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SUBMISSION TO THE SENATE

COMMUNITY AFFAIRS REFERENCES

COMMITTEE INQUIRY INTO

POVERTY AND FINANCIAL HARDSHIP

IN AUSTRALIA

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Key Points

Section 1 Poverty and Education

- 1** The relationship between the socio-economic circumstances of children and educational outcomes has been well established in research over many decades, and the financial and educational background of the parents is still the major determinant in the educational achievement of children. (3.1)
- 2** Therefore a discussion about poverty in schools must deal with the issues of equity and disadvantage.(3.2)
- 3** There is considerable evidence that poverty, inequity and disadvantage affects the schooling opportunities and the life chances of some Australian children. (3.3, 3.4 and 5)
- 4** The issue of so called voluntary fees and other user pays charges in schools is creating a set of specific and severe problems which must be addressed. (7)
- 5** The concept of equity in education involves equality of opportunity, of outcomes, and recognition and valuing of the diversity of cultural backgrounds, and what the students bring to school. (4.1)
- 6** A number of recent studies highlight the fact that addressing the effects of poverty is not just a matter of social justice and human rights, but also in the national economic interest. This includes the cost of students not completing school and of increased crime rates. (6)
- 7** There are a range of ways in which governments can operate to ameliorate disadvantage through the education system. However, the evolution of funding of schools and other educational institutions has lessened the effect of government policy on the amelioration of disadvantage and inequity. This is particularly the case with Commonwealth funding of private schools. (8.1 to 8.12)
- 8** There is an increasing tendency to brand any school catering to lower achieving students as a low performing school, and the pressures on public schools are to make the curriculum more suited to those in the middle and upper achievement bands. (9)
- 9** Tackling disadvantage and inequity requires programs directed at schools with high concentrations of disadvantage. There is a need to pilot and research the most appropriate way of delivering this. (10)
- 10** There must be a correct balance between acceptance of overall responsibility and provision of funds at departmental/government levels combined with the capacity for each school to decide its own solutions to its particular problems. (10)
- 11** The submission outlines a range of things that governments must do, including a national plan for universal access to high quality public preschool education, the development of appropriate programs for schools, a lead role for the Commonwealth, and pilot projects for full service schools. (11)

Section 2 Indigenous Education

1. The situation in regard to Indigenous students, families and communities is particularly alarming. Every socio-economic indicator points to the fact that poverty, and the issues which are symptomatic of it, is endemic in Indigenous Australian communities.(1.1)
2. The manifestations include low levels of educational attainment, high rates of unemployment, high levels of incarceration, substance abuse, family breakdown, and consequently the development, in many families and communities, of severe cases of poverty, highlighted by the large number of Indigenous peoples who are now inter-generational welfare dependents. (2)
3. Most alarming to the AEU is that the lessons from a history of discriminatory treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia remain to be learned. There continues to be a range of state-sanctioned policies and procedures which further exacerbate poverty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today, and too often, the victims continue to be blamed. (3.1)
4. There are particular problems with CDEP , including its use to pay Indigenous education workers (3 and 4.6-4.10)
5. The AEU believes that greater efforts must be made to develop strategies which encourage Indigenous students to remain at school, particularly beyond the compulsory years, and that any reforms to the CDEP scheme must ensure a closer alignment with the attainment of education and training outcomes. (4.1)
6. Problems of access to secondary schools in some remote areas must be addressed. (4.2 and 4.16)
7. Measures to address poor retention rates of Indigenous students are under funded. (4.4)
8. Educational policy makers, educators and the Indigenous community need to develop a shared vision of education, which raises the expectations of all stakeholders, focuses on outcomes, ensures collaboration through true partnerships, provides opportunities for Indigenous peoples to participate in and embrace educational opportunities, and challenges negative assumptions about educational success. (4.18)

Recommendations

Section 1 Poverty and Education

1. That the Commonwealth government through MCEETYA initiate:
 - A national strategy to achieve the social justice elements of the National Goals of Schooling, and that this include specific strategies in relation to “differences arising from students' socio-economic background”. Elements of the strategy would include:
 - giving greater priority to social justice objectives;
 - support and encouragement to develop curriculum and pedagogy which encompass all cultures and social backgrounds, which encourages all students to complete schooling, and offers successful pathways to all;
 - each jurisdiction having a comprehensive and coordinated plan to tackle disadvantage and inequity through education;
 - clear lines of responsibility for matters of equity in all education departments;
 - an “Equity impact study” for major educational decisions made by governments;
 - all schools considering and reporting on the measures they are taking to ameliorate poverty and disadvantage.
 - A national plan for preschool education coordinated through MCEETYA, including national goals, standards and a policy framework to ensure universal access to a high quality, free public preschool education within an overall framework of public education. In partnership with the states and territories, the Commonwealth should contribute to funding preschool education. Principles for cooperative Commonwealth - state/territory funding arrangements should include provision for a national Preschool Equity Program based on the numbers of children identified as disadvantaged or having special needs, targeted both at increasing participation and at redressing disadvantage/meeting special educational needs.
 - Measures to ensure that so-called voluntary fees in schools are genuinely voluntary and that inability to pay them does not limit educational opportunities by restricting subject choices, participation in activities and so on.
2. That the Commonwealth provide pilot funding to examine the current nature of the impact of poverty on schooling and education and effective ways of ameliorating it.
3. That the Commonwealth provide funding for well structured, funded and researched pilot projects looking at full service schools.
4. That the Commonwealth resume funding for the Australian Centre for Equity Through Education.

Section 2 Indigenous Education

- 1.** That the Federal Government act immediately to establish a National Forum on Indigenous Education to provide an opportunity for Indigenous educators and community members to input in to Federal Government decisions at a strategic level.
- 2.** That an investigation is conducted in relation to the reliance of State, Territory and Federal Government agencies on CDEP as a source of substitute funding for the long-term employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the education sector and other relevant sectors.
- 3.** Further, that this investigation explore the impact of CDEP on school retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and develop strategies to ensure that CDEP is not creating an adverse impact on school retention and completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure that the CDEP scheme becomes a true labour-market program, with opportunities and incentives for education, training and economic development built in.
- 4.** That the Federal Government provide immediate assistance to the Northern Territory Government to explore the unmet demand in relation to Aboriginal Education in the Territory, to determine the exact number of Aboriginal students (currently estimated at 5000) who have no access to the education system, and to develop strategies, including the immediate training of Assistant Teachers, to alleviate this national crisis.
- 5.** That an immediate audit be conducted in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to educational infrastructure on a national basis, and that strategies, such as the establishment of Government-run boarding schools, are explored in the context of ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to equitable educational infrastructure.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This submission was prepared by the Australian Education Union. The AEU is the union representing over 155 000 education workers in public education. As such, its membership includes teachers and other education workers in pre-schools, schools and TAFE.
- 1.2 This submission is endorsed by :
 - The Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO)
 - The Brotherhood of St Laurence
 - The National Coalition Against Poverty
 - The Victorian Council Of Social Service
- 1.3 In addition, the support of MacKillop Family Services and The Smith Family in commenting on this document, and the Poverty and Education sub-group of the National Coalition Against Poverty (NCAP) whose work has informed this submission, is also gratefully acknowledged.
- 1.4 As part of NCAP, the AEU was associated with calls for an Inquiry into Poverty, and congratulates the Senate for instituting such an inquiry. It is vitally important that the experiences of those living in poverty be heard and inform policy making, and hopefully this Inquiry will facilitate this.
- 1.5 This submission addresses primarily Terms of Reference 1(a(i) and (iii)), and focuses on the extent of poverty and inequality in early childhood, schools and TAFE and the educational experiences of those affected by poverty.
- 1.6 The first section deals with these areas generally, and the second section relates specifically to Indigenous Australians.

Section 1 Poverty and Education

1 The extent of child poverty in Australia

- 1.1 The publication “ ‘No Child....” Child Poverty: the Facts” (McClelland 2000) provides an excellent background to a discussion about the extent and nature of child poverty in Australia, and its relationship to school achievement, and we commend this to the Inquiry.
- 1.2 The wide variety of opinion on how poverty should be measured, and as a result the interpretation of whether the number of people living in poverty has improved or worsened is also reflected in statistics about child poverty and the numbers of children living in poverty that are in the schooling system.
- 1.3 The following are some recent figures in relation to child/education poverty:
 - In 1999 UNICEF, using an indicator based on 50% of overall median income, found that in Australia 17.1% of children are experiencing poverty.

- This ranks Australia as 5th worst out of the 25 countries measured. Using the US Poverty Line as an indicator the figure is 20.7% with a ranking of 11, indicating that in Australia more than one-fifth of all children have a standard of living that is lower than the USA official poverty line. (Bradbury,2003, pp.3-4).
- NATSEM (Harding and Szukalska, 1999) reported changes in the extent of child poverty in Australia between 1982 and 1995-96 using four different poverty measures. Whilst they found that using the Henderson poverty line gave considerably increased child poverty rates, the other three suggested substantial falls. However, this did not hold true for many in the 15-18 age group, and the gains became only minimal when after-housing costs were considered.
- The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL Fact sheet) suggests around one in eight children live in poverty in Australia.
- The Report of the National Education and Employment Forum (NEEF) (Feeney and others 2002) reviews a wide range of measures, and concludes that “our nation has conservatively between 650 000 and 750 000 children in jobless households.”

2 Schools

- 2.1 It should be noted that debates within the schooling community are usually based on a clear understanding that the relationship between the socio-economic circumstances of children and educational outcomes has been well established in research over many decades, and the financial and educational background of the parents is still the major determinant in the educational achievement of children. Education is fundamentally important to the life chances of individuals and plays a key role in social and economic mobility from generation to generation.
- 2.2 Thus discussion about poverty is often subsumed within a debate about equity and disadvantage, and therefore a discussion about poverty in schools must deal with the issues of equity and disadvantage
- 2.3 Relative poverty in regard to schooling exists where the lack of financial resources creates an inability to fully participate in schooling. There is evidence that this causes considerable exclusion and loss of opportunity for a large number of children (Orr nd., Zappala and Parker, 2000, Zappala and Considine, 2001, Anglicare Tasmania 2000).
- 2.4 There are also instances of real poverty. Programs such as the Breakfast Program run jointly by the CFMEU and the AEU in Victoria indicate that there are children who come to school hungry, and teachers are well aware that there are some children who lack the basics of life. A recent study found that four out of ten children in the Tasmanian public school system – nearly half come from families sufficiently disadvantaged to qualify for fee relief provided through the Student Assistance Scheme. (Flanagan, 2002, p.4).
- 2.5 Moore ((2000) in her summary of McClelland (2000) notes:
There is a link between poverty and child health and development, school achievement and employment futures...

Research concerned with secondary school children also indicates that family poverty is consistently related to poorer school performance and low school retention rates. Early school leavers are more likely to be unemployed or to be in precarious, casual, part-time work.

3. Concepts and measurement of equity in education

- 3.1 Broadly speaking the concept of equity in education involves:
- Equality of opportunity, which is understood as meaning all social groups should have similar participation rates in all levels of education;
 - Equality of outcomes, meaning that this participation should lead to similar achievement across all social groups;
 - A recognition and valuing of the diversity of cultural backgrounds, and what the students bring to school, which enables the basis of sound curriculum planning and pedagogical practice. (after Marginson, 2002, p.4)
- 3.2 Assessment of the degree of equity therefore generally involves consideration of the socio-economic background of students (including family income, size and education) against such measures as:
- Access to preschool education
 - Participation or completion rates for the latter years of schooling, or attending university, or other educational setting.
 - The numbers who complete further education courses at various levels. Frequently, this is limited to final school or tertiary entrance scores, but it should also include other post-school pathways.
 - The extent to which curricula and pedagogy respect and support differences and encourage self-determination. (after Marginson, 2002, p.4)

It should be noted that Indigenous Australians and certain cultural groups are over-represented when measures of low socio-economic background are analysed.

- 3.3 The National Goals of Schooling in Australia make specific reference to the desirability of achieving social justice and greater equity (Attachment 1). Whilst this is a noble sentiment, and some efforts are being made to achieve it, much remains to be done. As a goal it does not receive sufficient priority.
- 3.4 There are a number of other key factors involved that contribute to participation. Equality of outcomes through relevant and meaningful educational delivery is not only an important foundation stone, but is also an essential determinant of the child's future and the child's contribution to society as a whole.

4 Some Australian data and research on disadvantage and education

- 4.1 The relationship between socio-economic background and educational outcomes has been well understood over a long period of time. It is summarised by Vinson, (2002, p.230). He noted that students from low SES families are more likely to exhibit the following patterns in terms of educational outcomes, compared to children from high SES families:
- Lower levels of literacy, numeracy and comprehension;

- Lower retention rates;
- Lower participation rates (children from low SES are less likely to attend university);
- Higher problems of problematic school behaviour (e.g. truancy);
- Less likely to study specialised maths and science subjects;
- More likely to have difficulties with their studies and display negative attitudes to school; and
- Less successful transitions from school to labour market.

It is also well understood that they also:

- Are less likely to go to pre-school.
- Achieve lower final scores when they do complete school; and
- Will have lower average incomes than those from more well off backgrounds.

(Other factors such as gender and rurality which also overlay these statistics are not elaborated here).

- 4.2 The Report on Government Services (2003, 3.35) notes that “Completion rates for students from a low socioeconomic background were 15 percentage points below those for students from a high socioeconomic background in 2001.
- 4.3 Work such as that by Richard Teese (2000 and 2003) point strongly to the relationship between economic circumstances as represented by geographic location (or postcode) and educational success. He charts the patterns of success and failure in the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) across Melbourne.
- 4.4 Mukherjee(1996) also underlines the close connection between postcode, student outcomes and post school destinations.
- 4.5 The recent large scale and authoritative OECD Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) found that whilst Australian students did extremely well in comparison with other OECD countries, the gap between those achieving at the highest levels and those at the lowest was amongst the largest. That is, Australia did not do well on measures of equity. Those countries whose performance was above Australia, such as Finland and Korea had much narrower spreads of success. It is also notable that the comprehensive public school systems in these countries contain a much larger proportion of, indeed nearly all, the student population.

This study also again emphasised the link between socio-economic background and achievement. The conclusion is clear. Both equity and the national interest require public policy to be directed towards improving the performance of those with lower achievement. These are generally those from poor financial backgrounds and they are predominantly attending public schools.

Significantly, the OECD point out (McGaw, 2002) that the results from PISA refute the old argument that pursuing equity is at the cost of excellence, and that rather equity and excellence are now interdependent.

However, much of current policy, especially in terms of Commonwealth schools funding, is operating counter to this and encouraging greater resource provision to those from wealthier backgrounds who are statistically already the most likely to succeed.

- 4.6 There is now almost universal recognition of the vital importance of early childhood education. The research has been clear and overwhelming.

As Hull and Edsall have noted in their summary of the research findings:

preschool has a positive effect on intellectual and social skills, independent of background, when centres provide quality in terms of physical surroundings and adult/child interactions;
preschool improves children's ability to think and reason as they enter school, enabling them to learn more in the early grades. Even if the IQ advantage fades (this was not conclusive), their learning accumulates and their success keeps them 'on track' toward high school completion;
for children from very deprived socioeconomic backgrounds, pre-school makes a difference in intellectual progress and the acquisition of positive attitudes and motivation to succeed in school (2001, p v)

The Report on Government Services 2002 has indicated that around 83.7% of 4 year olds (5 year olds in WA) attended preschool in the year prior to school in 2000-01. This ranges from 100% in Queensland to 64.3% in NSW, although there are some reasons for caution in data interpretation.

Nonetheless, more than 16% of children in Australia miss out on preschool education. A conservative estimate would be that over 40,000 children are missing out and research indicates that often, children from low income and disadvantaged families are most likely to miss out.

- 4.7 The situation in regard to Indigenous students is particularly alarming, and requires deeper consideration in its own right. For this reason, a specific section (Section 2) on Indigenous Education is included as part of this submission.
- 4.8 Data on children from non-english speaking background is more complex. Studies such as PISA (Lokan, Greenwood and Cresswell, 2001) and Rothman (2002) indicate that there is a connection between disadvantage and students from certain non-English speaking backgrounds. However, there is considerable variation between various geographic origins.
- 4.9 The situation in regard to students with disabilities is also complex as disability itself is not related to poverty. However, there is evidence that those experiencing both a disability and poverty are subject to a compounding effect.
- 4.10 The National Inquiry into Rural and Remote Education (HEREOC, 2000) drew particular attention to the compounding effect of all forms of disadvantage when associated with rurality or remoteness. "Access to education is compromised by ill-health, disability, poverty, isolation, high mobility and transience ..." It notes the particular difficulty for teenagers in regard to work experience for those who

cannot afford the travel and accommodation costs where there is no suitable local work placement.

- 4.10.1 The difficulties of staffing schools in disadvantaged rural and remote areas and the tendency for them to have both inexperienced and transitory teachers is discussed in the Vinson Report (Vinson, p.23).
- 4.11 Vinson (2002, pp. 244-246) points to “the general and educational vulnerability of children receiving out-of-home care.” And notes :

Research here and abroad suggests that while some of these children and young people have learning difficulties and disabilities, their poor educational outcomes are more often a result of their circumstances (including their pre-care disadvantage and in-care experiences, such as multiple foster places), not a lack of ability.

5 The cost of not addressing poverty/disadvantage/equity and education.

- 5.1 A number of recent studies highlight the fact that addressing the effects of poverty is not just a matter of social justice and human rights, but also in the national economic interest.

- 5.2 A NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research study (Chapman and others, 2002) found:

...evidence of a negative association between criminal activity and unsuccessful senior high school completions, and positive associations between criminal activity and unsuccessful senior high school participation. The analysis suggests that labour market and education policies have the potential to significantly reduce property crime. (p.1)

The Annual Report of the NSW Department of Corrective Services 97/98 stated that “approximately 85% of the inmate population did not complete Year 10 at school”.(NSW, p.31) The 2000/2001 Annual Report stated that “at least 60% of inmates entering the correctional system have low to non-functional literacy, numeracy and communications skills”. (p.7)

A study in three states of the USA conducted by the Correctional Education Association (CEA) and funded by the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Correctional Education (OCE), found that 'the effect of correctional education on recidivism varied across states with all states showing a reduction in recidivism in the analyses.' " (Steurer and Smith, 2003, p.17)

Given the connection between retention in school and socioeconomic status (as noted above), this clearly indicates there is a social cost in not addressing disadvantage.

- 5.3 King (1999), on behalf of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum calculated the cost of early school leaving to the national economy at \$74 000 per student. The overall cost to Australia of one year's early school-leavers was estimated at \$2.6 billion. The Business Council of Australia have since worked with the Dusseldorp Skills Foundation on a series of papers outlining the cost of students not

completing year 12 or equivalent and the economic benefits of increasing the number of students who do complete. This work is summarised in BCA, (2003), and Allen Consulting Group, (2003).

6 Current problems for the most financially disadvantaged

6.1 The situation in regard to equity and disadvantage in Australia remains of considerable concern. This is shown in many of the indicators as mentioned above

6.2 A number of reports and case studies conducted by community organisations in the past decade highlight the specific effect of the costs of schooling on those from families which are most financially disadvantaged.

6.3 In 1999 Anglicare Tasmania's Social Action and Research Centre conducted a large-scale qualitative research project on the impact of poverty on low income households. In this research participants nominated the cost of public schooling as one of the major sources of financial stress for their families. One of the key findings of this report was:

The notion of free education is being undermined by the apparent funding crisis in the State education system with a range of levies and charges being introduced for excursions, activities, competitions and courses. Two standards of education are now being offered in our public education system with children from financially disadvantaged families being excluded from full participation." (Anglicare Tasmania,2000)

6.4 A follow-up study (Flanagan, 2002) explored the impact of costs and charges on families living on low incomes and their children's access to education and found that widespread socio-economic disadvantage is having a substantial impact on the experience of children from low-income families within the Tasmanian public education system. This is experienced through the impact of poverty on the children's lives and experiences. The widespread enforcement of "user pays" throughout the education system is exacerbating this.

Low income families reported that the imposition of charges by schools has become a significant barrier to their children's participation in education programmes and appears to be closely associated with patterns of absenteeism.

Most significantly, the report argues that with 40% of the children in the Tasmanian public education system coming from families living on incomes on or below Health Care Card eligibility, and therefore eligible for "fee relief" the Tasmanian Department of Education must cease to treat socio-economically disadvantaged children as an "equity group". It concludes that every budgetary and policy decision made within the Tasmanian school system must be made with the context of widespread poverty clearly in focus

6.5 Studies by the Smith Family (Orr and Taylor, 1996) and a recent Good Shepherd Report in Victoria (Webster, 2002) have similarly found that the imposition of school charges (generally nominally voluntary) has become a significant barrier to the participation of children experiencing poverty elsewhere in Australia.

6.6 In Victoria, the Herald Sun noted that:

It costs more than \$1100 for a Year 7 pupil at a state school to get a uniform, text books, stationery and public transport ticket. (January 29, 2002, p.5)

It also outlined the way difficulty in meeting schools costs was leading to some students having restricted subject choices, lessened participation in excursions and field trips, and how some families were seriously affected by the financial demands of public schools.

6.7 The 2000 survey for the Priority Schools Funding Program in NSW (the continuation in that state of the Disadvantaged Schools Programme) showed that in about one quarter (530) of government schools, 30% of families had no-one working. The concentration of poverty is now extreme, and is, with very few exceptions, distilled into government schools.

6.8 The importance of inequity in the early years was highlighted in *Unequal lives? Low Income and the Life Chances of Three year Olds* (Gilley and Taylor, 1995).

6.9 Access to preschool education is inequitable across systems and across regions. In those systems which do not include preschool education as part of the public school system, the fees imposed on parents would provide a significant barrier to preschool participation. In rural and remote areas, there may be no services provided. This is of particular concern in relation to many remote Indigenous communities.

6.10 Concern has also been expressed about the effect of the lack of availability of bulk billing through Medicare on the financial ability, and therefore the ability/willingness, of parents on low incomes, to seek early medical attention for their children (and themselves) - this seems to be an increasing problem which may impact on short and long term behaviour, attention, achievement, and attendance of children.

7 The role of governments

7.1 Marginson (2002, p.7) lists the following ways in which governments can intervene to improve the equity of education:

- Better facilities for, and higher participation in, pre-school;
- Improvements in the school-level education of the disadvantaged;
- Improved retention of school students and possibly TAFE students;
- Changes to the respective roles of public and private schools;
- Expansion of opportunities to enter higher education;
- Payments to individuals to support educational retention and participation;
- Policies designed to change the distribution of student achievement in upper secondary education;
- Changes to the mechanisms of student selection into universities, including later-year entry to higher demand courses;
- The provision of courses specific to particular social-cultural groups such as Indigenous students.

7.2 Marginson (2002, p.7) also notes that:

In the 1970s and 1980s there was some government intervention around some of these points including:

- Disadvantaged schools programs, which provided extra funding to schools, rather than students, in socially disadvantaged schools;
- Participation and Equity Programmes intended to increase participation and completion;
- School to work transition programmes;
- A Secondary allowance scheme;
- Expansion of higher education opportunities;
- Increases in the provision of payments to students in higher education.

This produced some amelioration of inequity in some cases. Most notably, retention and completion rates to the final year of school increased dramatically. The retention rate for secondary school students to year 12, which was 30.6% in 1971, peaked at 77.1% in 1992. By 1999 it had declined to 72.3%. However, most of this change is in fact due to the changes in the retention rate in public schools. In 1981 the retention rate of government school students was 28.5%. By 1990 this had risen to 58.3%, and it peaked at 73.8% in 1992. By 2000 it had declined to 66.6%.

More importantly, the participation of those from lower socio-economic backgrounds was an important factor in both the increase and the decline. It is clear that policies which increase or decrease retention are closely connected to equality of opportunity.

The expansion of higher education similarly increased the numbers of students from lower SES background who went to University, although in fact the proportion fell slightly.

7.3 However, over the last decade at least public policy has tended to move in the other direction. Policies have been implemented which:

- At the Commonwealth level, rolled Disadvantaged Schools Program and other equity programs into “literacy funding” For a discussion on the effects of this see Thomson (2002, pp168 – 179);
- Have increased the personal costs of Higher Education and in some cases, TAFE;
- Have left public schools inadequately funded and reliant on “voluntary fees”;
- Have given large increases to private schools, especially the more wealthy.
- Have encouraged competition and choice between educational institutions which in turn can discourage schools from taking students that may not enhance their image;
- Have made both AUSTUDY and ABSTUDY less adequate and more difficult to obtain;
- Have seen the number of Indigenous students at Universities fall between 1997 and 2000;
- Have made Australia more dependent on private education expenditure.
- Stopped Commonwealth funding to The Australian Centre for Equity Through Education, a body specifically charged with research and initiatives to do with equity, which was establishing considerable credibility, and was initiating some extremely valuable work, notably in the area of full service schools;
- Have failed to address the need to ensure a national commitment to universal access to public preschool education. Although the area of Early Childhood Education has become increasingly recognised as particularly influential in

regard to equity and compensating for disadvantage, there has been little national policy initiative in this area since Commonwealth funding for preschool education was abolished in the 1980s.

7.4 In 2002 the AEU surveyed Branches and Associated Bodies in regard to current programs available in the area of equity, and their effectiveness and adequacy. There were a surprisingly large number of such programs across all jurisdictions. The following summarises some of the reactions:

- In general, nearly all of the current programs are seen to be at least potentially beneficial. However, they were not regarded as universally successful as currently implemented and funded.
- Funding is a clear issue. Where programs are available on a system wide basis, they are characterised by a lack of adequate resources. Where they are available only to certain schools there is a desire that they be more widely available.
- Equally important seems to be the lack of continuity of funding. Funding is often short term and unpredictable.
- There is a heavy reliance on submission writing which is time consuming and favours those with the capacity to write submissions.
- There is a general concern that, despite some recent valuable initiatives, funding in regard to equity programs involves areas of discrete small expenditure rather than it being a fundamental determinant of how funding should be directed.

7.5 The summary of this survey also outlines a number of more specific issues and lists measures which are generally seen as desirable as part of “equity programmes”. It is attached (Attachment 2).

7.6 The NSW Priority Schools Funding Program (FPSF) arose from an earlier decision by the New South Wales Government not to abandon The Disadvantaged Schools Program when the Commonwealth acted to roll this program into “literacy funding”. Vinson (2002, p.232) characterised the PSFP as a “major initiative”, jointly funded from Commonwealth literacy funding and State equity funds. He notes (2002, p.232) that the “program provides additional support to assist targeted school communities to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes for students and increase their participation in schooling. The targeted schools, which are selected by means of a family survey, contain a high concentration of students from low socio-economic status backgrounds.

He also notes that “The additional resources provided through the PSFP are greatly appreciated by the target schools that use them to support a range of activities: literacy and numeracy programs, relief time for teachers to provide literacy and numeracy support to selected students, parent and community projects, employment of school community liaison officers and professional development for teachers.”

7.7 The AEU notes as an improvement the principles of funding expressed by MCEETYA at its meeting in Auckland in July 2002 (Attachment 3), which give greater primacy to public education and calls for a collaborative partnership between the states and territories and the Commonwealth in funding. It notes

that these were endorsed by all states and territories, but not by the Commonwealth.

- 7.8 The Commonwealth does run a number of programs which fall under a broad heading of equity, which make a contribution towards the area and are generally absorbed into state or territory funding. In 2002 these totalled less than \$300 million for public schools. This would be missed considerably if it were to disappear. However, when considered alongside the \$4 billion it gives to private schools, it means that only 7.5% of its expenditure on schools goes to equity programs in public schools, where the bulk of disadvantage is increasingly distilled. (This rises to about 10.5% if private school equity expenditure is included). This signifies that the Commonwealth has by and large abdicated its role as a leader in equity programs.
- 7.9 Whilst the private school sector is diverse and encompasses a variety of different objectives, a substantial portion of it exists to pursue educational advantage for those who can afford its fees and meet its selective criteria.
- 7.10 These schools have a mission which is in direct conflict with a public policy directed towards social justice. This of itself is extremely regrettable, but the situation is further worsened when they are able to mount formidable lobbying of the political process and secure large amounts of public funding to pursue this essentially vested interest.
- 7.11 Furthermore, the existence of such private schools inevitably leads to the denigration of public schools, and an unhealthy competition between them which encourages a conservatism in schools and pressures public schools to concentrate on those aspects of its charter catering to the middle class at the expense of the disadvantaged.
- 7.12 The rubric of choice, which in the Australian context frequently means school selection, allows the privileged to opt out of a schooling system which attempts to achieve greater social justice and equity into schools which seek to perpetuate privilege and inequities.

8 Disadvantage and curriculum and pedagogy

- 8.1 There is an increasing tendency to brand any school catering to lower achieving students as a low performing school.
- 8.2 This serves to confirm the stranglehold of the University system over the curriculum of schools, creating the danger that in responding to such public debates, public schools concentrate on curriculum designed for those already most likely to go to University and resist those who would seek to generate curriculum and pedagogy more appropriate to those who are less likely to do so. Thus the creation of culturally and socially appropriate curriculum and pedagogies, or productive pedagogies, is resisted in favour of that valued by the dominant cultural elite. (For a full discussion of this see Teese and Polesol 2003)
- 8.3 Frequently, the “solutions” proposed seek to create selective public schools, so that the public system can compete for those students aspiring to University and

create “sink” schools for those unlikely to achieve this. The real intent of this is for the middle class to achieve their educational privilege within the public system, and thwart attempts to make schools pursue more socially desirable objectives.

- 8.4 In reality, many private schools are successfully securing the higher achieving students, ignoring the needs of many others, and producing a dangerously divided schooling system
- 8.5 On the other hand, there is a growing body of knowledge that indicates that appropriate curriculum and pedagogy can play a vital part in maintaining the interest and building success for those from more disadvantaged and culturally different backgrounds.

9 Characteristics of desirable school programs

- 9.1 School programs designed to alleviate disadvantage and create greater equity are likely to have the following characteristics:
 - They are directed at schools with high concentrations of disadvantage;
 - They focus on improved outcomes and engaging students, families and teachers at the school level;
 - Finance is sufficient to make a substantial difference to the school, and sufficiently ongoing to allow the development of successful programs;
 - They provide resources which can be used flexibly through school and community based decision making;
 - The objectives, targets and outcomes are explicit and measurable, but also broad and related to the problems (rather than, for example, external basic skills testing).
 - There are high expectations of student outcomes.
- 9.2 Whilst each school must be given the opportunity to decide its own solutions to its own problems, the following areas should be targets for expenditure:
 - Reduced class size particularly in the early years with a priority for disadvantaged schools;
 - Public early childhood facilities;
 - Early needs identification and timely and appropriate additional support in literacy and numeracy.
 - Provision of additional teacher support;
 - Additional staffing to provide time for parent, community and interagency liaison;
 - Additional promotion positions;
 - Additional time for induction and mentoring;
 - Additional time for teachers to meet, and for counselling of students;
 - Professional development in relation to behaviour management and changed pedagogies.
- 9.3 Within a context which provides adequate funding and staffing levels and does not further increase workloads, and where agreement is reached between the

relevant Branch or Associated Body and employing authority, the AEU supports initiatives which have the potential to increase equity and address disadvantage. Such initiatives might encompass:

- Strategies to develop curriculum/whole school change;
- Middle years schooling;
- Changed teaching practice through appropriate pedagogies;
- Full service schools (including related health issues) ;
- Specific funding to increase participation of students;
- Alleviation of disadvantage;
- The role and delivery of VET in schools, and other matters related to the relationship between school and work;
- Funding of school based initiatives;
- Reduction of sectoral inequalities (EC, Primary, Secondary, etc.)
- Targeted resources for special programs;
- Student welfare and behaviour management;
- Whole of school mapping and tracking of whole of student issues;
- Congruence between home and school in development of integrated programs;
- The use of targets, and their relationship to other assessment and reporting issues;
- The importance of teacher recruitment, training and induction.

9.4 The AEU supports the idea of pilot projects in a number of these areas. In particular, it believes it is time for Commonwealth and state/territory governments to initiate well-funded action research projects in the area of full service schools.

9.5 At the school or cluster level those programs that appear to be highly regarded include:

- Whole school programs aimed towards changed pedagogy;
- Development of teaching/learning programs which engage, motivate and empower students;
- Community capacity building;
- Transition classes in early childhood;
- Homework programs;
- Cluster collaboration around more appropriate curriculum;
- Middle schooling projects;
- ICT for girls;
- Behaviour management programs;
- Transition classes from home to early childhood centres.

10 What must be done?

- 10.1 Tackling the effects of poverty, inequity, and disadvantage within the schooling system requires action at all levels. However, the first pre-requisite must be a re-emerging consensus within governments, the education community and society in general that these are important issues and that equity and a “fair go” are highly desirable public policy objectives.
- 10.2 Governments must provide greater funding for initiatives within the policy options listed above, encompassing preschool education, schools, TAFE and higher education.
- 10.3 It is time for a national plan to ensure the provision of universal access to high quality public preschool education, with specific attention to ensuring equitable access for the most disadvantaged.
- 10.4 In the schools area, there is a need to re-prioritise the public debate away from an unproductive one about unhealthy competition, inappropriate standards, choice, and a focus on funding the privileged and selected to one which is concerned with social justice and equity.
- 10.5 The Commonwealth, in particular could play a lead role in working in partnership with state or territory governments to re-assert the need for programs which target those most in need and make equity a national priority in the national interest, rather than arguing its role is to fund privilege and support a private system in opposition to state or territory provision of public education.
- 10.6 The old Disadvantaged Schools Program should be re-visited to examine its strengths and weaknesses and its relevance to a twenty-first century situation. Alternative proposals which target communities and areas most affected need objective assessment to find the most effective application.
- 10.7 The AEU also strongly reaffirms that in many circumstances disadvantage is evident in whole communities and that the collective resources of the community are an important consideration in dealing with equity. There is therefore an ongoing need for programs that target schools and their communities that are collectively experiencing disadvantage. Programs for greater equity must continue to target schools with large proportions of those experiencing disadvantage.
- 10.8 Above all there is an urgent need to provide pilot funding to examine the nature of the impact of poverty on schooling today and effective ways of ameliorating it.
- 10.9 So-called voluntary fees must be made genuinely voluntary and failure to pay must not be a determining factor in the provision of educational opportunity and participation.
- 10.10 The relationship between public and private schools must be re-assessed to ensure that the existence of a private system is not funded to undermine the social and equity objectives of a re-framed public system.

- 10.11 Schools must be supported and encouraged to develop curriculum and pedagogy which encompass all cultures and social backgrounds, which encourage all students to complete schooling, and offer successful pathways to all. The pressure to concentrate solely on the aspirations of those who are already more privileged must be countered.
- 10.12 Beyond the educational role of the school, support must be available to deal with the social and economic problems of the students and their families.
- 10.13 It is time for well structured, funded and researched pilot projects looking at full service schools. Vinson noted the following in regard to full service schools:

... Of particular importance are programs that are able to assist parents in preparing their children for school and that provide appropriate community-based services for a range of parenting needs, support and advice – a collaborative whole of government approach, addressing the needs not just of children but of families (Vinson, p.230).

A process of whole schools change towards more inclusive teacher-student relations, home-school partnerships, school cultures and organisations, and styles of teaching and learning (Vinson, 2002, p. 232).

As the concept of full service schools is frequently relatively poorly defined and understood, Attachment 4 contains a list of useful web addresses giving further information and examples.

- 10.14 In TAFE and Higher Education greater support for students must be provided, the move to user pays reversed, and entry policies examined to ensure access and equity to all.
- 10.15 Commonwealth and state or territory governments must give greater priority to equity and disadvantage in funding decisions and work in partnership with each other, teacher unions and the teaching profession to achieve equity for Australian children.
- 10.16 The Commonwealth government should increase its role as a funder of initiatives and programs designed to address equity and access for all students. Such funding should be long term and secure. It should not be tied to short-term, unrealistic targets.
- 10.17 It should resume funding for the Australian Centre for Equity Through Education.
- 10.18 The AEU asserts that issues of disadvantage are inherently part of all funding and policy decisions and supports the idea of an “Equity impact study” for major educational decisions made by governments. Schools should also be made to consider the impact on poverty and disadvantage in all decisions.
- 10.19 Within a context where schools are given the flexibility to find the most appropriate solutions, departments must accept responsibility for the situation overall. It cannot be left to individual schools to decide whether equity is an issue for it, and whether it gives priority to programs to counter disadvantage.

10.20 All jurisdictions should have a comprehensive and coordinated plan to tackle disadvantage and inequity through education. There should be clear responsibility for matters of equity in all education departments.

11 Specific recommendations

11.1 That the Commonwealth government through MCEETYA initiate:

- A national strategy to achieve the social justice elements of the National Goals of Schooling, and that this include specific strategies in relation to “differences arising from students' socio-economic background”. Elements of the strategy would include:
 - giving greater priority to social justice objectives;
 - support and encouragement to develop curriculum and pedagogy which encompass all cultures and social backgrounds, which encourages all students to complete schooling, and offers successful pathways to all;
 - each jurisdiction having a comprehensive and coordinated plan to tackle disadvantage and inequity through education;
 - clear lines of responsibility for matters of equity in all education departments;
 - an “Equity impact study” for major educational decisions made by governments;
 - all schools considering and reporting on the measures they are taking to ameliorate poverty and disadvantage.

- A national plan for preschool education coordinated through MCEETYA, including national goals, standards and a policy framework to ensure universal access to a high quality, free public preschool education within an overall framework of public education. In partnership with the states and territories, the Commonwealth should contribute to funding preschool education. Principles for cooperative Commonwealth - state/territory funding arrangements should include provision for a national Preschool Equity Program based on the numbers of children identified as disadvantaged or having special needs, targeted both at increasing participation and at redressing disadvantage/meeting special educational needs.

- Measures to ensure that so-called voluntary fees in schools are genuinely voluntary and that inability to pay them does not limit educational opportunities by restricting subject choices, participation in activities and so on.

11.2 That the Commonwealth provide pilot funding to examine the current nature of the impact of poverty on schooling and education and effective ways of ameliorating it.

11.3 That the Commonwealth provide funding for well structured, funded and researched pilot projects looking at full service schools.

11.4 That the Commonwealth resume funding for the Australian Centre for Equity Through Education.

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Section 2

Indigenous Education

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The situation in regard to Indigenous students, families and communities is particularly alarming. Every socio-economic indicator points to the fact that poverty, and the issues which are symptomatic of it, are endemic in Indigenous Australian communities.
- 1.2 The Commonwealth Grants Commission (CGC) reported in their *Inquiry into Indigenous Funding* (2001) that regardless of the diversity in the circumstances between, for example urban and remote Indigenous communities, “In all regions, and across all functional areas examined ... Indigenous people experienced entrenched levels of disadvantage compared to non-Indigenous people” (p xiv).
- 1.3 The CGC also noted that “The indicators ... measured consistently point to the highest needs per person (or per household) being in the remote ATSI regions” (p xv).
- 1.4 It is apparent from the evidence outlined in the inquiry that, relative to non-Indigenous communities, all Indigenous communities are relatively disadvantaged, and that those Indigenous communities located in remote areas are the most disadvantaged communities in Australia.

2 Factors and causes

- 2.1 The nature of poverty in Indigenous communities is complex. It has its origins in a range of socio-political and historical contexts, including a range of discriminatory government policies, such as removals of people and children from their traditional lands and families (Kidd, 2002); economic reforms (without subsequent protection of Aboriginal worker’s rights), such as the destruction of ‘niche’ employment markets during the 1960’s and 70’s (Wooten, 2002); employment systems characterised by unequal pay and poor conditions (Pearson, 2001); exclusionist social reforms, which have historically locked Aboriginal people out of the social security system (Langton, 2002 p 5); and confiscation and mismanagement of funds through the use of the Aboriginal peoples’ wages, savings and funds in trust to fund state development projects (Kidd in Langton, 2002).
- 2.2 These complexities have manifested into a range of issues, including low levels of educational attainment, high rates of unemployment, high levels of incarceration, substance abuse, family breakdown, and consequently the development, in many families and communities, of severe cases of poverty, highlighted by the large number of Indigenous peoples who are now inter-generational welfare dependents.

- 2.3 Dr Rosalind Kidd (in *Unfinished Business* 2002) has cited the state-sanctioned actions of a discriminatory system as one of the primary causes of Aboriginal poverty, leading to a systemic syndrome of ‘blaming the victim’. She states (in relation to her research on wages stolen from Aboriginal workers in Queensland):

“What I found most offensive was the realisation that during all of these years, when the causal factor was so clearly the pernicious system itself and the men who implemented it with such dogmatic determination, it was the people who were blamed, misrepresented, maligned and discounted as the root causes of their own miserable circumstances. As is still so often the case today. If you are driven from country which has sustained you for generations, if you are denied access to rental housing or casual accommodation, if those of you in work are denied the cash you are earning, if you are thereby struggling in shanties without clean water, sanitation, shelter, food, clothing and schooling that is mandated for all other Australians – how does it feel to be told that it is your failure to provide a good home environment that alerts the authorities to the need to ‘rescue’ your children from your negligence. How does it feel to know from experience, that you might never see your little ones again? To realise from the cold, hard facts of your position that you can’t afford to follow to be near them? To know, from your bitter experience, that the authorities will neither listen to your protests nor respect your heartache?” (p 135).

3 Community Development Program (CDEP)

- 3.1 Most alarming to the AEU is that the lessons from a history of discriminatory treatment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in Australia remain to be learned. There continues to be a range of state-sanctioned policies and procedures which further exacerbate poverty in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities today, and too often, the victims continue to be blamed.
- 3.2 The Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) is a case in point. CDEP was founded in the Northern Territory in 1977 as a localised, Aboriginal community based employment program. It has been accurately described as Australia’s first ‘mutual obligation’ program (Altman 2000), and was established initially as an alternative to receiving ‘sit down money’, or money for no work (Langton, 2002).
- 3.3 There can be no doubt that CDEP has produced a number of worthwhile outcomes for communities and individual participants, but it has also been criticised as the “principal poverty trap for Aboriginal individuals, families and communities” (Langton, 2002, p 11).
- 3.4 The mean income for male and female CDEP participants is \$186 and \$181 per week respectively, which is a higher mean income than those Indigenous people who are unemployed, or who are not in the work force (Altman, 2000). This however, does not mean that many CDEP participants are not living on or below the poverty line. Recent information from the Commonwealth Grants

Commission (2001) found that the cost of living is substantially higher in remote areas than in urban centres. As two-thirds of all CDEPs operate in rural and remote areas, with 162 'remote' schemes 'employing' approximately 22 092 people (Hunter, 2002), it stands to reason that the mean incomes identified above are not sufficient to provide a 'living wage', particularly in rural and remote areas.

- 3.5 The limitations of CDEP have been explored in a range of investigations and inquiries. In 1997, for example, the Commonwealth Ombudsman (cited in Langton, 2002) outlined that the absence of a minimum guaranteed income was "Causing severe poverty traps for Aboriginal people. This is a product of the design of CDEP and the distribution of work and available funds by some participating organisations" (p 12).
- 3.6 Langton (2002) contends that the "CDEP scheme requires radical transformation into a genuine labour market strategy that brings Aboriginal people into the workforce in sufficient numbers to enable them to escape the poverty trap" (p 15).
- 3.7 The AEU agrees with this proposition, and notes recent endeavours by organisations such as TAFE NSW, who have entered into partnerships with local CDEP's to provide training which aligns with real outcomes in a range of areas, including employment and community development.
- 3.8 There are a range of issues in relation to CDEP and education. Hunter (2002) argues that the CDEP scheme is one of the contributing factors to early school leaving in Indigenous communities. This is concerning, particularly given that qualified Indigenous males and females are respectively 23 and 28 percent more likely to be employed. Hunter further states that "the socio-economic outcomes for the Indigenous workforce would be enhanced if Indigenous youth (were) encouraged to complete school rather than move straight on to a CDEP scheme" (p 22).

4 Moves towards more positive outcomes

- 4.1 The AEU believes that greater efforts must be made to develop strategies which encourage Indigenous students to remain at school, particularly beyond the compulsory years, and that any reforms to the CDEP scheme must ensure a closer alignment with the attainment of education and training outcomes. The AEU notes, as mentioned above, that there are a range of activities occurring across the country to this end, however it is concerning that these initiatives appear to be occurring in an ad-hoc manner, with little opportunity for the systematisation of effective strategies which produce worthwhile educational and employment outcomes, which lead to the amelioration of poverty.
- 4.2 This provides a great challenge for educational policy makers, particularly in the more rural and remote parts of the country, where, for example, students in Cape York have no access to senior secondary education (years 11 & 12) in their home communities, and in the Northern Territory, where there are currently no mainstream equivalent secondary services available to Indigenous youth in any remote communities. Ensuring the establishment of appropriate

educational infrastructure for this cohort of students is an urgent imperative which needs to be implemented immediately to arrest the drift of students from schools to CDEP schemes.

- 4.3 The AEU notes the recent attempt by the Federal Government (in the 2002-03 budget) to address the issue of school retention in years 11 & 12 with the Working Together for Indigenous Youth strategy. Whilst the development of a series of national projects aimed at the retention of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in the post-compulsory years is seen by the AEU as positive, the effectiveness of this initiative is questionable, particularly in relation to its short timeframe (2 years), and miniscule budget (\$6million).
- 4.4 The AEU believes that the \$6million allocated to redress this appalling indicator of inequity – the retention rate for Indigenous students in the post-compulsory years is just under half the rate for non-Indigenous students – is clearly inadequate. It is further perplexing considering the clear correlation between education, employment, the reduction of economic disadvantage, breaking the poverty cycle and the potential amelioration of future imprisonment rates.
- 4.5 Along with the development of appropriate infrastructure, policy makers need to be focussed on the development of incentives to keep Indigenous young people at school, present them with a range of career options, and support them through the attainment of these.
- 4.6 An additional issue is the increasing evidence of Indigenous children who see CDEP as an end in itself, rather than a means to an employment outcome. One teacher, who formerly taught in a remote Cape York school, reported that upon asking her year three (eight year old) children about ‘what they wanted to be when they grew up’, they replied in chorus, ‘CDEP miss! I wanna do CDEP!’ (Pers Comm, 2002).
- 4.7 CDEP workers are also being used to fill education-worker roles in Indigenous community schools. The AEU supports the notion of work-place training and real employment opportunities being offered to CDEP participants, particularly in public schools and TAFE colleges. We are, however, aware of CDEP funds being used to employ workers in schools on an ongoing semi-permanent basis.
- 4.8 School principals and teachers in charge have expressed their concern about using this method of payment for their workers, but in many cases feel compelled to exercise this option of funding positions because of their limited school budgets.
- 4.9 The AEU believes that where on-going employment opportunities for CDEP participants are clearly available in the public education system, State and Territory Governments should and must meet their obligations as employers and ensure that Commonwealth funds, such as CDEP, are not used to supplement activities which clearly are the financial responsibilities of the States and Territories.
- 4.10 The ACTU is currently working with ATSIC to develop and lodge a CDEP award, with the aim of providing CDEP workers with a ‘safety-net’ in the event

that they are not covered by an existing award.

- 4.11 Kidd's (2002) description of the manifestations of the pernicious system is also apparent in respect to the establishment of homelands schools in the Northern Territory. The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission's (HREOC) *Inquiry in to Rural and Remote Education* (2000) cites that Aboriginal communities in the Northern Territory who wish to establish homelands education centres must be willing to "provide an assistant teacher who is expected to work for no pay during the trial period" (pp 48 & 49), which may be up to six months in duration.
- 4.12 Further investigation by the AEU has revealed that schools will usually pay the salary of the assistant teacher from their budget, but the systemic requirement of Indigenous peoples being willing to work for no pay for up to six months in order to establish a homelands centre is still NT Government policy (pers comm (a) 2003).
- 4.13 Access to education is a fundamental human right. As a signatory to the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, and the *International Covenant on Economic Social and Cultural Rights*, Australian Governments have an obligation to ensure that education is 'available, accessible, including affordable, acceptable and adaptable' (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in HREOC, 2000, p 1).
- 4.14 Dr William Jonas, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Social Justice Commissioner noted recently that "In calling for a move away from welfare dependency to economic empowerment there is little acknowledgement that integral to this shift is the empowerment of Indigenous Australians through the full recognition and equal enjoyment of their human rights" (Jonas, 2001 p 1).
- 4.15 The AEU agrees with this position, particularly as it relates to education, and notes in this context that the rights of many Indigenous peoples to access any sort of education (let alone accessible, affordable and adaptable education) are being continually breached, as outlined in the case above, where people are required to work in a voluntary capacity in order to ensure that their children can access some form of educational service. Incidences such as these contribute to the continuing inequitable treatment of Indigenous peoples, and exacerbate poverty.
- 4.16 Recent research conducted by the AEU in the Northern Territory has placed estimates of Indigenous students who have no access to any schooling whatsoever conservatively at 5000 students. Warren Snowdon, Member for Lingiari (Hansard September 2002) stated that in his electorate alone, as many as 3000 Aboriginal students have no access to secondary schooling.
- 4.17 The AEU believes that this circumstance is a blight on Australia's reputation as a 'fair go' society, and in clear contravention of our obligations as a signatory to the above-mentioned conventions.
- 4.18 Educational policy makers, educators and the Indigenous community need to develop a shared vision of education, which raises the expectations of all

stakeholders, focuses on outcomes, ensures collaboration through true partnerships, provides opportunities for Indigenous peoples to participate in and embrace educational opportunities, and challenges negative assumptions about educational success.

4.19 As Fitzgerald (2001) states:

"The challenge for education is how to respond when conditions on the ground prove these assumptions (of educational success) to be invalid, as is the case in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, especially remote communities whose histories are vastly different from those of non-Indigenous city-dwellers. Data from the 1996 census, for example, shows that 79.4% of Indigenous people in Cape York communities (excluding those in the NPA) left school before the age of 16 (including those who did not attend school at all). The material poverty of many communities in Cape York is a marker of both their history, and the likelihood that the assumption of a shared vision of education may be false. And while most studies suggest that it is poverty that has the greatest impact on student outcomes, we should be alert to the fact that the experience of poverty is not singular. Its history, nature, longevity and impacts are different in different communities. This has implications for both the organisation of schooling and the kinds of work that needs to be done to build a vision of education and its purposes which are shared by the community."

4.20 As the vast majority of Indigenous students (89.5% - primary and 84.5% - secondary) attend public schools (CGC, 2001), it stands to reason that a strong public education system which is able to foster an expectation of success and provide Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and their families with an opportunity to envisage a life beyond poverty, a life outside of CDEP, is crucial to breaking the ongoing cycle of poverty.

4.21 Recent examples of public schools acting as 'enablers' of this shared vision include Cherbourg State School in Queensland, where the Principal, Chris Sarra, has worked with the community to develop an expectation of success, resulting in marked increases in attendance and improvements in literacy and numeracy outcomes. Mr Sarra has stated that he was not prepared to accept the entrenched belief that the students of the school were not capable of performing to the same standards as non-Indigenous students. The school's motto is 'Strong and Smart', and Mr Sarra has used this to promulgate a culture of success within the school (pers comm (b) 2003).

4.22 Another example of this is the work of a teacher at a remote community school in the Northern Territory, who ensures that she takes Aboriginal parents and education workers into city schools, in order to provide them with a basis to compare educational services and infrastructure. The teacher has reported that this simple exercise has resulted in positive outcomes in the community, including greater parental involvement in the school's decision-making processes (pers comm (c) 2003).

4.23 Although there have been slight improvements in some areas of Indigenous education, (for example, Vocational Education and Training participation rates

have increased dramatically over the last 5 years) Indigenous students remain the most educationally disadvantaged group in Australia. They are underrepresented at University, making up only 1.2 per cent of total numbers. Their completion and retention rates in school are considerably below those for all Australian students, and on virtually all standard literacy tests their scores are well below the average.

- 4.24 This circumstance continues to justify the need for additional programs and resources which are tailored specifically for not only Indigenous students, but also their teachers and the whole educational community. Public schools, their leaders and their teachers play an integral role in the development of students. The AEU is supportive of programs and initiatives which continue to challenge negative assumptions about Indigenous students and provide them, their parents and their communities with opportunities to not only dream of a poverty-free life, but also to attain that dream.

5 Recommendations

- 1) That the Federal Government act immediately to establish a National Forum on Indigenous Education to provide an opportunity for Indigenous educators and community members to input in to Federal Government decisions at a strategic level.
- 2) That an investigation is conducted in relation to the reliance of State, Territory and Federal Government agencies on CDEP as a source of substitute funding for the long-term employment of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in the education sector and other relevant sectors.
- 3) Further, that this investigation explore the impact of CDEP on school retention rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and develop strategies to ensure that CDEP is not creating an adverse impact on school retention and completion rates for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. These strategies should be developed and implemented to ensure that the CDEP scheme becomes a true labour-market program, with opportunities and incentives for education, training and economic development built in.
- 4) That the Federal Government provide immediate assistance to the Northern Territory Government to explore the unmet demand in relation to Aboriginal Education in the Territory, to determine the exact number of Aboriginal students (currently estimated at 5000) who have no access to the education system, and to develop strategies, including the immediate training of Assistant Teachers, to alleviate this national crisis.
- 5) That an immediate audit be conducted in relation to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' access to educational infrastructure on a national basis, and that strategies, such as the establishment of Government-run boarding schools, are explored in the context of ensuring that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have access to equitable educational infrastructure.

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Attachment 1

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty - First Century

National Goals



Key Papers

National Report
on Schooling

Press Releases

Links



[Preamble](#) | [National Goals](#) | [Distribution](#)

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Commonwealth, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally.

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community



- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialling that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

National Goals

1. Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave schools they should:



- 1.1 have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities and to collaborate with others
- 1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members
- 1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions

about their own lives and to accept responsibility for their own actions

- 1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life
- 1.5 have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning
- 1.6 be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society
- 1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development
- 1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:

- 2.1 attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:

- the arts;
- English;
- health and physical education;
- languages other than English;
- mathematics;
- science;
- studies of society and environment;
- technology;

and the interrelationships between them

- 2.2 attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level
- 2.3 participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies
- 2.4 participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences



arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location

- 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students
- 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students
- 3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians
- 3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally
- 3.6 all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.



Distribution

A colour pamphlet which folds out to poster format will be provided for every Australian school free-of-charge from State and Territory government education departments, Catholic Education Offices and Associations of Independent Schools. Additional copies (free-of-charge) will also be available from these authorities, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs or:

The Secretary, MCEETYA
PO Box 202, Carlton South Vic 3053 Australia
Tel: (03) 9639 0588 (International: +61 3 9639 0588)
Fax: (03) 9639 1790 (International: +61 3 9639 1790)
E-mail: mceetya@curriculum.edu.au
Website: <http://www.curriculum.edu.au/mceetya>

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For further information, or a copy of the Adelaide Declaration poster contact:

The Secretary, MCEETYA
PO Box 202, Carlton South Vic 3053 Australia
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Attachment 2

Fair Go Schooling: A Summary of Responses by Branches/Associated Bodies to a Questionnaire

1 Introduction

During 2002 AEU Branches and Associated Bodies were asked to respond to a Questionnaire on Curriculum and Pedagogy for Access and Equity (Appendix 1). Five Branches/Associated Bodies did so. (NSW, Queensland, Tasmania, Victoria, and the ACT). Each Branch or Associated Body determined its own process in completing the questionnaire, but in general it involved some membership discussion through committees, invitations via journals, and so on. The questionnaire was compiled following a resolution at the 2002 Federal Conference Annual Meeting which in part stated:

Building on work already done (for instance in Early Childhood), and beginning this year (2002) the AEU, through its Branches and Associated Bodies and coordinated by the Curriculum and Professional Issues Committee (CPIC) will undertake a systematic consideration of the types of curriculum, pedagogies, integrated services and structures that are required to best serve the needs of all students, with a particular emphasis on the needs of disadvantaged students in schools.

(The full Conference Resolution is at Appendix 2).

2 Responses to the Questionnaire

The following is a summary of the responses and a commentary on them. The actual responses as supplied by Branches and Associated Bodies are at Appendices 3- 8.

2.1 How is your state or territory approaching the issue of disadvantage, access and equity and related issues (interpreted broadly rather than focussing solely on “Disadvantaged programs”)?

The responses covered an extremely wide area of programs. Of course, foremost amongst these were those programs targeted at schools catering for low socioeconomic areas. These included the new PASP in NSW, which adds to the PSFP there, and the Schools Equity Fund in Tasmania. In Victoria, it was noted that the school global budget includes elements intended to allow for a wide range of disadvantage factors. Besides these, there are a number of programs generally targeted at specific groups of students. Another group of programs is concerned with improving the skills and support available to teachers through professional development or the provision of additional support.

The following is an attempt to summarize and group the types of programs other than those specifically targeted at disadvantaged schools. There were generally considerable similarities between jurisdictions, and the programs mentioned in brackets are there as examples and not intended to list all

programs in all jurisdictions. (More details on particular programs can be found in the state and territory Appendices). The responses generally identified the following groups of programs as being related (not always exclusively) with the issue of access and equity:

- Direct assistance to students and their families (e.g. STAS in Tasmania and EMA in Victoria);
- Literacy and numeracy (Reading Recovery in most states and territories , and various other related or follow on programs such as Flying Start (Tasmania));
- Behaviour management and anti-bullying;
- Indigenous students (Home to school in NSW , Partners for Success (Queensland));
- Students at Risk (of not completing school) including alternative settings (e.g. MARSSS in Tasmania);
- Vocational Education and Training;
- Improved curriculum and pedagogy (New Basics and Productive Pedagogies in Queensland);
- Attendance (eg phone intervention program in NSW and the Access to Equity in Victoria);
- ESL/NESB children;
- Students with a disability(physical, mental, learning or behavioral);
- Full service schools (ACT), nurses in schools (Qld), Pregnant and parenting girls (Qld.);
- Middle years programs (Victoria);
- Detention centres;
- Hospitals;
- Drugs (Gateways in NSW).

Also mentioned were Tutorial Centers and Leadership forums in NSW, Managed Individual Pathways (Victoria), and Virtual schooling (to increase the range of subject options) in Queensland.

Many responses also referred to programs designed to reduce class size, either generally or more often targeted at low-socioeconomic students, which have been recent initiatives in several jurisdictions. The fundamental importance of these to tackling disadvantage was emphasised.

All of the responses also mentioned recent initiatives by Labor state or territory governments and it does seem reasonable to be encouraged by renewed interest in programs that look at educational disadvantage.

2.2 What is your view as to the effectiveness of these? What alternatives do you advocate?

In general, nearly all of the programs that were mentioned were seen to be at least potentially beneficial. However, they were not regarded as universally successful as currently implemented and funded.

Funding is a clear issue with many of the programs. Where programs are available on a system wide basis, they are characterized by a lack of adequate

resources. Where they are available only to certain schools there is a desire that they be more widely available. Equally important seems to be the lack of continuity of funding. Several responses, for instance, mentioned the withdrawal of funding by the Commonwealth for its Full Service Schools for Students at Risk program.

Both the extent and nature of funding and determining where it should be targeted are matters for further debate.

Victoria noted that with its system of funding through global budgeting, those schools with a commitment to equity issues were 'making it work'. System commitment is now growing, but devolution of responsibility had produced a patchy approach.

They suggested that for more system-wide effectiveness, there need to be approaches that address a combination of:

- time and resources for teachers and schools to be involved in action research;
- local decision making about curriculum;
- pedagogy;
- resourcing (including support personal as well as materials);
- teacher workload;
- class sizes;
- professional development for teachers;
- pre-service and induction programs; and
- alternative settings, where necessary.

Queensland noted that additional support is being given for the New Basics on the basis that it is being introduced to a limited number of schools.

Money is not always the problem however. In Indigenous programs, for instance, it was the need for cultural awareness that was commented upon, and this was similarly considered an issue in relation to low socioeconomic students.

Programs or aspects of programs that received particular support included:

- Early childhood investment;
- Reading recovery;
- Tutorial centres;
- Extra funding for low socioeconomic schools;
- Increased contact with the home;
- Increased community involvement;
- Increased provision of guidance, welfare officers speech therapists and other full service school measures;
- Professional development programs aimed at giving teachers new perspectives on pedagogy, poverty, and cultural awareness (though there was some criticism that these are not always as widely available as they should be and that teachers were sometimes doing them in their own time).

And the issue of class size and the effectiveness of reducing it was a strongly recurring theme.

A particular problem exists with those programs, mostly in literacy and numeracy, which relate to mass standardised testing, which now occurs in all states and territories. This testing has been strongly resisted by Branches and Associated Bodies since it was introduced, and there continues to be a lack of support for it.

However, the follow-up programs of themselves often provide some valuable professional development and an intensive focus on the individuals who achieved at the lower end of the spectrum. It is also the case that one of the criticisms made by the AEU, particularly of the Commonwealth obsession with testing, is the lack of allocation of funds to deal with those who are identified as having problems. The link between testing and remediation programs will remain problematic.

There is also some contention in regard to which years literacy and numeracy programs are best targeted at, with the ACT noting some desire for it to be concentrated even more in the early years or at least for high schools to be more accountable for the money they receive.

With the steady growth in mainstreaming or integration the area of students with disabilities has been the subject of ongoing debate, and remains an area of difficulty experienced by members. It is currently the subject of a Commonwealth Senate Inquiry.

Programs related to behavior management seem to have mixed effectiveness, and there is a need to further identify those aspects that are effective and those not. Problems relate to the balance between withdrawal and re-integration and the relationship between the specialist teachers and those in the schools.

Similarly, alternative settings seem to have a mixed reception. Whilst some seem to be supported, the objectives of such programs seem to need some clarification.

The importance of improving the outcomes for Indigenous students were also referred to in all responses.

Criticism related primarily to a lack of adequate funding, and therefore a restriction on the numbers of students or schools involved. Those programs with some of the characteristics noted below received higher support.

2.3 Are there any programs, or school approaches, that are especially worth noting?

Two recently introduced programs are worth special attention.

Both the Priority Action School Program (NSW) and the Student Support Plan 2002-2004 (ACT) are recent programs that have been introduced with considerable involvement from the respective Branches and Associated Bodies, and consequently reflect current thinking and initiatives from an AEU perspective.

The Priority Action School Program (NSW) was announced in August 2002. The NSWTF and the NSW Department will jointly select 70 schools which will be

invited to participate in a trial program in 2003. Support will be provided for them to develop a Priority Action Plan, and participating schools will receive between \$100 000 and \$400 000 that may be spent to facilitate such things as:

- Induction and mentoring for staff
- School based training and development for teachers, students, and parents in areas such as conflict resolution and behaviour management;
- School based training and development on effective teaching and learning strategies;
- Intensive literacy and numeracy support;
- Supporting students to access community and health services;
- Smaller class sizes and team teaching;
- Alternative staffing models and innovative executive structures (e.g. AP welfare);
- Employment of specialist teachers and other staff (e.g. Community Liaison Officers);
- Engagement of researchers and mentors.

The program includes monitoring, evaluation and reporting mechanisms.

The ACT program is more holistic in nature, involving a comprehensive rewrite of the ACT Government Schools Plan *Within Reach of Us All* over the last 18 months. With considerable union involvement this has produced the *Student Support Plan 2002-2004*, which with the *Services to Indigenous People Plan 2002-2004* fleshes out the Department's commitment to overcoming disadvantage. The hallmarks of the Plans are:

- a culturally inclusive environment;
- successful transition within school and to work;
- contemporary, challenging and relevant programs;
- improved literacy and numeracy;
- genuine partnerships between schools, parents and community,
- interagency collaboration.

Specific actions are required of both schools and the Department to promote the value of diversity, equitable access to learning, and the fostering of racial respect. Departmental policy currently sees issues of access and equity very broadly, and the new ALP Minister for Education has a strong interest in smaller class sizes for early primary, curriculum and pedagogy renewal in high schools, and students at risk. (Money has been provided for a High School Development Fund and for a "Students at Risk Pathways Project" in the 2002 Budget.)

Other programs that were noted include the Student Discipline, Behaviour and Management Programs in NSW.

In Victoria the introduction of the Victorian Certificate of Learning (VCAL) as an alternative to the VCE, should allow the development of curriculum in the

later years of school more appropriate to the needs of those not pursuing tertiary entrance as their primary objective.

In Tasmania, a recent report about the effects of poverty on the lives of children at school has resulted in a series of conferences for principals and others which is increasing the understanding of the problem considerably. It has particularly put a focus on the effects of levies in schools and is leading to a number of poverty alleviation strategies. The Anglicare report found that 40% of Tasmanian children are affected by poverty, and argued this meant that poverty is not a minority issue but in fact something which schools must consider in all policy and curriculum decisions.

At the school or cluster level those programs that appear to be highly regarded include:

- Community capacity building;
- Transition classes in early childhood;
- Homework programs;
- Cluster collaboration around more appropriate curriculum;
- Middle schooling projects;
- ICT for girls;
- Behaviour management programs;
- Transition classes from home to early childhood centers.

Also worth noting is a project called the Mt. Isa Educational Precinct which is designed to meet the needs of rural and remote students, including a large number of Indigenous students, by providing school and TAFE facilities combined with a State Boarding School.

2.4 What kinds of programs in relation to disadvantage, access and equity and related issues should the AEU (including its Branches and Associated Bodies) seek support for from Commonwealth and state or territory governments?

The directions in which Branches and Associated Bodies wish to move in regard to disadvantage are reflected in the above responses. All states and territories who responded have provided examples of programs which are desirable and which can be used as models for further development. They cover the range from extra funding for low socioeconomic schools through to curriculum and examination change and changes in pedagogy. They look at the specific circumstances of particular students and include changes in cultural awareness through professional development.

Within a context where most existing programs are valued but perceived to be vastly under funded, the major call is for better funding of existing initiatives across the board. This is not just a call for more money, but in fact a call for greater priority to be given to the issues of equity and disadvantage. Whilst there are many excellent programs in operation, and politicians are prone to trot out lists of them with figures attached, the reality is that in terms of increased expenditure on schools over the past decade, the major share has gone to those schools, especially the wealthy private schools, where issues of poverty and disadvantage

are not the foremost considerations. The Commonwealth, in particular, has directed billions of dollars to programs of “choice” which benefit the wealthy and exclusive, whilst giving only dollars and cents to equity programs.

The states and territories, despite some recent valuable initiatives, are also inclined to regard equity programs as areas of discrete small expenditure rather than a fundamental determinant of how funding should be directed.

There must be a fundamental change in attitude by government so that considerations of equity and disadvantage are matters that determine all funding decisions, not just see them as catch up programs that can run counter to and remedy the effects of the major funding directions. There is considerable appeal in the idea of running all major schooling decisions through a “disadvantaged impact study”.

The role of the Commonwealth is worth considering at this point. In the past Commonwealth programs have often formed a useful stimulus to the provision of equity programs by state or territory governments, the most notable being the Disadvantaged Schools Program begun in the 1970s, and still regularly referred to, and to an extent continued in some states and territories. However, this role appears to be considerably diminished. Programs such as the Commonwealth “Full Service Schools for Students at Risk” program were mentioned as valuable, but this particular program ceased in 2001. This seems to underline current problems with the Commonwealth approach. The uncertainty of funding and a concentration on literacy and numeracy as the focus of most things to do with disadvantage are proving very restrictive and are not perceived as contributing much to equity.

The Commonwealth does run a number of programs which fall under a broad heading of equity, (outlined in Appendix 8) which make a contribution towards the area and are generally absorbed into state or territory funding. In 2002 these total less than \$300 million for public schools. This would be missed considerably if it were to disappear. However, when considered alongside the \$4 billion it gives to private schools, it means that only 7.5% of its expenditure on schools goes to equity programs in public schools. (This rises to about 10.5% if private school equity expenditure is included). This signifies that the Commonwealth has by and large abdicated its role as a leader in equity programs.

The ACT response, reflecting on the Territory government’s provision in general, noted that:

It would appear to be piecemeal, as if it has grown on an ad hoc basis in response to various stimuli over time.

And this seems to pertain to all jurisdictions. The ACT, however, has recently taken a holistic look at its provision, and where they have not already done so, all jurisdictions should be encouraged to do likewise, and ensure that the multiplicity of programs take place within an overarching framework which looks at overall adequacy.

The Questionnaire did not ask questions about the way responsibility for equity matters is handled within the bureaucracy, but it is worth ensuring that within each jurisdiction there is clear responsibility for equity matters and that the various programs are not fragmented and dis-coordinated..

The targeting of programs, both to schools and individuals, presents a set of problems that need further discussion. There is a dilemma between directing the funds to a small, most needy group or spreading available resources more thinly across a wider range of schools or students. Although additional funding would do much to relieve some of the pressure around the allocation, it is likely that determining the target group will always remain problematic. Whilst there is probably scope for more sliding scales to prevent large differences either side of a marginal cut off point– for instance in definitions and levels of funding to students with a disability - there are also many arguments for concentrating on the most needy 20% or so.

To an extent, campaigns around class size encapsulate this dilemma. Class size appears again and again as one of the most important factors in dealing with a wide range of problems associated with disadvantage. In general, Branches and Associated Bodies seem to argue for general reductions within a context of giving priority to these schools identified as disadvantaged, a compromise that is both principled and practical.

Another dilemma about funding is concerned with how to allocate the money to individual schools. There is a growing tendency for governments to allocate money to selected schools by a submission process. This has many disadvantages. Submission writing is time consuming and the best submission writers are not necessarily the most deserving recipients. On the other hand, there is no point allocating the funding if it does not involve the school in a serious consideration of how it is going to use it to benefit those it is intended for.

Similarly governments now have an expectation of measured improved performance outcomes. These can be a distraction from the real problem unless the outcomes are closely connected to the problem. At times the targets are quite unrealistic and doom the program to apparent failure. On the other hand, there is evidence that in the past not having valid outcomes measures has both dissipated the focus and done little to build support for programs.

Many of these debates need to be had in relation to the proposals the ALP took to the 2001 Federal election to introduce Educational Priority Zones. The extent to which they are an appropriate updating of the previous Disadvantaged Schools Program should be discussed. The AEU must develop its thinking about how they should or could operate, or of viable alternatives, as the fundamental principles are likely to remain attractive to ALP policy makers, and this provides the best hook to get a greater proportion of Commonwealth funding directed at equity rather than “choice”.

2.5 In regard to initial teacher training courses, do pre-service teachers gain sufficient understanding of equity issues and do they gain appropriate experience and contact with educational disadvantage?

Most initial teacher training involves some courses related to:

- Indigenous students;
- NESB students;
- ESL students;
- Social justice in education (including low socioeconomic background);
- Students with special needs.

However, they are often combined into one or two courses (such as “The Context of the Inclusive Classroom” (UNE), or “Diversity in Educational Settings” (CU)) and the length of time and depth varies considerably. On the whole, it seems fair to say that most teacher education institutions seek to include them in the courses, but it is difficult to give them as much attention as might be desirable in a context where the teacher education curriculum is extremely crowded. This is particularly the case for courses post-graduation in specific disciplines.

The Queensland Board of Teacher Registration Guidelines state “During their professional experience program, preservice teachers should learn to work with a range of learners: for example, learners of both genders and or varied ages, abilities, special needs, social and geographical circumstances and cultures”.

In its submission to the Review of Teaching and Teacher Education, the AEU emphasised its view that all teachers employed in the public education system must have completed a comprehensive sequence of Indigenous Studies in their undergraduate courses as a precondition to their employment. Such studies should include studies of Indigenous histories, languages and cultures, Indigenous teaching and learning processes and practices.

Actual experience of such students during teaching practice across the country is, however, much more patchy. The placement of students for practicum, which is already a difficult process with often too few places for the number of students, does not normally systematically ensure contact with a variety of school situations. Much depends on the location of the University. Of course, most government schools, at least, offer a range of student backgrounds, and perhaps more could be done to ensure experience with some disadvantaged groups of students.

2.6 To what extent does the induction process for beginning teachers deal with equity issues and educational disadvantage and prepare and equip them to deal with educational disadvantage? Are there examples of good practice in regard to this?

The induction of beginning teachers does not appear to be satisfactory in general, and therefore induction in regard to equity issues is also generally inadequate. Much is dependent on what happens at the school level.

There are generally some attempts to give new teachers some background within what are incredibly short system induction processes. For instance, in the ACT beginning teachers receive three orientation days, and the second of these is devoted to “The Challenge of Inclusivity: Inclusive Classroom Practices”. In NSW a Beginning Teachers Induction Program prepared by the Training and

Development Directorate contains several units related to the issue. However, this does not guarantee they are used at the district and school level, since induction programmes are not mandatory in NSW.

One can only conclude that the extent to which beginning teachers are systematically informed of issues and pedagogies appropriate to teaching disadvantaged students is generally slight and a matter of happenstance.

Attachment 3

Resourcing the National Goals for Schooling An Agreed Framework of Principles for Funding Schools.

- 1. The total level of resources available for schooling is adequate so that achievement of the National Goals for Schooling is a realistic objective for all students.**
- 2. Public funding across different schools and sectors is distributed fairly and equitably through a consistent approach to assessing student needs and through having regard to the total level of resources available for students.**
- 3. The total level of funding for government schooling is adequate to ensure access to high quality government schooling for all, and all governments' funding policies recognise this as a national priority.**
- 4. Public funding for schooling supports the right of families to choose non-government schooling and supports nongovernment schools on the basis of need, within the context of promoting a socially and culturally cohesive society and the effective use of public funds.**
- 5. Resourcing for all students is adequate for meeting the National Goals, notwithstanding the school or school sector they attend.**

As adopted at its meeting in Auckland, 2003

Attachment 4

Useful Web Addresses for Information on Full Service Schools

http://www.eisenhowerfoundation.org/grassroots/community_schools.html (US site)

<http://www.aypf.org/./forumbriefs/2001/fb030901.htm> (US Site)

<http://www.youthaffairs.tas.gov.au/publications/homeless/cluster.htm> (Tasmanian Paper)

<http://www.decs.act.gov.au/services/fssunit.htm> (ACT Case studies and examples)

<http://www.voices4kids.org/communityschools.pdf> PDF Document Voices for Kids from Illinois

http://www.polkbrosfdn.org/full_service_schools_initiative.htm A Chicago initiative in primary schools

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/news/features/welch05172001.html> Massachusetts

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/library/documents-w3/ncsp-05.htm> From Scotland

<http://www.albany.edu/aire/urban/dryfoos-knauer.html> Joy De Froos again