



## Gender Equity – Quality resource materials on Boys' Education for AEU members.

Over recent years, the intensity of both argument and action over the education of boys has escalated. The gender equity policies of education departments and governments alike have, to date, focussed on strategies to cater for the optimal learning environments of both girls and boys. The MCEETYA Gender Equity Framework 1997 has provided a solid base from which to address gendered disadvantage in schools, as well as acknowledging factors such as ethnicity, aboriginality, socio-economic status and sexuality, that contribute to learning outcomes for students. Such structural frameworks have been a feminist and union demand for almost 2 decades.

The AEU believes that boys' and girls' education initiatives must be regarded as parallel priorities and take place within a "whole school approach" to gender equity, i.e. There is no educational or social justification for introduction of a separate and exclusive boys' education policy. More strong girls do not mean more weak boys.

However, more recently this debate has moved away from treating gender equity holistically and has seen the Federal Government propose and enact reactionary measures. Essentially there are three distinct yet wrongly linked issues being grappled with within the scope of the boys' education debate and the proposed Sex Discrimination Amendment (Teaching Profession) Bill:

- The male (and overall) teacher shortage,
- The literacy rates of some boys, and
- Absent fathers/ single parent families.

The AEU believes that many assertions being used to justify both the notion of male teacher scholarships and remedies for the underperformance of some boys' literacy levels stem from a misinterpretations and generalisations about role models, masculinity, parenting, assessment of educational success, 'feminised' industries and quality teaching.

This compilation of research reports, journal and newspaper articles and web resources, by the AEU Federal Women's Officer, aims to give AEU members access to ACCURATE, BALANCED and QUALITY information that will assist in understanding the complexities of the boys education debate, devoid of the Federal Government's alarmist rhetoric.

Armed with a comprehensive knowledge base of the issue, by those who have been studying in the area long before Minister Nelson used the issue as perfect wedge politics, it becomes easier to explain WHY much of the Federal Government's ideas for boys has more to do with the principals of quality teaching, MUCH less to do with gender and certainly requiring better ways of targeting real disadvantage, rather than treating students as a homogenous group.

Boys' education debates have often been based on anecdote and backlash. They have been short sighted and futile. However the AEU believes that addressing disadvantage on the basis of solid evidence and considered expert opinion will produce quality educational outcomes for all our students.



Cartoon © Judy Horacek,  
reprinted with permission. [www.horacek.com.au](http://www.horacek.com.au)

Neither re-drafting the Gender Equity Framework, nor amending the Sex Discrimination Act will necessarily produce these desired outcomes.

## Reports

- Alloway, N., Freebody, P., Gilbert, P. & Muspratt, S., (2002), "*Boys, Literacy and Schooling: Expanding the repertoires of practice*," Commonwealth Department of Education, Science and Training, Canberra. (project undertaken by Curriculum Corporation, James Cook University and Griffith University)  
<http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/boyseducation/BoysLiteracy.pdf>
- Bailey, L. (1996) "*The Feminisation of a School? Women Teachers in a Boys' School, Gender and Education*," 8(2), pp. 171-184.
- Collins, C., Kenway, J. and McLeod, J. (2000) "*Factors Influencing the Educational Performance of Males and Females in School and their initial Destinations after Leaving School*," Geelong, Deakin University.  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2000/Gender\\_Report.pdf](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2000/Gender_Report.pdf)
- Collins, Cherry, (1998), "*What would a school with good gender policies look like?*", produced for the Gender Equity Unit, Department of Education and Training, NSW.
- Davies, B. (1997), "*Constructing and deconstructing masculinities through critical literacy*", Gender and Education, vol. 9, no. 1, pp. 9–30.
- Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education Employment, Training and Youth Affairs, (1997), "*Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*", Canberra.  
<http://www.mceetya.edu.au/public/genderequity.htm>
- Gilbert, R. and Gilbert, P. (1998), "*Masculinity Goes to School*," Sydney, Allen and Unwin.
- Herbert, Jeannie (1995), "*Gender Issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Girls: Exploring issues for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander boys*", in Gender Equity Taskforce for the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs 1997 Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools, Canberra.
- Jóhannesson, Ingólfur Ásgeir, (2003), "*Gender And Individual Differences In Primary Schools In Iceland*", presented at Gender and Power in the New Europe, the 5th European Feminist Research Conference, August 20–24, 2003 Lund University, Sweden.  
[http://www.5thfeminist.lu.se/filer/paper\\_107.pdf](http://www.5thfeminist.lu.se/filer/paper_107.pdf)
- Kenway, J., Willis, S., Blackmore, J & Rennie, L. (1997) "*Answering back: girls, boys and feminism in schools*," Sydney, Allen &Unwin.
- Kenway, J. (1995), "*Masculinities in Schools: Under Siege, on the defensive and under reconstruction?*" Discourse, 16(1), pp. 59-79
- Kenway, J. (ed) (1997), "*Will boys be boys? Boys education in the context of gender reform*," Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Deakin West, ACT.

- Lingard, B and Douglas, P. (1999), *"Men Engaging Feminisms: Profeminism, Backlashes and Schooling"*, Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Lingard, B. Prf.; Martin, W.; Mills, M. Dr; & Bahr, M. Dr; (2002), *"Addressing the Educational Needs of Boys – Strategies for Schools and Teachers,"* a report of a study by Murdoch University and the University of Queensland  
[http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/boyseducation/Boys\\_Report\\_Final1.pdf](http://www.dest.gov.au/schools/publications/2002/boyseducation/Boys_Report_Final1.pdf)
- Martin A. J., (2002), *"Improving the educational outcomes of boys"*, Department of Education, Youth and Family Services, Tuggeranong, ACT.  
[http://www.decs.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/Ed\\_Outcomes\\_Boys.pdf](http://www.decs.act.gov.au/publicat/pdf/Ed_Outcomes_Boys.pdf)
- Martino, W. & Meyenn, B., (eds), (2001), *"What About the Boys? Issues of Masculinity in Schools,"* Open University Press, Buckingham and Philadelphia.
- Martino, W. & Berrill, D., (2003), *"Boys, Schooling and Masculinities: interrogating the 'Right' way to educate boys"*, Educational Review, Vol. 55, No. 2, 2003.  
[http://www.educationarena.com/educationarena/sample/sample\\_pdfs5/cedr55\\_2.pdf](http://www.educationarena.com/educationarena/sample/sample_pdfs5/cedr55_2.pdf)
- Martino, W., & Pallotta-Chiarolli, M., (2001), *"Boys' Stuff. Boys Talking About What Matters,"* Allen & Unwin, Sydney.
- Martino, W. & Pallotta-Chiarolli, (2003) *"So What's a Boy?: Addressing Issues of Masculinity and Schooling,"* Buckingham, Open University Press.
- Martino, W. (1994), *"Masculinity and Learning: Exploring Boys' Underachievement and Under-Representation in Subject English,"* *Interpretation*, 27(2), pp. 22-57.
- Martino, W. (1997), *"Gendered Learning Practices: Exploring the Costs of Hegemonic Masculinity for Girls and Boys in Schools,"* in *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*, Canberra, DEETYA. and in *Proceedings of the Promoting Gender Equity Conference*, ACT Department of Education and Training, Canberra, pp. 343–64.  
<http://www.doe.tased.edu.au/equitystandards/gender/framewrk/learning.htm>
- MCEETYA, (2003) *"Demand and Supply of Primary and Secondary School Teachers in Australia: Part F, Complementary Research"*. [http://www.mceetya.edu.au/pdf/demand/part\\_f.pdf](http://www.mceetya.edu.au/pdf/demand/part_f.pdf)
- McLean, Chris, *"Engaging with boys' experience of masculinity: implication for gender reform in schools"* cited in Kenway, Jane (ed.) 1997, *Will boys be boys? Boys' education in the context of gender reform*, Australian Curriculum Studies Association, Deakin West, ACT.
- Rowe, K.J. (2000), *"Schooling Performances and Experiences of Males and Females: Exploring 'real' effects from evidence-based research in teacher and school effectiveness,"* Background Paper of Invited Discussant, Presentation for AIPS and DETYA, Education Symposium, Eden on the Park Hotel, Melbourne, November 22.

- Kenneth J. Rowe, PhD, (2003), *"The Importance of Teacher Quality as a Key Determinant of Students' Experiences and Outcomes of Schooling,"* a context and discussion paper prepared on behalf of the Interim Committee for a NSW Institute of Teachers, Australian Council for Educational Research.  
[http://icit.nsw.edu.au/library/files/Rowe-The\\_Importance\\_of\\_Teacher\\_Quality.pdf](http://icit.nsw.edu.au/library/files/Rowe-The_Importance_of_Teacher_Quality.pdf)
- Teese, R., Davies, M., Charlton, M. & Polesel, J. (1995), *"Who Wins at School? Boys and Girls in Australian Secondary Education,"* Department of Education Policy and Management, University of Melbourne.
- Withers, Graeme & Russell, Jean, (1999), *"Educating for Resilience: Prevention and Intervention Strategies for Young People at Risk,"* MacKillop Family Services Ltd and Catholic Education Office, republished by Australian Council for Educational Research 2001 Melbourne.

## **Media Articles -**

### **The Australian**

- Michael Costello, 27 February 2004 *"Equal rights the big loser"*, The Australian Newspaper.  
[http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5744,8799598%255E7583,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,8799598%255E7583,00.html)
- Samantha Maiden, 21 February 2004, *"Give girls a go, women tell Latham"*, The Australian.  
[http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5744,8744252%255E2702,00.html](http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,8744252%255E2702,00.html)
- Samantha Maiden, 23 February 2004, *"No new law for male teachers: ALP"*, The Australian.  
[http://theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story\\_page/0,5744,8762236%255E2702,00.html](http://theaustralian.news.com.au/common/story_page/0,5744,8762236%255E2702,00.html)

### **The Sydney Morning Herald –**

- Burke, Kelly, 10 March 2004, *"Outcry at Nelson plan to woo male teachers,"* Sydney Morning Herald. <http://www.smh.com.au/text/articles/2004/03/09/1078594365954.html>

### **The Age –**

- Cervini, Erica, 14 March 2004, *"Claims on male teachers disputed,"* The Age.  
<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/03/13/1078594615619.html>
- Greig, Brian, 2 April 2004, *"Here is the real masculinity crisis,"* The Age.  
<http://www.theage.com.au/articles/2004/04/01/1080544625786.html>

### **The Bulletin –**

- Bagnall, Diana, 30 May 2001, *"Lost boys : That girls consistently perform better at school than boys is undisputed. What is controversial is why this occurs, with some educators blaming a feminised curriculum."* <http://bulletin.ninemsn.com.au/bulletin/>

## **The Australian Educator -**

- Slamet, Diny, "*Educating boys*," Winter 2003.  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/AEissues.html>
- Slamet, Diny, "*The gender agenda*," Spring 2003.  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/AEissues.html>
- Davis, Catherine, "*Gender blind*," Summer 2003.  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/AEissues.html>
- Slamet, Diny, "*You've got male*," Autumn 2004.  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Publications/AE/AEissues.html>

## **The Drawing Board: An Australian Review of Public Affairs -**

- Smith, Tony, 9<sup>th</sup> April 2004, "Which crisis in masculinity?", © 2000–2004 School of Economics and Political Science, University of Sydney.  
<http://www.econ.usyd.edu.au/drawingboard/digest/0404/smith.html>

## **Web Resources -**

- Education Tasmania, Equity Standards Branch, Gender Equity (Framework for Australian Schools) Part B "*Perspectives on Gender Equity*".  
<http://www.education.tas.gov.au/equitystandards/gender/framework/partb.htm>
- Michael Flood, (2003), "*The Men's Bibliography: A comprehensive bibliography of writing on men, masculinities, gender, and sexualities*." 11th edition published Canberra, Australia. ISBN 0 646 18088 6.  
<http://mensbiblio.xyonline.net/>
- AEU Women's Focus, What's New, Boys in Education (Male Teacher Strategy), "*Federal Government Boys' Lighthouse Schooling Project Stage One report "Meeting the Challenge" – AEU Federal report on Boys' Education*".  
<http://www.aeufederal.org.au/Women/index2.html#BIE>

## **Key Points of Argument -**

### **THERE IS NO NEED TO AMMEND THE SEX DISCRIMINATION ACT TO OFFER MALE TEACHER SCHOLARSHIPS.**

- The Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission, when assessing the Catholic Education Office's bid for an exemption to the Sex Discrimination Act to offer scholarships to male would-be teachers, said, 'neither the means of offering scholarships, nor the ends of producing better boys' literacy performance' could be proven to justify granted the exemption.

i.e. More men in classrooms won't necessarily improve boys' learning outcomes. The HECS charged for studying teaching at university is NOT the reason why men are staying away from teaching.

At a time of a current and accelerating teacher shortage, governments should be addressing the underlying factors that are turning graduates away from teaching as a career and are failing to retain beginning teachers in education systems. Consistently pay, status and workload are sited as why teachers of both genders are moving away from the industry. Quality teachers must be attracted back to teaching and not falsely and discriminately lured to a profession that does not value their work.

### **BOYS DO NOT NEED SPECIAL PROGRAMS TO ADDRESS LITERACY. EDUCATION SYSTEMS AS A WHOLE SIMPLY REQUIRE MORE ADEQUATE RESOURCES, QUALITY TEACHERS AND SMALLER CLASS SIZES.**

- The Government's own report from the lengthy stage one of their Boys Lighthouse Schools Project, shows that 8 of the 10 recommendations are SOLEY about the principals of quality teaching, (that preparation time, resources, smaller class sizes and professional development matter to educational outcomes as well as student motivation and behaviour) and only 2 recommendations superficially acknowledged that gender existed as a factor in the boys' educational experience. But even then, few of the pilot projects the report deals with, actually DID specifically tackle notions of masculinity and how this impacts at school.

There are multiple learning STYLES but not a BOYS' learning style only common to ALL boys.

The Boys' Lighthouse Project has demonstrated that boys' literacy can be improved, yes, but it has also shown that the methods used to produce successful learning outcomes for boys, are matters of quality teaching not gender, and thus are equally as applicable to all in the classroom.

### **BOYS AND GIRLS NEED ROLE MODELS.**

- A role model is a positive force displaying qualities worthy of replicating. A teacher is not AUTOMATICALLY a role model simply because they are an authority figure, nor because they are the same gender, nor because they are the same ethnicity, nor because they are the same religion, class, sexuality etc. And though good teachers often are role models for their students, it is their responsibility to teach their students NOT to be pseudo-parents. We want schools to represent diverse cultures, both sexes, all classes and ethnicities, so that students are not constrained in their perceptions of what opportunities they have in their lives to pursue their dreams. But we want quality teachers first and foremost and we want them to be there with qualities worthy of replicating, not simply because they will reinforce gender stereotypes that may be absent in students' homes.

i.e. NO argument has been put that the female teachers in schools have NOT successfully acted as role models for girls and boys for the decades they have been in the profession.

### **IT IS UNNECESSARY AND REACTIONARY TO AMEND THE GENDER EQUITY FRAMEWORK**

- The move to amend an EQUITY framework because it does not emphasis ONE group enough, is an oxymoron! The gender equity framework that has been in effect since 1997, is a FRAMEWORK for governments and schools to apply to ensure that their programs, curricula, whole of school approach does not exclude, sideline for favour the needs of boys or girls over each other. This equity framework needs to be structured in the way it does, to ensure disadvantage is addressed, (in what ever forms they are manifest), but to ensure that equity is the outcome. This is what the current framework DOES, by amending it to "ensure the needs of boys are recognised in the school setting" turns the document into something it is not. Targeting forms of disadvantage is welcomed, but doing it through the Gender Equity Framework is inappropriate.