

THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS COMMISSION 1973-1982:

A CASE STUDY OF FEDERAL INTERVENTION
IN AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

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fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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*Common
Feasibility*

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"Education is a political animal: As such it lives, breathes and adapts in every moment of its existence. At times the animal travels forward like an ancient tortoise (and) at other times it leaps forward with the vigour of a young gazelle..... Eventually the animal slows down and needs to adapt in order to survive".

(D'CRUZ 1978, P11)

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INTRODUCTION

The interactive relationship between schools and society is very complex and any attempt to affect this could have major consequences. Harman and Smart (1981) in discussing the scope of Commonwealth intervention in Australian education consider that:

"Federal Government intervention constitutes one of the most important and yet at the same time one of the least understood dimensions of Australian education. For over forty years, since the Second World War, under a succession of Australian Prime Ministers - Menzies, Holt, Gorton, McMahon, Whitlam and, to some extent, Fraser the Commonwealth Government has enlarged and diversified the Federal presence in education". (P vii)

Establishment of the Commonwealth Schools Commission in 1973 should then be seen in the context of this gradually expanded Commonwealth role in an area that has traditionally been seen as an area of State responsibility.

In this case study it is intended to present an historical overview of the development of the Commission as part of the expanded Commonwealth education function, and attempt to explain how this role has changed. However, while advancing reasons for these changes that can be substantiated by the literature, this will need to be set in the context of a political and economic environment that has changed significantly since 1972.

General literature on the Commission is relatively sparse, especially in the area of intergovernmental relations where the emphasis is fiscal rather than social policy issues and most education references are concerned with the post compulsory sector. Also as education is seen as a State responsibility the literature is either State or school specific. However, literature on change is extensive and can be applied to government's role in affecting change. Even with these limitations there is sufficient material to provide a theoretical base for an explanation of the Commission's changed role.

This study attempts to test two inter-related hypotheses. Firstly - attempts by the Federal Government to intervene in an area of social policy that is a State responsibility will meet with limited success

because, secondly, change cannot be achieved by legislation alone as there are numerous environmental influences that can modify the intended outcome.

Since 1945 the Federal Government has had a major impact on Australian education and continues to be an important source of change in education systems. The Commonwealth has had more than 'limited success' in the tertiary sector where it now exercises total control over funding. Machinery also exists for the Commonwealth to control almost all other sectors and its fiscal supremacy enables it to influence decisionmaking at the State level. This is restricted to the compulsory sector, defined as years 1 to 12 where specific Commonwealth influence is limited because the Schools Commission funds only represent about 10 per cent of total expenditure in this area. Also defining success is difficult because it is necessary to go beyond fiscal aspects such as transfer of funds and try to gauge the level of improvement for children. This has yet to be investigated in detail. The study, therefore, is limited to discussing the Commission's role as part of the intervention process rather than considering the impact of specific programs.

Use of the term intervention is certainly relevant to any study of the overall impact of Federal education policies but in the compulsory sector 'participation or involvement' may be more suitable. Harman and Smart (1982) support use of the stronger term because of the extent of commitment and influence as:

"in many cases the Federal Government has stepped in and established an (educational) activity or enterprise which has previously been the responsibility of the State Government without there being any specific requests to do so". (P 3)

I have accepted this view not on the basis of funding levels but because deliberate intervention was the initial purpose of the Commission. However, management procedures, accountability requirements and recent developments are generally based on an 'involvement' process. States still have a major responsibility for development and implementation of education policy but they can no longer ignore the Federal Government as a force affecting their decisions in the compulsory over post secondary (T.A.F.E.) sectors.

Intervention can best be used to describe the initial, more assertive period of the Commission's history under a Labor government to 1975. Since then changed political and economic circumstances have resulted in a role change from a capacity to intervene to one of influence. Also the funds have now become an integral part of educational provisions by the States rather than an additional resource as originally proposed. Accountability requirements for both the government and non-government school sector also support this view. Therefore, in this three part case study, it is proposed to consider the Commission's intervention in State education from a number of inter-related aspects:

PART A: POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

- . politics education and policy formation in general;
- . differences between Federal and State policy processes;
- . the Commonwealth's role in education policy formation;
- . an historical overview of the growth of Federal influence 1945-1982.

PART B: THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION 1973-1982

- . formation, functions and changed role;
- . reasons for a changed role with reference to environmental influences and the literature. Emphasis here is on how the role has changed without any significant alterations to the original legislation.

PART C: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

- . these will be discussed by reference to the current political environment, the past history of the Commission and general literature on the Commonwealth's role in education.

PART A: POLITICAL AND HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

1. Politics, Education and Policy Formation

Education Policy can generally be considered in the context of the values held by the participants in the Policy process. This

raises the question of what the various parties require to develop these values. In most countries responsibility for provision of resources for education rests with the public sector and these resources enable educators to achieve what 'society' values. The general public holds them responsible for education outcomes as well as utilisation of funds.

Australians are served by a variety of educational communities both government and non-government. At one level there is the Commonwealth and the various State systems and at the other the various systems within States. Policy development occurs within all these communities and serves to highlight the importance of considering them as being in the mainstream of Australian political life. Harman (1978) in discussing the relationships between education and politics, raises a number of issues that are central to any consideration of the changed role of the Schools Commission. He stresses that the link goes beyond party politics and the continual struggle for power. Any governments (or political parties) policies on education also reflect its political creed and view of society which is usually expressed in terms that will attract votes. 'National' education policy should therefore be seen as a synthesis of State and Federal views. This differs considerably from Federal systems such as the United States and West Germany where education (as an investment in the future) clearly forms part of national economic and social policy. This importance is reflected in the proportion of G.N.P. expended on education being considerably higher than in Australia (until recently).

Educational Policy formation is a complex matter and a process according to Harman (1980) that is often characterised by "diversity and apparent disorder and certainly not adequately understood" (P 54) Harman also defines policy as:

"a ~~Course~~ of action or inaction towards the accomplishment of some intended or desired end. It embraces what is actually intended and what actually occurs as a result of that intention". (P 56)

Elmore and McLaughlin (1982) expand the definition and indicate some of the factors that contribute to the complexities of the

educational policy process that are relevant to the study:

"Policies are authoritative declarations of intent.

They are prescriptions about what ought to be done but they are conditional statements that contain some degree of uncertainty about the casual relationship between government action and the result it intended to produce. Policies can also be thought of as attempts to assure that people do certain things they might not do otherwise, or alternatively as ways of legitimising things that are already being done and attempting to assure they will be done by others".

(P 173)

In Australia public policy with respect to education is not an exclusive right of either the State or Federal governments. However, one major difference is that Federal initiatives usually require Parliamentary approval and are expressed in legislation whereas in the states major policy decisions have been implemented with minimal involvement of the legislature. Therefore in any discussion of policy implementation it is important to go beyond legislation and consider the people involved. Birch (1976) supports this view and uses the Rosenau (1961) model to categorise the people involved in Federal policy formation into three groups:

- . the decision makers: government departments, caucus, Cabinet
 - . the opinion makers: the electorate, Department of Education (Canberra) and pressure groups
 - . the opinion transmitters: political parties, State Governments
- (P 3)

All were involved in developments surrounding the Commission and need to be linked with the what are generally considered to be the three major strategies for affecting change:

- . empirical-rational: where policies and procedures are changed as relevant knowledge becomes available

- . normative re-educative: processes where change is affected through education; and
- . the power strategy: which uses legislation or conditional financing to initiate change

These strategies have been used by the Federal government (or its agent, the Commission) in an attempt to affect change in education systems at the State level. According to Basset (1970) they require three types of people to be involved in the process and all the following can be identified with the establishment and changed role of the Commission:

- . the administrator: who can initiate, develop and implement plans (with support from the profession);
- . the technician: who identifies, for example, the major elements and costs of a program; and
- . the politician: who can initiate, accept and legislate for change

In this study the above are identified as groups rather than individuals because of the number of systems and people involved.

2. The Policy Process

In the policy making process similarities between State and Federal government exist, however, there are also substantial differences and it is "appropriate to include the Commonwealth as part of the decisionmaking process with respect to State education policies". (Birch 1976, P 65) In this area of Federal policy making the States are cast in the role of opinion makers and transmitters but they perform a major decisionmaking function in program administration. *This* model is particularly true with Commission recurrent funds; however, *in* many of the specific purpose programs decisionmaking is more on a shared basis. The Commonwealth policy process is more 'formalised' based on inputs from Commissions, committees, political parties and the States. The influence of political parties is not as obvious at the State level where governments "have always been guided by the professional educationalists and administrators who have been

in charge of the departments". (Birch, P 69) The departments are long established and serve the purpose of administering a school system. While they are under a minister their role has not been seriously challenged. The Commonwealth, since 1945, has used a number of Commissions to transmit opinions in the terms of a particular brief and many changes in policy can be linked with the funding of an inquiry. Together these comprise a highly developed machinery available for the Commonwealth to 'intervene' and affect State education policy formation.

3. The Commonwealth's Role in Policy Formation

Education is not specifically mentioned in the Australian Constitution (1901) or any subsequent amendments. Therefore, in the terms of the 1898 Constitutional Convention, it can be considered one of the unnamed residual Powers of the States. Establishment of a Commonwealth body such as the Schools Commission could, from a very simplistic viewpoint, be classed as an attempt to intrude in an area of States rights. The most significant issue in rights against intrusion, according to McCulloch (1975), "concerns the determination of policies or goals and concerns only in a secondary way the provisions of financial or other resources" (P 1). However, the Commonwealth has always exerted some influence in education because of its 'secondary' educational role e.g. territory school systems, defence and instrumentalities such as Telecom.

Through broad use of Section 96 of the Constitution (Commonwealth cash grants for specific purposes) Federal governments have been able to exert a more direct influence on education policy formation. Indirectly this has been further increased through the Commonwealth's taxation power and the subsequent allocation of general recurrent funds by each State government. During the 'expansionary' years (1945-1970 approximately) this only allowed state systems to follow a general policy of system maintenance. Policy making during these years, at both State and Federal level was mainly on an 'ad hoc' basis aimed at maintaining the status quo. Also any developments were generally incremental in nature. There was (and still is) no really developed mechanism for planning so policy is directed at the operations level e.g. teacher supply and demand, building programs. The State bureaucracies assumed responsibility achieving for these and little consideration

has been given to national planning. In fact States jealously guard their "rights" in many areas. This had a major impact on development and implementation of Commission (Government) policies.

As indicated previously, education policy formation is affected by a societies view of the purpose of the educational process plus changes in the economic and political environment. In Australia, like other 'western' economies, education is considered to be an investment in human resources for further economic development and social progress. However, during the 1960's and early 1970's there was a swing towards a consumption oriented view with an emphasis on a need to improve individual effectiveness which could be achieved through culture transmission, self-realisation and citizenship preparation. With the onset of a recession and the need for fiscal restraint there has been a swing back to more of a manpower planning approach with 'relevance' being stressed. This has been the source of conflict because of the need to define relevance and interpretation of the role education has in today's society. All these factors contribute to a changed role for the Commission and will be discussed in detail later.

Government responses to environmental changes and the implementation of party policies (both Liberal and Labor) have provided the Commonwealth with policies and programs that now cover all sectors of education. Birch (1976) argues that Commonwealth assistance (or intervention) "could be said to be based on the assumption that the national parliament should assist the States with the provision of education". (P 7) This situation has been reached incrementally and mainly expressed in a States Grants act providing conditional assistance to governments, instrumentalities and schools. Elmore and McLaughlin (1982) call this the compliance-assistance trade off approach and is based on the principle that the spending power has the right to determine how the money is finally spent. This type of assistance for education could take a number of forms e.g.:

- . support for existing State programs with the State maintaining its current level of effort;
- . matching grants on a shared cost basis;
- . support for community initiatives;

- . use statutory authorities (e.g. Tertiary Education Commission, Schools Commission) ;
- . funds from other government departments e.g. Office of Child Care, Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

The pattern that has emerged is that, apart from universities, authority resides with the States while an increasing financial role has been assumed by the Commonwealth. This is a type of 'executive responsibility' that depends upon the degree of control over policy making. It is important to consider the amount of intrusion and raises several questions that have to be linked with the Commissions influence viz:- the effect of conditions placed on grants and the way those grants could distort State priorities. Tomlinson (1977) provides a useful summary of the current Commonwealth position in stressing that:

"The debate about Federal involvement is no longer whether it should have a role in education. That role is an accomplished fact. The focus of the debate is now on the nature of executive responsibility which should be assumed by the Commonwealth....the division of authority is no longer clear". (P 15)

This compares quite favourably (from a Federal perspective) with the 1960's when Harman (1968) concluded that:

"one of the main reasons for the neglect of Education in Australia is undoubtedly been the federal system of government whereby the States have the constitutional responsibility for education while apparently lacking in the financial resources to discharge that responsibility". (P 8)

The Commonwealth now concedes the right of a state to determine its own needs and priorities but through its financial power it can influence the level of expenditure on both government and non-government schools. Also though "the grants power has enabled the Commonwealth to make its priorities effective (and) in effect there is a notional shift toward centralised planning". (Tomlinson P 1) However, allocating funds through a very

diversified educational community has provided an impetus for a rather flexible and diversified approach to educational provisions by each State. An approach which appears to be at odds with intervention but consistent with Commission views about choice, diversity and devolution of decisionmaking. The opposite is true of the Catholic school administration which has become more centralised in order to allocate funds effectively.

4. The Growth of Federal Influence - An Historical Overview

A feature of Australian education since 1945 has been the accelerated growth in the demand for educational services due to factors such as rapid population increases, industrialisation and community acceptance of the need for increased educational standards. This has resulted in a corresponding growth both in expenditure and percentage of G.N.P. It has also been accompanied by an expanded Federal role. At the State level education was also afforded a higher priority when compared with other public services and has generally reached a figure in excess of 25% of State expenditure (e.g. Tasmania- in 1960 22% and in 1980 27% of expenditure was allocated to education). Statistical Data in Appendix A provides an indication of the growth of expenditure to 1974-5. Since then levels have tended to stabilize.

In addition to providing finance the Federal Government's role has changed dramatically. In 1939 Commonwealth involvement in education was minimal and relatively unimportant in the eyes of most Australians. Education expenditure was a relatively minor budget item. However, despite a strong traditional view that education was a State responsibility, the Federal Government has developed a major commitment to all areas from Pre-School to tertiary education. It now provides about 40% of all public education costs which amounts to about 9% of total budget outcome. Today the Commonwealth is a major force in education policy formation and the States are no longer the single agency for exercising a responsibility. Some critics have argued that this is an unwarranted intervention in State affairs; however, as noted above it is possible to see it as a liberating force for diverse responses.

The pattern of post 1945 Federal 'intervention' (involvement) has followed a hierarchial, incremental model but there have been a number of periods of more frantic activity (e.g. the Whitlam years). Also it is important to consider education in the context of the centrepetal forces that have existed in Australia's federal system. Ever since Federation the tendency has been to increase gradually the strength and range of Commonwealth function and from 1901-1975 the

number of government departments increased from 7 to 37. Also the centralism - decentralism argument has been ongoing with demands for greater equality in resource allocation having to be balanced off against national priorities. The Uniform Taxation legislation (1942) has ensured the Commonwealth a dominant role and ushered in a period of coercive federalism (as opposed to co-ordinate and co-operative approaches). Since 1975 the Fraser government's 'New Federalism' policy has seen a professed return to the co-operative model but the coercive style still seems to predominate.

Broadly the hierarchial pattern of involvement has followed a traditional model with a federal committee of inquiry usually followed by support for its findings. It commenced with the funding of universities and now includes support for pre-schools. Funds are provided for general recurrent, specific purpose and capital programs in both government and non-government schools. Generally the Liberal-National Party has followed a more elitist, ad hoc federalist approach, now favouring bloc grants that require states to order their priorities. Some 'coersion' was used prior to 1972 but generally limited to capital assistance. On the other hand the Labor Party takes a more egalitarian view using a national planning approach to ensure equality of resource provision and to direct funds to specific groups.

Prior to 1972 the gradual increase in Commonwealth involvement resulted in major developments such as:

- . establishment of a Commonwealth Department of Education;
- . grants to schools for science laboratories and libraries;
- . direct assistance to students through the Commonwealth Scholarship Scheme;
- . 'assumption' of total responsibility of university funding through a Universities Commission; and
- . involvement in establishing Colleges of Advanced Education.

In general the co-operative approach was used with a Liberal-National Country Party government accepting the principle (in Senator J. Gorton's

words-1966) that education was:

"tending to become in effect a partnership between the Commonwealth and the States. The States have the prime responsibility, particularly in primary and secondary schools, but the Commonwealth is now sharing with the States in financing tertiary education and is making a direct contribution to secondary education".

(Harman & Smart, 1982 P 24)

Between 1966 and 1972 the new Commonwealth Department of Education examined possible areas for new initiatives and expansion. The Government was reluctant to change its policy of limiting support to the tertiary sector plus an extension of the relatively inexpensive capital assistance type programs. However, following representations from the non-government sector the Minister (Malcolm Fraser) introduced per capita recurrent funding for non-government schools. This set a highly significant precedent which "inevitably left the Federal Government vulnerable to future pressures for the provision of increasingly extensive general purpose school funding". (ibid, P 25) The government also responded in the early 1970's to a variety of initiatives for specific groups such as immigrants and aboriginal secondary students. These, plus introduction of general purpose capital assistance for government schools further confirm the ad hoc nature of the policy process.

Election of a Labor government in 1972 ushered in a period of dramatic change. At its 1971 Conference the Party was committed to a policy of action "to reform and revitalise Australian education by taking unilateral national action". Reform was to be achieved through^a Schools Commission and a Pre-Schools Commission with the underlying principle of funding being a needs approach. Between 1972 and 1975 the Whitlam government through an assertive, centralist approach pushed through a reformist education program which established four statutory authorities and quadrupled Commonwealth expenditure. The basic framework has been continued by subsequent Liberal governments through two Commissions (Tertiary and Schools) and the Office of Child Care.

1975 can be considered as a watershed year because of changes in both the political and economic environment. A recession gave rise

a reduction of government expenditure growth in areas such as education and social welfare. This co-incided with all the Commissions presenting triennial budgets that were beyond the capacity of the economy to support. The Commissions reports were rejected and guidelines issued that restricted expenditure growth. This procedure has been adopted as routine by subsequent Liberal-NCP governments.

Since 1975 the situation has been one of consolidation or 'steady state' with attempts to reduce Federal expenditure and reduction in the size of the bureaucracy. Funding levels have remained steady in real terms with 'adjustments' between sectors and within particular programs. There has been a noticable shift of funds to the non-government schools which is in Liberal policy. The significant features of this period are:

- . a continual commitment to planning but the advisory role of Commissions has been further restricted by government guidelines;
- . an increase in the consultative process with a view to shifting more responsibility for decision-making and administration to the states (New Federalism);
- . a downgraded role for the Schools Commission;
- . budget deficits and calls for expenditure restraint;
- . demands for more accountability and a decline in public support for the levels of Commonwealth funding; and
- . declining enrolments resulting in an over supply of teachers.

All these aspects and others have combined to create an environment that has affected the Commission's role. Also these developments were further affected by the 1981 Review of Commonwealth Functions which reinforced the need to shift the financial burden to States. There was also a significant reduction in Commonwealth's support for education research and curriculum development.

During 1981-82 the 'steady state' has continued with the non-government sector receiving additional support within a budget allocation that remained at a generally static level. There were attempts to earmark recurrent funds for transition education and demands for greater recognition for Commonwealth capital. New developments included establishing two new programs (Country Areas, Severely Handicapped Children) and removing restrictions on Special Education funds to allow for early intervention programs. Previously the commission funds were limited to the compulsory sector and limited to children who were required to attend school. Thus the Commission's efforts to influence (intervene) State education priorities has continued. The impact of these developments and the Commission's changed role are discussed later in the study against this background.

PART B: THE SCHOOLS COMMISSION 1973-1982

1. The Initial Stages

Election of the Whitlam Labor government in December 1972 heralded the most comprehensive attempt to alter Commonwealth education planning and policy making. Whitlam envisaged a Schools Commission that would operate in a similar fashion to the Universities Commission. It would have no vast bureaucracy but would collect information and make recommendations for government action. Also it would be fully representative of educational opinion without specific groups nominating members and it would not dominate or displace existing institutions.

Many of the broad issues relating to establishing the Commission were settled before Labor was elected to government. Successive national conferences prior to 1972 developed a policy that committed a future Labor government to establish a body to be known as the Schools Commission to:

"examine and determine the needs of students in government and non-government primary, secondary and technical schools and recommend grants which the Commonwealth should make to the States to assist in meeting the requirements of school-age children on the basis of needs and priorities".

(Tannock 1980, P 2)

The new prime minister had a definite line of action, a tentative

timetable and his party was committed to increasing expenditure on education, especially the 'school' sector. Victory was taken as a mandate for action and an Interim Committee under the chairmanship of Professor P. Karmel, was formed to inquire into and report on the compulsory sector of schooling (following the traditional Commonwealth model of an inquiry preceding action).

The Report of the Interim Committee, entitled "Schools in Australia" was submitted, after a relatively short inquiry in May 1973. Referred to as the 'Karmel Report' it is considered to be one of the land marks in Australia's educational history. It provided a framework for comprehensive planning that has continued to be used with only minor alterations since 1974. The suggested course of action was for funding to be provided for government and non-government schools through seven major programs - recurrent grants, building grants, libraries, disadvantaged schools (urban and rural), special education, teacher development and innovation. The programs contained certain implicit values such as equality of outcomes, diversity and community involvement. These were based on a model of society characterised by Musgrave as:

"One marked by equality within a wide social system (which tolerates) a wide variety of social groupings, including different religious groups, and by a firm rootedness in local communities". (Tomlinson 1977, P 24)

These implicit values were translated into legislative action and have been made to operate at the State level. Education was seen as an instrument of social change. The Committee recognised it could not "change society directly, but it can make recommendations which affect the quality of the experience which the child has in the school". (ibid) The reference was to be achieved by providing financial assistance through programs that took into account:

- . existing Federal commitments to schools;
- . the concept of equality of opportunity; and
- . the needs and priorities of all types of schools.

Schools in Australia may have appeared as a report based on very specific terms of reference (Appendix B) and predetermined by campaign pledges but the "public service and members of the Interim Committee still had considerable initiative in the shaping of the recommendations for grants and the legislation needed to implement them". (Birch and Smart 1977, P 54) In fact the processes involved prior to passage of the legislation followed the traditional model of opinion making, opinion transmission and decision making discussed in Part A of this study.

The Schools Commission Act and accompanying funding legislation (State Grants - Schools Assistance) received royal assent in December 1973 after a stormy passage through Parliament. As part of Labor's election platform it was (according to Birch and Smart, 1977):

"a politically contentious measure that received and publically aroused bitter and varied debate and marked an important step by the Federal Government into the sphere of state and private education". (P 48)

In Parliament the nature of the legislation and debates were dominated by a number of factors that also raises issues concerning the policy formation process. First, the legislation was based on a specific election pledge which could place constraints on those who turn pledges into performances. Second, the considerable involvement of public servants in determining alternatives that would break the parliamentary deadlock that occurred during the legislative process which raises a question of the validity of such a role. Third the external pressures caused by interest groups with a vested interest in the shape and administration of a planning or policy advice authority.

The interaction of these factors was overshadowed by the fact that Labor (Whitlam?) was determined to establish a Commission because:

"no significant advance has been made since the war, in any field requiring a significant increase in public expenditure; without Commonwealth initiative"... (Birch and Smart, 1977 P 48)

Also there was a general belief that Australian schools lagged behind their counterparts in countries with similar levels of economic

development. Whitlam believed that, through Commonwealth involvement the gap could be narrowed.

2. Functions and Operation

Formal establishment of the Commission completed the legislative phase of the proposed intervention process. As a statutory authority it was charged with the responsibility of implementing the Government's programs (policy). The functions, set out in full in Appendix B, may be summarised as follows:

- " . advising the Government on acceptable standards and on the needs of government and non-government schools for buildings, equipment, teaching and other staff;
- . the necessity for financial assistance, the conditions of such assistance, and the allocations to be granted;
- . in addition the Commission is required to advise the Minister on any matter relating to primary and secondary education in Australia referred to it by him (or which the Commission considers to be an appropriate subject for inquiry)". (Schools Commission, 1981 P 1)

The numerous Commonwealth statutory authorities have varying degrees of autonomy and effect on the policy making process. The Schools Commission does not have financial or staffing independence and its statutory functions do not provide it with a predictable task involving little or no policy development. As an advisory body to government, no one is obliged to take its advice and the grants it provides could be handled by other Government departments. In addition its advice (through annual and triennial reports) is public and this allows for public debate and political activity relating to implementing that advice. With such restricted powers the co-ersive type of intervention based on strong legal authority could only proceed in an environment of co-operation. An unlikely situation in this area because of the States constitutional position, the number of parties involved and an environment which has changed dramatically since 1972. Labor's intervention then was based on certain assumptions rather than legal power:

- " . states could not increase funding for education beyond their present levels. Therefore, money to achieve Commission resource targets would come from Canberra and be additional to stable (in real terms) state contributions;
- . most non-government schools were well behind the resource levels of government schools and would require considerable funding increases;
- . state and non-government authorities would accept the spirit and letter of the proposed programs;
- . relations between the Commission and the State would be similar to that of the Universities Commission; and
- . the economy would remain stable during the 1970's".

(Tannock 1980, PP 3-4)

Thus the Labor Government, while legislating for intervention, only provided the responsible authority with a number of 'defacto' powers that were bound-up with issues such as: the degree to which the Minister and the government are prepared to act on the advice given, the capacity of the Commission to disseminate information, the degree to which the Commission is supported by its clients, the general public statue of the Commission, and delegation of authority through legislation. All these elements have had an effect on the actual intervention or implementation process as well as the level of success possible. The Labor Party chose a compliance process and left the implementation very much in the bargaining area which has met varying degrees of success.

Before discussing changed directions and commenting on successes it is necessary to consider operating procedures and the nature of relationships that have developed between Commonwealth and State authorities. This assists with developing an understanding of the levels of success possible in complex area of education policy formation. The Commission is not bound by internal operating rules as it sets its own agenda and can order its own priorities for discussion. Any matters relating to policy generally proceed by

consensus which can be a long process but allows coverage of the wide range of opinion influencing its decision making. While all grants require ministerial approval the Commission is responsible for general program administration, without being questioned within Government. This is of *vital* importance because "it provides that first hand knowledge about the interaction of policies and their practical consequences, which is essential for further policy development". (McKinnon, 1979 P 141) Detailed program administration occurs on a decentralized basis with money being advanced to the States.

As a result of these precedures the each program varies considerably between States but they all operate within guidelines that are issued annually. States also have to provide the Commonwealth with financial accountability statements each year and there are now educational accountability requirements in the legislation but the actual format is still subject to negotiation. What has emerged is a 'soft' version of the compliance model which, according to Elmore and McLaughlin (1982), has more chance of 'success' than a strict model hidebound in rules and regulations. While this may be the case in educational terms there is also a need to satisfy the political requirements and provide 'visible' demonstrations of Federal support. This aspect has not generally been satisfied with the general recurrent or capital programs for government schools because funds are combined with those provided by the States. This approach satisfies the federalist view of States ordering their own priorities but it does not ensure Commonwealth policy is implemented. There is more evidence of success with the specific purpose programs but this varies according to how States interpret the guidelines (which are not obligatory except for the very general requirements under the Act.)

Impact of specific purpose programs at State level is a study in itself as each program has its own administration and would have to be discussed on a State by State basis. Such information is not easily obtained but it would give an insight into the intergovernmental relations aspects of this form of intervention. This confirms the complexities associated with implementation of social policy. However, the major concerns that provide a framework for the Commission programs have been:

- . the need to improve resource levels and equity of resource provision between schools and school systems;
- . devolution of decision making to the school level;
- . improvement in content and purpose of school programs;
- . positive discrimination on a needs basis to provide equality of opportunity in schooling; and
- . to encourage diversified forms of schooling.

Measurement of achievements in this area are still very much at the subjective level because of the difficulty associated with the isolation of measurable variables. At present the main concerns are of a cost-benefit nature and judgements are again subjective.

Federal-State relationships occur at several levels - political, heads of departments and between officers. This pattern is complicated because teacher and parent organisation also have an input at both state and Commonwealth levels. Tensions do exist and are mainly associated with the power considerations that always occur in the Federal-State bargaining process. The major differences, involve either the federalist view that at the general policy level, funds should be provided on a block basis or only to support programs proposed by the States. A more centralist view is that the Commonwealth should develop national policies and offer to support unmet needs especially when there is a lack of action by the States. The crux of the argument rests on the question of whose right it is to decide on the best use of Commonwealth money. The Commission then:

"sits amid all the forces at work in Australian school level education. Because its recommendations inevitably have political overtones it is in a very sensitive position, open to continuous scrutiny. It is constantly involved in consulting, liaising and acquiring and disseminating information". (McKinnon, 1979, P 148)

As a result there are inherent difficulties in the relationships involved because the States jealously guard their control over their

education systems but the Federal Government controls the finance. State policies and priorities are affected and their budgets affected without certainty of any prior consultation. These factors contribute to the limited success of those attempting to intervene.

3. A Changing Role 1975-1982

While the statutory functions have not changed the ability of the Commission to influence government policy and act as an agent of change has been reduced. The type of influence or intervention proposed by 'Schools in Australia' has been altered significantly because of a number of political and economic factors that also affected the educational environment in which the Commission operates. Labor put into effect most of the Karmel recommendations by substantially increasing funding for the schools sector. However, increased inflation and budgetary pressures forced Labor in 1975 to review its programs. In its Report for the Triennium 1976-78 the Commission indicated that there were problems carrying out some of the Karmel recommendations but the general thrusts of each program should be maintained.

Labor's response to this advice was to declare 1976 a 'holding year' with a rolling triennium commencing in 1977. Thus longer term planning was replaced by annual funding and probably negated the more stable triennium approach Labor also introduced the procedure of issuing guidelines to the Commission. This, and the annual funding concept were continued by successive Liberal-NCP governments. These developments have created an uneasy situation in the States (and the Commission) as there has to be an annual response to the governments 'instruction' and the type of advice now provided is severely restricted. The Commission still issues a triennial report which is the basic policy advice but government acceptance does not automatically guarantee a program the recommended funding level for each year e.g. in accepting a Country Areas Program in 1981 with an expanded budget the Commonwealth agreed to the initial budget level and did not increase funding for 1982. This has had significant effects in States like Tasmania because funds are allocated on the basis of isolation whereas previously they were on a socio-economic needs base. The increased funding levels would have enabled Tasmania to maintain its program at the 1981 level but it was 'forced' to adjust its program budget. It is situations such as this that has increased the tension between Commonwealth and State governments

with the Commission being caught in the middle.

Since 1975 most programs have been in a static state or holding situation. Commission funding levels have not been increased significantly and because of Government instructions priorities have been re-ordered within that budget framework. This has resulted in reducing funds for Professional Development; scrapping the innovations program; and reducing the Commission's capacity to collect data and undertake research. There has also been a marked shift of funds to the private sector in response to election promises and based on the fact that enrolments in that sector are increasing while government schools numbers decline (Hence the need for less funds!). So the intervention has continued but the priorities have been re-ordered. The Commission is still able to operate, but within a much more restrictive environment. While this may have the support of conservative governments the Labor Party places a high priority on the need to intervene in the schools sector.

After 1977, the economic downturn continued and caused all governments to put the brakes on education spending but rather than abandon most Commission programs the level of effort was reduced. The problems were compounded because of significant increases in teacher salaries and escalating building costs which made it difficult to achieve the resource targets proposed by Karmel. Inflation also diverted attention away from the needs of education as a political issue as well as causing a backlash against the high levels of funding. These pressures were also affecting State programs and made it difficult for them to maintain their level of effort. As a result the Commission's funds have been built into many State education budgets rather than being supplementary and allowing States to progress beyond the level of general systems maintenance by using recurrent funds as catalysts for improvement.

Overall the effects of these developments has been to reduce the effectiveness of the Commission as an 'agent of change'. Its planning role has been switched from one of affecting policy to one of administering government policy. The validity of either approach depends on the view taken of the Commission role (a similar role change has occurred with the Tertiary Education Commission). This overt government policy change has been achieved by edict rather than legislation and has had major effect on the planning process.

While emphasis has been placed on the political and economic reasons for the Commission's changed role from that proposed by Karmel to the present situation, the 'demise' could be considered inevitable because of the nature of Federal-State responsibilities - the Commonwealth having the financial power and the States the 'legal' responsibility for education.

Labor's desire to initiate a program of assistance through a statutory body with considerable independence may have been better suited to periods when the economy was expanding. With the onset of a recession there has been increasing concern in the community about the health and direction of education programs resulting in changed attitudes and demands on the educational process. This problem was compounded because of considerable uncertainty about the Commission's goals and the process by which it could service all schools separately from State funds. Therefore, acceptance of the Commission was limited in the larger states who responded by considering general recurrent and specific purpose funds for government schools as part of their normal education budget. The Tasmanian response is outlined later.

Community attitudes about the purpose of education also changed because of the economic downturn, a rise in youth unemployment, changed social attitudes, the standards debate and the continual clash between the 'progressive' and 'conservative' views of the education process. Criticism of the Commission was widespread mainly because of the 'innovations programs' and examples of funds that were wasted. The great bulk of support was not politically visible because of the methods used by States to administer their Commission's allocation. These attitudes further compounded the difficulties of affecting change in an area of State responsibility. Harman (1981) aptly summarises the situation:

"To take part in education reforms in Australia can be a very disturbing experience. The machinery is so cumbersome, there are so many officials, boards and committees holding the levers that operate it". (P 15)

Diffusion of formal power means that change is difficult to achieve and in an administrative climate such as this it is little wonder that the Commission's programs only achieve limited success. As Rice (1982) indicates the:

"allocation of public resources is determined by the relative power of conflicting interests and the quality of their tactics....(there is a) need to take note of the inequality of social forces through a comparison of a reform policy with related government policies". (P 196)

While it can be argued that the general resource target approach is an external attack on the States area of responsibility there are a number of general successes that can be afforded the Commission.

For example:

- . Raised resource levels for government schools. This was the greatest initial effect and while it has stabilized the higher level of employment has been retained by States with quite significant reductions in pupil teacher ratios.
- . An improvement in morale in schools because of the increased resources and more of a voice in how they are managed. This is particularly true in Tasmanian schools.
- . An improved quality of educational debate because of an increased information base and professional development of both teachers and the school community. (There has always been a reluctance to make detailed material available and many of the Commission's documents have at least 'opened the door').
- . Assisted with changing the Australian view of the social functions of education from the narrow academic, meritocratic approach to a more egalitarian view. This is again changing in the current economic climate resulting in the 'job orientation' returning. The Commission, however, continues to provide information that questions the relevance and purpose of school programs. Reports such as Schooling for 15 and 16 Year Olds is a good example of this and have resulted in governments questioning the secondary sector (another 'unjustified' threat from Canberra!). This information has certainly assisted with raising the level

of public awareness of educational issues.

- Depoliticising education debates through consensus policies and providing funds on a needs rather than a per capita basis. This wound has been re-opened mainly with a continual shift for funds to the private sector and a return to per capita allocations.

(Matthews and Keeves, 1978 PP 155-197)

In the 1980's, under the Liberal-NCP government, the Commission's functions have been narrowed further with further devolutions of administrative authority to the States ('Federalism'). This may satisfy State authorities but it is a move away from the Commission's original purpose to effect improvement in education quality. A future scenario is outlined in Part C of this study.

4. Two Responses to Intervention

4.1 The Tasmanian Response to Commission Programs

Jones (1981) when commenting on the future administration of Australian education indicated that:

"it was the advent of the Schools Commission that gave the Commonwealth Government its greatest influence on the administration of State education....(by forcing them)to plan ahead, both short and long term, communicate better with the public, relax bureaucratic controls and look at accountability". (P 28)

If success is measured in fiscal terms then there have been considerable benefits. Successful responses to the aim of achieving educational improvement are varied. The Tasmanian response (from the Commission's view) serves as an example of 'successful' intervention.

Since the introduction of Commission funding for Government schools the Education Department has administered these funds separately from State funds. This is in accordance with the original wishes of the Commission and is generally recognised, especially by schools in other States, as a highly successful

way of managing Commonwealth funds. It has also permitted the State to make effective use of these funds, since they can be readily used to meet particular priorities, to respond to the special needs of particular groups (e.g. handicapped children, country children and poor children) and to increase the responsibility which schools and colleges can exercise due to their budgets.

General administration of the program clearly reflects a policy of involving teachers and parent representatives in decision making. The overall program structure has advantages such as:

- . (the possibility) to use Schools Commission funds to supplement State initiatives at a level decided by (management) committees;
- . committees can help the State continue programs that are difficult to fund from State sources;
- . a minimum of 72% of general recurrent funds reach schools for use on programs they want;
- . involvement of parent and teacher groups in committee activities because the level of awareness about the use and value of Schools Commission funds;
- . Schools Commission funds enable the school and the system to pilot new initiatives; and
- . personnel paid from Schools Commission funds do not count against State quotas. Therefore, it is possible to assist schools and the system focus on specific areas of need without having a detrimental effect on the overall staffing situation." (Education Department 1982, PP 1-2)

In accepting Commission (Federal Government) intervention in its Education programs and developing the management processes outlined above, Tasmania runs counter to the overall Australian pattern for government school programs. Generally the approach

in other states is to link the Commission funds with internal structures and officers already working in the areas identified by the Commission. This makes accountability and assessing the level of Commonwealth 'effect' on for example, disadvantaged schools very difficult. In Tasmania it is possible to identify all programs receiving Commonwealth support which is an advantage with regard to the 'political visibility' of programs. However, it has not been of any extra advantage as funds are allocated by formulae or on a per capita basis.

Reasons for Tasmania's decision to accept the Schools Commission administrative proposals are difficult to establish because of a lack of documentation on the subject. It is possible to make certain general observations and draw conclusions from these. Firstly, the early 1970's were noted for the acceptance of a more 'progressive' view of the education process and the Commission emphasis on these were acceptable in this climate. Secondly, the previous Labor Government afforded a high priority education so additional funding would find favour. Thirdly, the devolution of responsibility, school based decision making, parental involvement and equality of opportunity underlying the Commission's programs corresponded with Tasmanian priorities.

In 1973, there was a climate favourable to acceptance, both within the Education Department and the Government. Also, many of the Commissions programs provided specific purpose funds for education areas that were not catered for by existing administrative machinery. Departmental officers were asked to develop an administrative model that was acceptable to both the Tasmanian system and fulfilled commission requirements. Their proposal for separate administrative procedures for all commission programs was accepted by the Director-General and the Minister. Commonwealth intervention therefore, was successful and has continued through a continuation of bureaucratic inertia plus system support because of the advantages listed previously (P 26). Recurrent funds have always been threatened because Treasury could use these to replace rather than supplement State funds. This has been strongly resisted by both the bureaucracy and schools.

Inertia can also be used as the reason for original management procedures remaining unchanged in other States. A high degree of

resistance to change and intervention resulted in Commission funds for government schools being absorbed by the State. They have had an impact and enabled support Education to remain high in difficult budgeting situations. States now rely heavily on the Commonwealth input rather than maintaining effort through other State sources which could be seen as a failure of one of the original Commission objectives to provide additional resources. There has been more 'success' with the joint program and funding for non-government where funds are more visible and the legislative requirements more specific.

The various degrees of acceptance by States fits the 'dominant decision rule' suggested by Elmore and McLaughlin (1982). In referring to the compliance assistance intervention model they proposed a mix of strategies that would:

"minimise the number of instances in which regulatory compliance is required to achieve federal policy objectives. Or, stated positively: maximise the likelihood that states and localities will initiate and assume responsibility for policies consistent with federal objectives. This decision shifts federal emphasis from compliance with the letter of the law compliance with the spirit of the law". (P 187)

This approach adds weight to the argument that programs are more likely to succeed if the compliance aspect is played down. The Commission's general desire to achieve consensus also supports this view and has produced a pattern of 'intervention' that is much less than originally proposed. However, the Commission has survived and continues to have a real impact on education in the States.

4.2 Rejection of 'Earmarked' funding

In June 1981, the Government's guidelines to the Commission included an instruction that 10 percent of general recurrent funds be earmarked for a specific purpose - transition education. This was an attempt at coercion and in direct contradiction to advice from the Commission. It was rejected by all States and the end result of protracted negotiations was that the Commonwealth backed down

allowing funds to be expended as in previous years. This attempt by the Commonwealth serves as a good example of a compliance strategy that failed and highlights a number of important aspects of intergovernmental relations and the bargaining process, viz:

- . advisory bodies have few powers of enforcement. They need government backing.
- . in some situations States can overturn Federal policy if they are bargaining from a position of strength. In this case the existence of hostile Senate to reject legislation, upcoming state elections and an electorate that did not favour the Government all gave strength to rejection.
- . the need for a sound information base when entering negotiations. The Federal officials from the Department of Education, appeared unsure of their case probably because they were dealing with a social rather than fiscal policy.

The result was a far cry from Premier's Conferences where the Commonwealth has the strength. While the States were united in opposition, their reasons varied considerably. There was common ground rejecting the principle of earmarking recurrent funds denying the states their 'right' to order priorities. Each State also had specific reasons, for example:

- . Tasmania - the Commonwealth proposals ran counter to an already successful program and would have had drastic effects in the school budget program;
- . Queensland - the inability to administer a school based cash grant program;
- . Victoria - Federal priorities forcing a change of priorities in an area of State responsibility.

In order to 'save face' at the end of negotiations the Commonwealth extracted a commitment that the States would maintain support for

transition education over a base year (1979-80) (really a maintenance of the status quo and cannot be enforced). This is an excellent example of a 'political' solution to a failed bargaining situation.

The preceding sections established the basis for Federal Government interventions into the areas of education policy making and administration through one of its agencies - the Commonwealth Schools Commission. In the section that follows it is intended to discuss the future possibilities of the statutory authority in the context of the current economic and political climate with special emphasis on the Review of Commonwealth Functions (1981) and its after effects.

PART C: FUTURE POSSIBILITIES

1. Introduction

On April 30, 1981 the Prime Minister announced to Parliament the Government's decisions regarding the Review of Commonwealth Functions (or Razor Gang Report). This, combined with guidelines issued to both Education Commissions on June 4, provided a possible basis for fundamental changes to take place with regard to the Commonwealth's involvement in education. The decision increased the vulnerability of education in the policy arena and clearly downgraded the role of the Schools Commission by, for example:

- . "reduction of the Commission's direct involvement in program administration and information gathering;
- . scaling down the Commission's State Offices;
- . insisting on greater controls over funds for school building projects;
- . a reduction in real terms to the government sector to enable increased funding (especially recurrent funds) for non-government schools;

- . earmarking of recurrent grants to government schools for transition education programs (against Commission advice)". (from Harman and Smart, 1982 PP 169-173)

Reactions to the Review ranged from 'threatened disaster' to 'window dressing' but in the political-economic context it was necessary for the Government to 'appear' to go through such an exercise because of demands for reductions in government expenditure and the size of the Federal bureaucracy. Harman (1982) saw it as:

"a threat to rational and consistent policy development and to developing truly national approaches to particular problems in conjunction with the States.....(and ironic that) a Government which prides itself on being a good manager seems bent on eliminating mechanisms to achieve efficient management-research, inquiries, monitoring of programs and the building up of detailed information bases". (P 167)

If these decisions were to be implemented the scene was also set for continuation of this in the near future. However, the literature on change in government organisations clearly demonstrates that official decisions are not always implemented and even if they are the form can differ considerably from the original proposal. Such proved to be the case with many of the Razor Gang education proposals.

By using December 1982 as an endpoint to this study future predictions could have been set in the context of Liberal-NCP policies and it could be assumed that previous administrative procedures would be followed. The July 1982 Guidelines and subsequent Reports for 1983 confirmed this as they contained no major surprises by continuing to implement previously announced Government policy. In early February 1983 the Commission issued its Recommendations for 1984 and these continued to be the usual mix of Government responses to the 1982-84 Triennial Report and confirmation of current policy as outlined in the previous year's (1982) Guidelines to the Commissions. Planning is also underway for preparing the 1985-87 Triennial Report with several programs under review. While this is the Commission's advice to a government it could be assumed that it would have been framed in terms that were consistent with the main thrusts of Government policy. However the election of a Labor Government has

altered this situation and will be considered as a postscript.

2. General Predictions

Attempts to make predictions about the future of any government agency is always difficult because its very existence depends upon the policies of the government of the day. With this factor in mind plus a proviso that education cannot be isolated from the general policy context it is possible to make some comments about future developments. Harman and Smart make it quite clear that:

"Federal intervention has had a major impact on Australian education, and the Federal government continues to be one of the very important sources of influence and change in the education system". (1982, P 7)

It is however difficult to assess the impact of this intervention because the Commonwealth commitments have not developed as a result of a clearly stated national policy or long term strategy. Therefore, it is relatively safe to assume that the ad hoc nature of planning, based on political considerations will continue. The variety of agencies involved in the education process and the normal 'inbuilt' resistance to change that is inherent in such organisations will continue to work against large scale intervention in the government schools sector. It is unlikely, for political reasons, that the funding for this sector will be withdrawn.

With regard to overall funding policies Tomlinson (1972) supports the view that:

"the ultimate concentration of power at the Commonwealth level is an inevitable consequence of Australia's taxation and loan arrangements, combined with the use of Section 96 of the Constitution". (P 15)

and this will outweigh any residual State powers detailed in the Constitution because the Commonwealth can always bargain from a position of financial strength. As a result the degree of intervention in Education will depend upon the terms and conditions of specific purpose grants. It is most likely that the oscillation between federalist (Liberal-NCP) and centralist (A.L.P.) approaches will

continue. Therefore, with a continuation of present revenue sharing arrangements the Commonwealth must assume more authority as the primary decisionmaker with States being concerned with the level of funding and the type of programs to be supported. Intervention then will continue to be subject to all the factors involved in any bargaining process with States continuing to demand their right to order priorities. The Commonwealth is now 'locked in' to supporting the schools sector and it would appear unlikely that this position will change irrespective of which party is in power. The main argument will centre on the balance of funding between the government and non-government sectors, particularly with recurrent and capital funds as they form the major proportion of Commonwealth support (about 86 per cent).

Since 1981 it was quite clear that the Liberal NCP Government will maintain its "overall commitment to education as a priority area of direct Commonwealth endeavour" and believes "it has a particular role in identifying and bringing resources to bear on educational issues of national importance". (Harman 1982, P 177) Between the parties there will be policy differences, wherever that influence should be directed and the issues to be addressed but the Labor Party is also committed to an interventionist position which seems to ensure the Commission's future. Also in the current political situation with a 'hung' Senate it would appear unlikely that the Legislation establishing the Commission as a statutory authority would be revoked.

3. Postscript - A Change of Government

Originally the conclusion to this section was based on the view that, while the Liberal-NCP remained in office, there would be a continuation of the status quo with only incrementalist types of changes in policy e.g. initiating a computer education program. With the election of a Labor government on March 5, 1983 the 'futures' scenario changed significantly. While there may not be significant changes in the Commission funds there will be, according to the A.L.P. "Policy for Schools", major changes into the Commission's role and function. In general it involves a return to the original principles and removal of many of the Liberal-NCP restrictions. The return(or reinforcement) of a strong national education role is made clear with the Commission being given the responsibility "to develop

increased understanding and co-operation between the Commonwealth and the States"....(through) "an independent Schools Commission to provide advice and information on the needs of schools and the measures which should be taken to meet those needs" (P 2). Use of guidelines will continue but they will contain general principles rather than being prescriptive.

While it is too early to make any long-term predictions about these policy statements it would appear to strengthen the Commission's position. From the federalist, states-rights viewpoint it will probably mean a return to the bargaining-consultation process that characterised the Commission's early years. As there are now four State Labor governments it will be interesting to follow the progress of their dealings with a government that is committed to developing "a statement of national objectives which will provide a framework within which Commonwealth initiatives will be undertaken". (A.L.P. Policy P 1).

PART D: CONCLUSION

"In the ultimate, statutory bodies like the Schools Commission must be a mixed blessing to the government. They ensure tremendous involvement and frequently generate interest in the political process but they also mediate the political process. While they bring openness and debate to the formation of policy, this very openness may ruffle the waters". (McKinnon 1979, P 150)

This study has been based on consideration of two interrelated hypotheses -

- . intervention in an area of social policy that is a State responsibility will meet with limited success; because
- . changes cannot be achieved through legislation alone as there are numerous environmental influences that can modify the intended outcome.

The historical overview approach has been used to describe two major aspects of the implementation - intervention process by a Commonwealth statutory authority. These are, firstly that the various degrees of success is intervention depended upon the amount of government support at all levels and secondly, that changes in the political-economic environment significantly affected the continued success of Commonwealth intervention. In addition,

as there is no clear national education policy, success depends so much upon the acceptability of Commonwealth programs to the State and the outcome of bargaining or consultations which are usually conducted at officer level after a government (party) has established policy.

The Whitlam Labor Government successfully legislated for change but only provided the statutory body responsible for implementation with 'defacto' powers which produced a significant variety of responses in each state. This attempt at the 'compliance-assistance trade off' followed fairly traditional lines in the policy change process because the reforming party placed too much emphasis on establishing the responsible authority and ignoring implementation problems. This comment may be somewhat overcritical because the Commission was formed to work a new area of Commonwealth-State relations and has survived a change of government and philosophical stance. It has, perhaps, also changed its capacity in this regard over time as it became more legitimate. Commonwealth accountability requirements do have an impact on State policy making and priority setting because of the specific purpose aspect of funding. The Commission's level of success in intervention depended upon a number of factors well supported in the literature on bargaining processes. For example:

1. Any attempt to affect change in an area of State responsibility relies on successful bargaining in an area where there is no legitimate constitutional basis.
2. There is a need for the right timing-a factor - crucial for both the Whitlam and Fraser governments because the Commission continued to attempt, to affect change in an environment that was becoming increasingly hostile. Subsequent tightening of control on the Commission resulted from this situation.
3. The need to bargain from a position of strength.

The Commonwealth had financial and legislative power but the Constitution supported the States. The Universities Commission was the administrative model but it had strength because of its total funding responsibility whereas the Schools Commission was only providing about 10 per cent of government school funds. States were very reluctant to relinquish any control of a situation further compounded by the complexities of joint

action aptly summarised by Pressman and Wildavski (1979) in concluding that:

"no matter how the Federal Government is organised and re-organised virtually all social programs will cut across jurisdictions of different bureaus, departments (and) there is no organisation that will minimise clearances for all programs". (P 162)

The Schools Commission has acted in that capacity with a fair degree of success considering its short history and the type of environment in which it operates.

It is fitting that the last comments on the level of success and future of the Commission are provided by Dr. K. McKinnon, Chairman from 1973 to 1981. In discussing aspects of policy making and politics within the statutory body he concluded:

"for the Commission to continue to be successful it must not be a prisoner of the States or of the interest groups. It must not be seen as simply a conduit for passing never ending requests to Government for resources for schools.... it is essential the Commission have an independent stance if it is to maintain credibility". (1979 P 149)

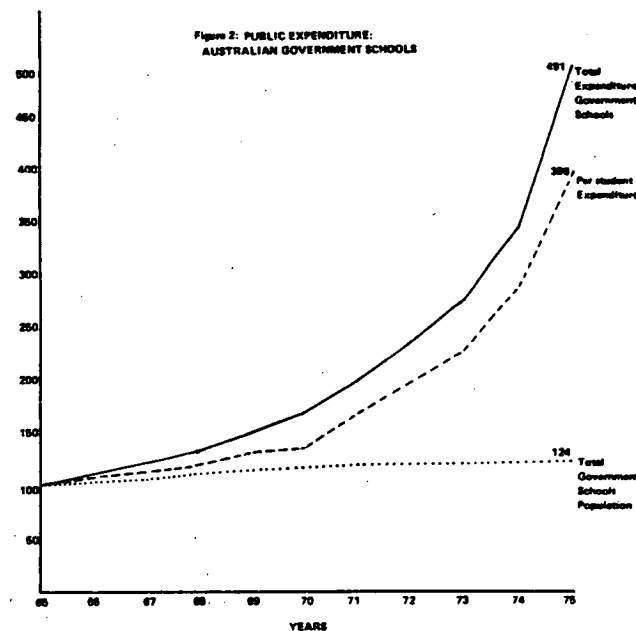
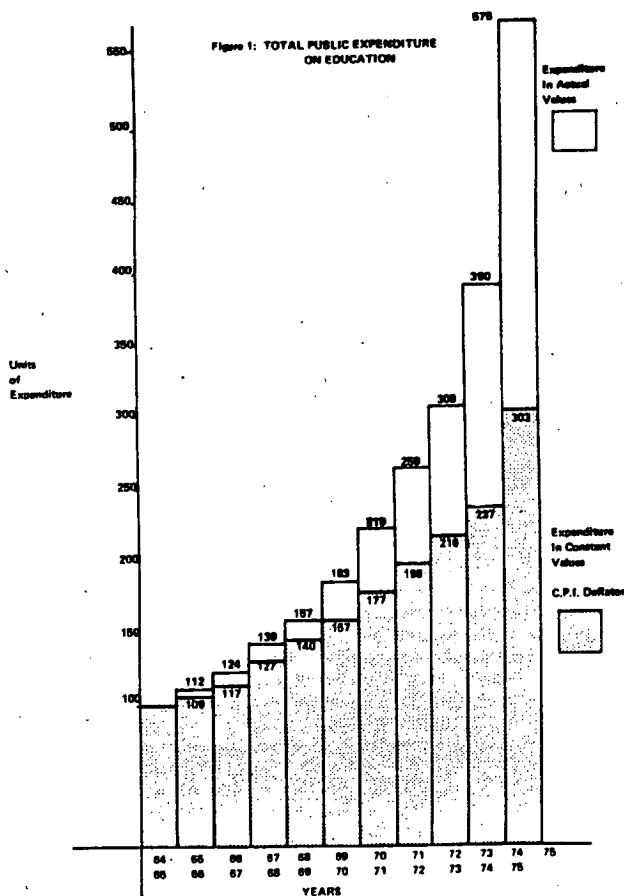
The Commission was losing credibility because of restrictions placed on it and the re-emergence of the state-aid for non-government schools question. There is considerable potential for change under a Labor Government if its policy is enacted.

APPENDIX A

TABLE 1
GOVERNMENT FINAL CONSUMPTION EXPENDITURE
EDUCATION COMPARED WITH OTHER PUBLIC SERVICES
1964-65 AND 1969-70 TO 1974-75
(PERCENT OF TOTAL)

Year	Final Consumption Expenditure	Education	Health	Social Security and Welfare	Housing and Community Amenities	Recreation and Cultural Services
1964-65	2043	22.3	13.5	2.2	1.0	3.9
1969-70	3834	23.0	12.9	2.3	0.9	3.6
1970-71	4198	24.2	13.5	2.3	0.9	3.6
1971-72	4760	25.5	13.9	2.4	0.9	3.6
1972-73	5441	26.6	14.0	2.6	1.0	3.8
1973-74	6756	27.9	15.2	2.6	1.3	3.9
1974-75	9082	29.9	16.8	2.9	1.4	3.8

Source: derived from expenditure data published in *Australian National Accounts: National Income and Expenditure, 1974-75*.
Canberra: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1976, Table 55.



TRENDS OF FUNDING FOR EDUCATION 1964-1975

(From Tomlinson 1977 PP 3-8)

APPENDIX B

TERMS OF REFERENCE - INTERIM COMMITTEE FOR THE
AUSTRALIAN SCHOOLS COMMISSION

"The Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission was appointed on 12 December, 1972 by the Hon. E.G. Whitlam, Q.C., M.P., Prime Minister of Australia. The terms of reference of the Committee were:

Pending the establishment under statute of the Australian Schools Commission which will make continuing arrangements, the Interim Committee will:

- (a) examine the position of both government and non-government primary and secondary schools in all States and in the A.C.T. and the N.T.;
 - (b) make recommendations to the Minister for Education and Science as to the immediate financial needs of schools, priorities within those needs, and appropriate measures to assist in meeting those needs, including:
 - (i) grants from the Commonwealth to the States in respect of both government and non-government schools;
 - (ii) funds for government schools and grants to non-government schools in the A.C.T. and the N.T.;
 - (iii) the conditions under which those grants are to be made available.
2. In carrying out its task the Interim Committee will:
- (a) work towards establishing acceptable standards for those schools, government and non-government alike, which fall short of those standards;
 - (b) take into account:
 - (i) where necessary, both the expansion of existing schools and the establishment of new ones;
 - (ii) the particular needs of schools for the handicapped, whether mental, physical or social, and of isolated children;
 - (iii) the diversity of curricula to meet differing aptitudes and interests of students;
 - (iv) plans for development of particular areas;
 - (c) promote the economic use of resources;
 - (d) consult with the States and representatives of non-government schools and with appropriate authorities in the A.C.T. and N.T.

3. The grants recommended by the Interim Committee will be:
 - (a) for the period 1 January, 1974 to 31 December, 1975;
 - (b) in addition to existing Commonwealth commitments;
 - (c) directed towards increased expenditure on schools and not in substitution for continuing efforts by the States and non-government school authorities.
4. The reports of the Interim Committee will be made public promptly by the Minister."

(Schools in Australia P 3)

APPENDIX C

THE COMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS COMMISSION - FUNCTIONS

The functions of the Schools Commission are set out in Section 13 of its Act:

- "(1) In the performance of its functions, the Commission shall consult and co-operate with representatives of the States, with authorities in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory responsible for primary or secondary education in either or both of those Territories and with persons, bodies and authorities conducting non-government schools in Australia, and may consult with other persons, bodies and authorities as the Commission thinks necessary.
- (2) The functions of the Commission are to inquire into, and to furnish information and advice to the Minister with respect to, the following matters:
 - (a) The establishing of acceptable standards for buildings, equipment, teaching and other staff and other facilities at government and non-government primary and secondary schools in Australia, and means of attaining and maintaining those standards;
 - (b) The needs of such schools in respect of buildings, equipment, staff and other facilities, and the respective priorities to be given to the satisfying of those various needs;
 - (c) Matters in connexion with the grant by Australia of financial assistance to the States for and in respect of schools in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, including matters relevant to the necessity for financial assistance to be so granted by Australia, the conditions upon which financial assistance should be so granted and the amount and allocation of any financial assistance so granted; and
 - (d) Any other matter relating to primary or secondary education in Australia, or to Australian schools, that may be referred to the Commission by the Minister or which the Commission considers to be a matter that should be inquired into by the Commission.
- (3) In addition to the functions of the Commission under sub-section (2), the Commission shall have such other functions as are conferred on it, either expressly or by implication, by or under any other Act.
- (4) In the exercise of its functions, the Commission shall have regard to such matters as are relevant, including the need for improving primary and secondary educational facilities in Australia and of providing increased and equal opportunities

for education in government and non-government schools in Australia and the need for ensuring that the facilities provided in all schools in Australia, whether government or non-government, are of the highest standard, and, in particular shall have regard to:

- (a) the primary obligation, in relation to education, for governments to provide and maintain government school systems that are of the highest standard and are open, without fees or religious tests, to all children;
 - (b) the prior right of parents to choose whether their children are educated at a government school or at a non-government school;
 - (c) the educational needs of handicapped children and handicapped young persons;
 - (d) the needs of disadvantaged schools and of students at disadvantaged schools, and of other students suffering disadvantages in relation to education for social, economic, ethnic, geographic, cultural, lingual or similar reasons;
 - (e) the need to encourage diversity and innovation in education in schools and in the curricular and teaching methods of schools;
 - (f) the need to stimulate and encourage public and private interest in, and support for, improvements in primary and secondary education and in schools and school systems;
 - (g) the desirability of providing special educational opportunities for students who have demonstrated their ability in a particular field of studies, including scientific, literary, artistic or musical studies; and
 - (h) the need, in relation to primary and secondary education and in schools and school systems, to promote the economic use of resources.
- (5) For the purpose of the performance of its functions, the Commission may undertake, or cause to be undertaken, such research as it thinks necessary into matters that relate to the functions of the Commission."

(Schools Commission 1978 PP 1-2)

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