEXUALS

The Department of School Education's *Procedures for Resolving Complaints About Discrimination Against Students* include discrimination on the grounds of homosexuality, and also refer to the anti-vilification provisions of the Anti-Discrimination Act.

The Department has undertaken a number of initiatives to address the incidence of violence against homosexual men and women. A curriculum component in the *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit, entitled *Violence Against Homosexual Men and Women* (Department of School Education, 1992c) is recommended as being appropriate for students from Years 9 to 12. The Committee was informed of an evaluation of the attitudes of Year 9 students. While the module produced different outcomes across a range of variables, it was successful in

achieving attitudinal change in the areas of homophobic anger and behavioural intentions towards homosexuals and lesbians. The beliefs of both male and female students became more positive, but when follow-up testing occurred three months later, the males had relapsed to their previous attitudes, with the general conclusion being that:

overall the module has a positive impact but there is an interesting retrogression for male students [which] might indicate the need for planned revision (van de Ven Evidence, 29.06.94).

The Student Welfare Teacher - Anti-violence in Metropolitan North region used the *Violence against Homosexual Men and Women* module of the *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit in a number of secondary schools as part of that region's focus on boys' education.

The Committee was also informed of workshops conducted at an inner-city high school after the murder of a homosexual man by students of the school, and the unsolved murder of a homosexual teacher from the school. Twenty police officers and twenty youth workers discussed issues of violence against homosexuals and violence in the community. Approximately 200 students participated in a school workshop which included a panel of homosexuals and lesbians. The workshop included discussions on victims of crime and the suffering of victims' families. Following the workshops, the Committee was advised that the incidence of gay bashing in the area dropped dramatically, and continues to be low (In camera Evidence).

The impact of the *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* module on young offenders in Juvenile Justice Centres has also been evaluated and subsequently adapted. This adapted module was reproduced by the Directorate of Special Education and issued to all schools in Juvenile Justice Centres in July 1993 (van de Ven Evidence, 29.06.94).

The *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit is currently being revised and will be distributed to all schools in 1995. The list referring students to other agencies for further information and counselling is to be expanded to include a wider range of support options, including parents or other adult family members, and local cultural and religious organisations. The Committee believes the efficacy of the kit in changing students' attitudes to homosexuals and lesbians should continue to be reviewed.

While evidence to the Committee suggested that the kit is widely accepted as a valuable teaching aid, concern was expressed regarding the extent to which it is being used in schools. The *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit was first produced in 1992 and distributed at regional level in the school system. Since a request must be made through the principal for the homophobia module to be taught, the decision to implement the program rests with the discretion of individual principals (Edwards Evidence, 29.06.94). The Committee believes that the use of the updated kit should be encouraged and monitored.

The Gay and Lesbian Teachers' and Students' Association suggested that the speakers' bureaus of the AIDS Council of New South Wales and the Lesbian and Gay Anti-Violence Project, and members of the Gay and Lesbian Teachers' and Students' Association would be ideally suited to assist in the implementation of the *Violence against Homosexual Men and Women* module of the *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit within schools (Brodie Evidence, 29.06.94).

The Acting Executive Director of the AIDS Council of NSW (ACON) suggested to the Committee that the *Resources for Teaching against Violence* kit should be used in combination with education about HIV/AIDS (Malcolm Evidence, 29.06.94). It was also suggested to the Committee that inviting people living with HIV/AIDS to speak and interact with students in schools would further reduce stereotyping and fear (Bendall Evidence, 29.06.94).

The *Violence Against Homosexual Men and Women* module currently provides schools with the option of using a panel of homosexuals and lesbians, or utilising a taped panel discussion. The Committee supports this approach to encourage attitudinal change.

RECOMMENDATION 99

That the Minister for Education ensure the *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit continues to be reviewed, and that this review includes an analysis of attitudes towards homosexuals and lesbians among high school students.

RECOMMENDATION 100

That the Minister for Education develop strategies to

- **encourage the introduction of the revised *Resources for Teaching Against Violence* kit in the Personal Development, Health and Physical Education curriculum; and**
- **monitor its use and effectiveness.**

10.6.1 Counselling and Support

The Committee has heard that the physical victimisation of gay and lesbian students can lead to these students discontinuing their studies. Preliminary data from the SchoolWatch report, for example, suggest that 18% of the student respondents had left school as a result of violence against homosexuals or HIV/AIDS discrimination, and a further 14% had contemplated leaving school at some time as a result of these pressures (Submission 43).

During the Committee's Inquiry into Suicide in Rural New South Wales, a number of submissions expressed great concern about the extent of suicide among homosexuals, particularly young homosexuals in the country areas of New South Wales. The Committee was told that young homosexual men suffer taunting and intimidation from peers, even from pre-adolescent years, and may develop a sense of rejection and self-rejection (Standing Committee on Social Issues, 1994:79,80).

An indirect result of leaving school is that once these students leave the education system they are no longer able to access school-based counselling services and receive support. The

Committee believes homosexual and lesbian students experiencing harassment should be provided with information on appropriate support agencies.

In 1985 a project known as Project 10 was introduced in Los Angeles, comprising four strands: education, school safety, dropout prevention strategies for homosexual and lesbian students, and support services. The Committee was advised that a noticeable drop in violence against homosexuals was recorded in the Los Angeles area and in the schools that implemented the program (Brodie Evidence, 29.06.94).

It was suggested to the Committee that school teaching staff be provided with in-service training to assist students accept lesbians and homosexuals, both within and outside the classroom, and school counselling staff be provided with in-service training to deal with both the problems faced by these groups at school as well as issues surrounding harassment and violence (Submission 47). The Committee supports this approach.

RECOMMENDATION 101

That the Minister for Education ensure students identifying as homosexual or lesbian and reporting harassment are advised of appropriate agencies and counselling services.

RECOMMENDATION 102

That the Minister for Education ensure

- **all school counsellors are adequately prepared and receptive to handling sexual orientation inquiries from all students, and to provide support for students with HIV; and**
- **teachers have access to in-service training to assist them in countering negative attitudes towards homosexuals and lesbians by school students, both within and outside the classroom.**

10.7 STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES AND CONDUCT AND LEARNING DISORDERS

10.7.1 Attention Deficit Disorder

The Committee heard that the majority of the students who become conduct disordered are also usually attention deficit disordered, and may become involved in a cycle of disruptive and aggressive behaviour:

Children who are hyperactive with poor impulse control ... frequently get punished for those behaviours and never learn really to control those behaviours, and are never given treatment for that, which starts a cycle of aggression that

can often continue. There may be specific factors for a child in terms of learning deficits but where no one has picked up those learning problems. The children learn that to try to exclude themselves from work, being class clown or being disruptive will get them excluded or stop them from being involved with class programs (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94).

There are broadly two types of Attention Deficit Disorder:

	WITH HYPERACTIVITY (ADHD)	WITHOUT (ADD)
Main Symptom	Impulsivity	Inattention
Behaviour	Overactive	Sluggish
Occurrence	Boys considerably greater than Girls	Boys somewhat greater than Girls
Language	Language Disorder	Subtle Deficits
Peers	Peer rejection	Social withdrawal
Comorbidity	Aggression Conduct disorder	Anxiety Depression
Presentation	Behaviour Early referral	Learning Late referral
Family type	Discord/anger	Stress/frustration
Outcome	Persistence	Adjustment

Source: Hutchins, 1994:8

As the above typology indicates, children with ADHD are more likely to be aggressive or conduct-disordered.

The impaired learning patterns of children with ADD and ADHD often result in illiteracy, difficulties in coping with school work and poor employment prognosis. The personal and social problems experienced by these children can lead to delinquency, vandalism and aggression at home, school and in the community. It has been suggested to the Committee that these conditions, if untreated, have serious ramifications for society in general and these children and their families.

Father Halliday from Boys' Town contends that the condition of conduct disorder is more likely to be found in male adolescents, in households experiencing marital discord or inadequate parenting, in neighbourhoods of lower socio-economic status, and the education regions of the Metropolitan South West, West and South Coast (Submission 31).

Father Halliday argues that students with conduct disorders tend to be excluded from the mainstream education system. It has also been suggested by a child psychiatrist that up to 80% of disruptive students with learning difficulties received no services or appropriate services, and that existing services did not meet the complex, multiple needs of these adolescents and their families (St George, 1994:2). The former principal of a Special School has claimed that 85% to 95% of students considered for suspension had a history of learning failure and either a mild intellectual disability or severe learning difficulty (Clayton, 1994:3).

Rather than applying punishment, the needs of these students can only be met through a systematic program facilitating effective and functional learning and increasing desirable behaviour (Clayton, 1994:4).

The Committee heard that early intervention to break this cycle of behavioural problems is vital:

The earlier the intervention, the better. The age of five is starting to get too late with severe violent and conduct disorders unless there is intervention involving both parents and the school and including skills with the student before the age of nine, the prognosis is very poor (Hatswell Evidence, 22.02.94).

10.7.2 Autism

The Committee is also aware that disabilities such as autism may lead to aggressive behaviour. Autism is a severely incapacitating, lifelong developmental disability arising from a dysfunction of some parts of the central nervous system affecting how a child learns to understand and use language and to interact with people and the environment. Those with autism experience confusion, frustration and fear which can lead to the person becoming withdrawn, aggressive or self-abusive or performing repetitive movements as a way of comforting themselves (Autistic Association, 1993:1).

The incidence of "classical" autism is estimated to be 15 in every 10,000 children with boys four times more likely than girls to have the disability. While there is a general perception that the incidence of autism has increased in recent years, the Autistic Association advised the Committee that any increase is more likely due to an increase in awareness and reporting by health and education personnel rather than an actual increase in the disability.

Although the Department of School Education has four specific classes within its education system for autistic children, educational services for these children are generally provided by the Autistic Association of New South Wales which receives funding from the Department of School Education for certain services. The Association has four schools in metropolitan Sydney and two in regional centres staffed by teachers funded by the Department. Teachers' aides do not, however, receive state funding and funding is only available for students up to 16 years of age. The Department also funds the Association to provide a limited range of services for autistic students attending government schools. Currently funding is provided for a Metropolitan Outreach Service that visits schools providing advice to teachers. The Service consists of a psychologist, an educational consultant and a part-time speech pathologist. It is anticipated that an additional teacher will be funded in the near future. It is the Committee's understanding that the services of these consultants are fully extended and that they are not

able to meet the demand fully. The provision of one additional teacher, while useful, will in no way ensure that the current demand is met.

Despite submissions having been made on numerous occasions, the Department does not fund music or occupational therapists to meet the special needs of these children, and funding is not available for a Rural Outreach Service.

In response to the unique educational needs of autistic children, two submissions have been made to the Department of School Education to implement a pilot program called "Giant Steps". This program places a strong emphasis on the development of sensory skills in early education and the integration of sensory instruction into sessions focusing on functional skill development. The Committee understands that initial funding has been received and that space at the former Gladesville Hospital has been made available for the project. The Committee fully supports this program and the continued development of initiatives to address the needs of autistic youth.

10.7.3 Psychiatric Disorders

It was suggested to the Committee that no educational facilities for long-term psychotic young people are offered by the Department of School Education, and that while this group does not constitute a significant number, they do have a right to education. The Principal of Rivendell SSP suggested that offering "distance education" to these students is "really quite impossible" (Black Evidence, 26.04.94). The Committee believes educational services for these students should be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATION 103

That the Minister for Education undertake a review of educational services for students with long-term psychiatric disorders.

10.7.4 Support in Schools

While school counsellors are attempting to help teachers identify and address problems, the Committee heard that

there is a lack of resources in trying to do that in a very consistent manner I think you need additional teacher time with help from specialist personnel to help develop the programs. The specialist personnel will be the school counselling or the special education services (Hatswell Evidence, 22.02.94).

The Committee acknowledges that the Department of School Education is responding to the needs of children with special needs in a number of ways and within the education system a number of options are available. An itinerant teacher can be brought in to work intensively with the child in an attempt to modify behaviour. School counsellors can develop programs for

students. Some students are removed from their school and placed in special schools, or facilities such as Arndell, Rivendell, and Redbank, discussed in the following section. Other programs allow students to spend part of their week at a special school with an intense input on behaviour, and attend their regular school for the remainder of school time.

An aim of the Special Education Plan 1993-1997 of the Department of School Education is the provision of educationally effective support services within regular and special schools for students with disabilities, learning difficulties and behaviour disorders. Strategies to meet this aim include improving the effectiveness of support classes and itinerant services for students with disabilities and behaviour disorders. This is to be achieved through local review of supervisory and management mechanisms and the examination of educational provision for students with behavioural disorders and emotional disturbance, in conjunction with other relevant Government departments. Early intervention is to be facilitated by implementing training and development models to upgrade the basic diagnostic and intervention skills of primary and secondary school teachers including the promotion of the Learning Assistance Course in all regions (NSW Department of School Education, 1993c). The Committee supports these strategies.

The Committee is aware of teachers who have expressed concern that students diagnosed with learning disorders may use this diagnosis as an excuse for anti-social behaviour. The Committee believes, however, that the important task of assisting these children is compatible with an approach that encourages personal responsibility for behaviour.

The Catholic Education Commission has been considering violence in the context of examining the issue of emotionally and behaviourally disturbed children in schools. The Commission has prepared a position paper on the issue, which outlines action to be taken at the Commission, diocesan, school and university level. Schools are asked to develop interagency intervention strategies and make student management and support programs a priority focus for school-based teacher inservice programs (Catholic Education Commission, 1993:5).

The Department of School Education has a policy regarding administration of medication at school which is currently being reviewed. It is intended that wide consultation will be undertaken. The Committee believes that this review should include consideration of protocols relating to drugs prescribed for Attention Deficit Disorder.

The Committee is also concerned that students receive appropriate expert assistance when they have a learning disorder or disability which results in violent behaviour. The Committee believes that a more wide-ranging review of support services available in schools for students with such learning disorders and disabilities should be undertaken, recognising the need for a multi-disciplinary approach involving, where desirable, experts from fields other than education.

RECOMMENDATION 104

That the Minister for Education review the support available in schools for students with learning disorders and disabilities which result in violent behaviour, recognising the need for a multi-disciplinary approach involving, where desirable, experts from fields other than education.

10.7.5 Alternative Education Facilities

During the course of its Inquiry, the Committee either visited or met with representatives from a number of alternative education facilities designed to meet the needs of students who have a history of aggression. These facilities include:

■ **Schools for Specific Purposes (SSPs)**

Campbell House SSP in the Metropolitan South West region was opened in 1990 for students that could not be maintained in mainstream schools. Other regions have similar facilities. To be referred to the school, students must be aged over 12 years, be identified as conduct disordered, and have a history of multiple suspensions. The school's programs are underpinned by the philosophy of Glasser's Reality Therapy, where the students are held accountable for their actions. In addition to the behaviour modification focus, each student is placed on an Individual Education Program to cater for academic needs. Self-esteem building and practical lifeskills are also part of the program. Students are placed on a levels system of achievement, with points allocated for tasks satisfactorily completed. Students on higher levels are afforded more privileges and free time.

As of December 1993, over 150 students had attended Campbell House. Approximately 18% left the program prematurely. It was suggested to the Committee that many students who do not complete the program have dysfunctional home lives and would require a residential program for greater success.

Campbell House has been involved in the production of the "Back on Track" and "Taming Anger" behaviour modification programs; conducting the "Trailblazers" wilderness program; and staff development activities.

■ **Boys' Town**

Boys' Town provides school and residential facilities to cater for boys who lack confidence or competence and whose behaviour, due to complex familial reasons, demands more resources than can be provided in mainstream schools. The school has to deal with more disturbed classroom behaviour than mainstream schools. Over 50% of boys in the program in 1991-1993 had been abusive at school or to a member of the public. Boys' Town has programs for aggressive youth and for families to assist them to rearrange situations that have brought them to seek assistance. The school has small class groups, a modified curriculum, a positive incentive system operating through the program, and a professional staff component offering consultation, liaison and support for teaching staff (Submission 31).

■ **Rivendell, Arndell and Redbank**

Rivendell, Arndell and Redbank are special institutions providing health and education programs for children who cannot fit into the mainstream school system. These institutions cater for a wide spectrum of children, including those with major psychiatric disorders such as

schizophrenia, manic-depressive illness, severe anxiety disorders and depression. Staff of the Departments of Health and School Education work together in these facilities, which offer unique opportunities for interagency cooperation and coordinated responses:

We do not have [the Department of] Education working in isolation and we do not have [the Department of] Health without the support of the school system, where a lot of the behaviour management strategies can be implemented on a day-to-day basis [you] need multi-disciplinary teams working together (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94)

In evidence before the Committee, Dr Wever, a child psychiatrist, and Mr Black, the Principal of Rivendell SSP, outlined a special day program for the more disruptive students. The day program commenced in 1991, and is conducted separately from the residential program for children with more severe psychiatric disorders. Referrals to this program tend to come through school counsellors, and are usually students who have poor academic skills and low self esteem. The program is based on a cognitive behavioural approach encouraging decision-making and aims to reintegrate students back into mainstream schools. Students with disruptive disorders remain in the program for approximately six months, and attend their regular schools for one day a week at the beginning of the program.

Arndell also offers a day program for adolescents, in addition to week-day residential facilities for children aged from 8 to 12 years (Ryan Evidence, 26.07.94).

The provision of sound academic tuition is integral to the Rivendell day program's approach to ensure a concerted effort is made to improve literacy and numeracy skills:

These children have been operating in a class of 30 students and really have not known what has been going on. They start to play up, they are sent out of the room and they miss out further — it is a snowballing situation. We need to stop that snowball. We need intervention and we need to place an emphasis on academic progress (Black Evidence, 26.04.94).

Dr Wever suggested that the belief that counselling alone will change the inappropriate behaviours of children is erroneous. Intervention in a setting where young people can learn the consequences of their behaviours and start to learn new ways of meeting their needs rather than through violence and aggression is considered more appropriate (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94). Dr Wever suggested to the Committee that:

where there is a yoking of family work, individual supportive psychotherapy work for the child, and behaviour management systems in place at the school, that is when you will get an outcome (Wever Evidence, 26.04.94).

The Committee was advised that students who have completed the day program at Rivendell cause teachers in their mainstream schools fewer problems than previously. Rivendell carries out measurement tests to assess academic improvement. Follow-ups and discussions with families have revealed improvements in social interaction and self-esteem. Another indication of the program's success is that the majority of children who attend Rivendell's day program return to school even though they had histories of long-term or frequent suspensions or had been asked to leave their schools (Black Evidence, 26.04.94).

The Committee is aware that some commentators have suggested special education units may have damaging effects on students by:

- stigmatising the pupils with public and visible labels;
- developing programs phrased in denigrating language; and
- removing them from mainstream sequences of educational development, with associated difficulties of re-entry (Polk, 1989:192).

The Committee recognises that appropriate care is required in establishing alternative units outside of mainstream schools to ensure that students continue to receive adequate support in schools.

RECOMMENDATION 105

That the Minister for Education ensure students entering or returning to mainstream schools from alternative education facilities are provided with appropriate support.

RECOMMENDATION 106

That the Minister for Education and the Minister for Health ensure additional alternative day and residential programs are made available for conduct disordered students.

10.8 HOME SCHOOL LIAISON

The Home School Liaison program aims to improve the relationship between schools and families of students with poor attendance in order to establish good school attendance patterns and provide opportunities for continued education. Improved learning outcomes can lead to increases in self-esteem and a consequent reduction in violent behaviour.

10.9 HOMELESS STUDENTS

The specific issue of the treatment of homeless young people by schools has also been brought to the Committee's attention. A recent study suggests that approximately 2,910 secondary students in NSW were homeless in May 1994 (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1994:8). Many of these young people have not performed well at school, often because of their family background, and they may leave school early. Those that do stay on at school after they leave or are removed from their families may be stigmatised:

They look different at times and they often have to change schools, depending on where they end up living. I do not believe that schools are welcoming of young people who are known to be in the homeless group. We

have had a number of instances where I believe they have been discriminated against (Clay Evidence, 26.04.94).

When housing workers attempt to intervene and advocate for these young people, witnesses claimed that school authorities are often less than responsive:

I think they think we are meddlesome we find school counsellors supportive, but their caseloads are beyond what is reasonably able to be expected of a human being (Clay Evidence, 26.04.94).

Since homeless young people are often frustrated, angry and experiencing difficulties at school, truanting is frequent. If a young person is in a refuge, workers may attempt to ensure that the young person remains at school for the whole day, but when truanting occurs schools often contact the student's estranged parents. This can lead to further conflict between the student and his or her family, and feelings of anger towards the school and its staff which can lead to violence or aggressive outbursts. Housing workers may ask the school to contact them, rather than a student's family, when problems arise, and have recommended special protocols be developed for dealing with such cases (Clay Evidence, 26.04.94). The Committee supports this step.

In evidence to the Committee, the Director-General of School Education indicated that he was aware of the problem of homeless children of a young age in an area of the mid-north coast of New South Wales:

That is of deep concern to me in School Education because I want to see those children supported and able to learn in school We need to get [the Department of Community Services] and [Departments of] Health and Education in particular focussing in an inter-systemic way on the child (Boston Evidence, 29.07.94).

As indicated in Section 8.1.1, the Committee supports continued inter-agency consultation and co-operation.

RECOMMENDATION 107

That the Minister for Education, in consultation with other relevant agencies, develop protocols on dealing with homeless young people attending school.

10.10 CONCLUSIONS AND FINDINGS

- In addition to the state-wide introduction of *Procedures for Resolving Complaints about Discrimination against Students*, schools should be encouraged to develop **anti-harassment policies** with input from the entire school community to achieve a sense of ownership and contribute to a change in the culture of the school. This approach must be supported with appropriate resource material and in-service training.

- The Committee recognises the gendered nature of youth violence. A **gender equity strategy** should be developed, focusing on the gendered nature of violence, overcoming gender stereotypes and, for boys, encourage communication, conflict resolution and non-violent models of masculinity.
- **Bullying** is a far more serious aspect of youth violence than has been recognised in the past, and information and training should be offered to teachers to assist them in addressing the problem.
- The implementation of the **anti-racism** policy and procedures should be reviewed. Resources must be provided for adequate numbers of **Community Liaison Officers**.
- Violent offenders often have a history of under-achievement in school, and providing young people with the means to succeed at school may be an effective crime prevention strategy. Appropriately resourced **language high schools** should be developed, provided that they continue to demonstrate that the acquisition of English is facilitated.
- Appropriate links with **Aboriginal** communities must be fostered by schools. Adequate numbers of male and female Regional Aboriginal Community Liaison Officers must be appointed.
- The efficacy of the Resources for Teaching against Violence kit in changing students' attitudes to **homosexuals and lesbians** should continue to be reviewed. The use of the updated kit should be encouraged and monitored. Homosexual and lesbian students experiencing harassment should be provided with information on appropriate support agencies. School teaching staff should be provided with in-service training to assist students accept lesbians and homosexuals, both within and outside the classroom, and school counselling staff should be provided with in-service training to deal with both the problems faced by these groups at school as well as issues surrounding harassment and violence.
- The majority of students who become **conduct disordered** are also usually attention deficit disordered, and may become involved in a cycle of disruptive and aggressive behaviour. Early intervention to break the cycle of behavioural problems is vital. Disabilities such as autism and psychiatric disorders may also lead to aggressive behaviour. A wide-ranging review of support services available in schools for students with learning disorders and disabilities should be undertaken. Students should also receive appropriate expert assistance when they have a learning disorder or disability which results in violent behaviour.
- Appropriate care is required in establishing **alternative education facilities** units outside of mainstream schools to ensure that students with a history of aggression continue to receive adequate support in schools. Additional day and residential programs should be available to such students.
- Special protocols for dealing with cases of **homeless students** must be developed.
