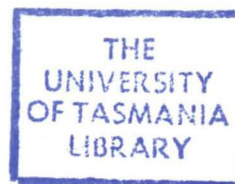


DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM IN TASMANIA:

DESCRIPTION AND APPLICATION



A dissertation submitted to the Political Science Department of the University of Tasmania in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of Master of Social Science (Administration).

30th April, 1983.

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"Dedicated to my wife Prabha and to my children Preeya and Amit"

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## PREFACE

The purpose of this dissertation is to provide a descriptive analysis of the operation of the School Commission's Disadvantaged School Program with particular emphasis of its application in the Tasmanian context. In Tasmania, the name of the Program is different - it is known as the Priority Projects Programme. However, the Tasmanian Catholic System retains the original title.

For the purpose of this dissertation, the Country Areas Program, an element of the Disadvantaged Schools Program shall be excluded since it has a somewhat different rationale and method of operation.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program is a specific federally funded program. It operates in thirty two selected Tasmanian Schools (1982).

The Program attempts to promote more equal outcomes of schooling for all pupils by providing a higher than normal level of resources to schools serving disadvantaged communities. Such communities are characterised principally by high levels of poverty. The Program's objective is to urge schools to look for ways of redressing educational disadvantage associated with low socio-economic status. In sum, the Program has these aims:

- \* that schools should provide greater equality of opportunity; that is, that all children should be assisted to gain the fundamental skills necessary to participate fully and equally in society, and to have the opportunity to share in its culture;
- \* that schooling should be relevant, enjoyable and fruitful in itself, not merely preparation for later life; and
- \* that schools should become closely identified with and supportive of the communities within which they are situated.

The Program is therefore a form of positive discrimination in favour of schools where educationally disadvantaged pupils are congregated. Declared schools are eligible to participate in the Program on the basis of socio-economic background characteristics associated with lower than average school success.

As a condition of funding, it is necessary for school communities to analyse their objectives and operations, to formulate proposals designed to improve learning outcomes, to relate the curriculum more closely to the life experience of the pupils enrolled, and to foster closer relationship between parents and the school.

Basically, Chapter 1 analyses why the Program was established; the principal values that it has inherited from the Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission; the need for the Program; the objectives of the Program and the reasons for providing extra resources to disadvantaged schools.

Chapter 2 is mainly concerned with the major emphases of the Program, including the basis for funding in disadvantaged schools.

Chapter 3 looks at a Tasmanian Case Study of Rokeby Primary School, which was in the process of joining the Priority Projects Program.

This Case Study is wholly based on the research material provided by the Education Department of Tasmania. It describes the process of formulating a submission, the actors involved in it and the problems they had encountered in preparing a submission.

The final chapter draws all the threads together and presents an overall picture of the Disadvantaged Schools Program.

A common theme which runs through this dissertation, especially in Chapter 3, is that the success of the Disadvantaged Schools Program depends on good relationships between the main actors - the pupils, the parents and local community, the teachers and the education authorities. If these actors are working in a co-operative manner, the chances of

educational success for disadvantaged pupils seems to be great.

(\*) Australia, Commonwealth Schools Commission, Program Guidelines  
1982, Canberra Publishing and Printing, Canberra, 1982.

## CHAPTER 1

### THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM

#### The Background

In December 1972, an Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission was appointed by the Australian Government. Its tasks were to examine the position of government and non-government primary and secondary schools throughout Australia and to make recommendations on: "the immediate financial need of those schools, priorities within those needs and measures appropriate to assist in meeting the needs".<sup>1</sup> The Committee interpreted the phrase 'financial needs of schools' to mean that it is to be concerned with the resources used in the schools and not with the financial situation of the parents of pupils.<sup>2</sup>

The Interim Committee, whose Chairman was Professor P. Karmel, delivered its Report to the Federal Government in May 1973. The Report shaped the foundation of legislation enacted as the States Grants (Schools) Act 1973. Under this Act, grants were made available in accordance with the needs delineated in the Committee's Report and several Programs designed to meet those needs, were established. The Disadvantaged Schools Program comprised one of these Programs. It has remained as an essential part of the Schools Commission's numerous Programs since the enactment of the Act and the establishment of the Schools Commission in 1973.

A 'disadvantaged school' is defined by the States Grants (Schools) Act 1973 as "as school-

- (a) the students at which, or a substantial proportion of the students at which, are members of a community which, for social, economic, ethnic, geographic, cultural, lingual or any similar reason, has a lower than average ability to take advantage of educational facilities; and



- (b) which requires special facilities (whether in the form of buildings, equipment, teaching staff or in some other form) for the purpose of enabling the school to provide adequate educational opportunities for students at the school."<sup>3</sup>

The concept of disadvantage has often been associated with lower income groups; low parental educational levels; rural areas; high migrant areas; inner suburban areas; high teacher turnover levels; as so forth.

The term has also been associated with the value system of the working class - those using the term recognise that the education system predominantly reflects the values of the middle class and the values of the lower to middle class teachers in it.<sup>4</sup>

In devising solutions to the problems of disadvantage, it is necessary to distinguish between disadvantage caused by poverty and one 'caused' by an entirely different cultural background.<sup>5</sup> Cultural background in turn has two components - Australia's 'working class' culture and its minority ethnic cultures. The Report appears implicitly (though not explicitly) to acknowledge the difference between financial and cultural disadvantage and to suggest 'remedies' based on educational programs geared to the needs of the community.<sup>6</sup>

The Interim Committee cites a number of familial, home and neighbourhood factors which influence educational success, but concedes somewhat paradoxically the "little is known about the process by which the conditions of family and neighbourhood life effects educational performance..."<sup>7</sup> Two facts are definite, however. Firstly, children, whose progress in early years is slow, fall progressively further behind their age school mates through a process of 'cumulative deficit'. Secondly, disadvantage may also be compounded within the school in which clustering of children from common socio-economic backgrounds occurs. Such a concentration in one school of children with low

aspirations and achievement is known to produce educational disadvantage.<sup>8</sup>

It is appropriate at this point to extract some principal values from the Interim Committee's Report since these form the basis of the underlying philosophy of the Disadvantaged Schools Program.

#### PRINCIPAL VALUES ESPOUSED BY THE KARMEL REPORT

Much discussion of the recommendations of the Report has concentrated not so much on the actual financial recommendations as on the values it claimed to be trying to put forward. Those most strongly emphasised were equality and equality of opportunity, diversity, community involvement, and devolution of responsibility to the local school level.<sup>9</sup>

#### Equality and Equality of Opportunity

The Report stated two aspects of equality; firstly, its "values the principle that the standard of schooling a child receives should not depend on what his parents are able or willing to contribute directly to it...";<sup>10</sup> secondly, it "values the right of every child, within practicable limits, to be prepared through schooling for full participation in society, both for its own and for society's benefit".<sup>11</sup>

The Report rejected the notion of equality as being 'equal access to schools'. It stated: "...formal access to education, even when supplemented by financial provisions which give those who succeed the opportunity to go higher, does not produce equal educational attainment between social groups."<sup>12</sup>

Many studies have measured the unequal representation of the children of semi and unskilled employees in tertiary institutions.<sup>13</sup> The measures used to reduce educational inequality have been scholarships (for example, Commonwealth Secondary Scholarships) and bursaries so that those previously forced by financial considerations to end their studies hopefully might continue.

The Whitlam Labor Government in 1973 further extended these measures by abolishing tertiary education fees. However, the policy to abolish tertiary education fees was been attacked as benefitting middle-class students who would have continued their studies anyway.<sup>14</sup>

Eric Midwinter sees this type of policy as at best a form of tokenism. The policy of rewarding a few 'dilutes the majority'.<sup>15</sup> A system of scholarships and bursaries for all would still be untenable because it would still be based on the ideas of the financial/intellectual elite and would not provide for alternative goals or directions.<sup>16</sup>

The Report adopted a different approach to equality of opportunity. Its approach to it was 'equality of educational outcomes', the maximization of individual achievement, rather than equality of access to education.<sup>17</sup>

The Interim Committee stated: "Such an objective would not imply that all individuals should achieve equally."<sup>18</sup>

It then approvingly quoted Halsey: "...the goal should not be the liberal one of equality of access but equality of outcome for the medium member of each identifiable group, i.e., the average woman or negro or proletarian or rural dweller should have the same level of educational attainment as the average male white-collar suburbanite."<sup>19</sup>

#### Diversity and Community Involvement

The Report went on to develop an alternative or supplementary method of reducing inequalities - by increasing the diversity of the educational programs being implemented in Australian schools.

The Interim Committee in the Report favoured "experimentation with a variety of forms of schooling, of learning and of joint school community projects in an attempt to bring the school into a more

significant relationship with the out-of-school groups which exercise so important an influence on children's lives."<sup>20</sup>

On diversity the Committee stated: "(it) places high value on the provision of resources in ways which will not simply perpetuate existing forms of schooling, but will stimulate among teachers and the community a search for forms of learning and the relationships between teachers and pupils more appropriate to the social and individual needs of Australians..."<sup>21</sup>

The Committee thus linked the concepts of diversity in educational programs and community involvement in education in its endeavour to reduce educational inequalities.

#### Devolution of Responsibility

Like community involvement, devolution of greater responsibility to the school level was also seen as a form of accountability which would "be most effectively discharged where the people entrusted with making decisions are also responsible for carrying them out, with an obligation to justify them and in a position to profit from their experience."<sup>22</sup>

The reasons for advocating community involvement and devolution of responsibility in the Report reflected local pressures and overseas influences.<sup>23</sup>

#### THE NEED FOR THE PROGRAM

The general rationale for the program is that, "to the degree that populations are segregated geographically by socio-economic level, some schools have a greater than average need for resources because of the concentration in them of students whose social background characteristics are associated with low average performance and with a need for wider than average school services."<sup>24</sup>

A marginal increase in resources would not in itself greatly affect the quality and nature of the services offered to pupils. For

the year 1983, the Schools Commission has recommended \$34.74 million to be spent on some 422,250 students in Disadvantaged Schools throughout Australia. (see Appendix 1) On average, this amounts to about \$78 per pupil.

Since over a hundred years of compulsory schooling in schools of roughly equal resource utilisation has failed to reduce the differences in school results among social groups, and the way to attack this was unknown. It was agreed to establish the program in a way which encouraged locally planned experimentation and the commitment of people in the school communities concerned to their own improved schooling,

The Disadvantaged Schools Program is a program which enables positive discrimination in favour of those schools where educationally disadvantaged are congregated. Positive discrimination is defined as "a process by which selected schools are given a share of resources and services greater than those they would have received under a per capita allocation."<sup>25</sup>

The resources and services consist mainly of additional teachers and support staff, equipment, books and materials, travel funds and consultant services.

Section 13(4)(d) of the Commonwealth Schools Commission Act 1973 states that the Commission requires to take into account "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."<sup>26</sup> Appendix II of this dissertation specifies all the functions of the Schools Commission.

Gwen Cassidy states that the Disadvantaged Schools Program is essentially concerned with the "educational implications of socio-economic status and the provision of opportunities to initiate projects which may ameliorate school failure and may provide greater educational

opportunity for certain groups."<sup>27</sup>

The Schools Commission set up the Program on the assumption that school disadvantaged and equality of opportunity are inversely related and that, given appropriate support, schools themselves can, and must, take the initiatives which could assist in alleviating the disadvantage manifested in school performance.<sup>28</sup>

Though the Commission failed to specify the nature of the relationship between disadvantage and equality of opportunity, it nevertheless, asserted three broad objectives of the Program.

#### THE OBJECTIVES OF THE PROGRAM

In sum, the Program has the following objectives:

- \* "that schools should provide greater equality of opportunity; that is, that all children should be assisted to gain the fundamental skills necessary to participate fully and equally in society, and to have the opportunity to share in its culture;
- \* "that schooling should be relevant, enjoyable and fruitful in itself, not merely preparation for later life"; and
- \* "that schools should become closely identified with and supportive of the communities within which they are located."<sup>29</sup>

Any advance towards the realization of these objectives is only possible if the nature of the disadvantage faced by pupils in schools is comprehended. The main causes of disadvantage in Tasmanian Schools (government and non-government) are: the low socio-economic status of families of pupils; the relative isolation of some pupils and schools; a family and community tradition of indifference to education; a lack of understanding of the education process by parents; low expectations of parents and pupils and sometimes even of teachers; and the use of a curriculum and teaching methods by schools which are not suitable for the abilities and interests of disadvantaged pupils.<sup>30</sup>

If the programs which operate in the schools are to attain the realisation of the Disadvantaged Schools Programs objectives they must of necessity

- (a) concentrate on the strengths, interests, and out-of-school reality of the child, not merely attempt to make up for alleged deficiency. To blame the child or the home environment for a situation over which the child has no control is to prolong to perpetuate educational inequality.
- (b) bring about real and meaningful change so that what is done at school becomes more pertinent to the pupils' needs and the community which the school serves. One of the most important aspects of this change is a change in attitudes whereby the value of each individual child is highlighted irrespective of the child's ability and background.
- (c) allow for the accomplishment by all children of an acceptable level of competence which will give them to fully exercise choices and fully participate in society. Disadvantage is synonymous with lack of power and choice by some members of society; the raising of achievement levels so that all children are more equal in educational outcome effectively increases their degree of power and choice and counters with the disadvantage they suffer.<sup>31</sup>

The Disadvantaged Schools Program exists to give more equal educational opportunity for pupils who in the past have been unable to gain as much as the majority of pupils from the schooling process. There are two important aspects of this provision of more equal educational opportunity. The Schools Commission distributes additional resources to schools whose selection is based on the socio-economic status of their neighbourhoods. Those additional resources are distributed by engaging people in a particular process which involves the total school community in making decisions on more effective, educational programs.

#### EXTRA RESOURCE PROVISION

There are mainly three justifications for providing extra resources for disadvantaged schools.<sup>32</sup> First of all these particular

schools generally have poorer resources available within them. A majority of disadvantaged schools are in inner-city neighbourhoods or isolated country communities. The school premises themselves are older and the recreation areas that have been provided for these schools are often inadequate.

A second justification for additional resource provision is that many of these schools face environmental disadvantage. Both the public and private resources of the communities are generally low; there is segregation, overcrowding in the housing areas, there is not enough extra money for families to purchase books and materials for their children or for leisure activities beyond the community, such as travel and excursions.

The final reason for the provision of additional resources is that these particular schools have a tradition of low educational achievement. These schools have lower retention rates for senior students than the average across Australia. Further, the frequency of learning failure in disadvantaged schools are greater than the national average.



## CHAPTER 2

### THE PROJECT - BASED NATURE OF THE PROGRAM

The extra resources given to schools must be shown to be necessary for the successful implementation of a program designed to improve student outcomes. The Program puts an emphasis on the provision of resources for a particular purpose rather than for the overall upgrading of resources in general.

The Program's main concern with regard to the provision of resources are:

- who decides that extra resources will be required and how they will be utilised?
- what is done with the extra resources?
- what are the effects of the implementation of the extra resources?<sup>1</sup>

To answer the first question: all teachers in co-operation with parents, students and members of the community must share in the planning of projects. This decision jointly made by the participants is of greatest benefit to the school in the sense that most of their values and perceptions are catered for. It is not the case that only one group of participants decides on the planning of projects and that the others are 'silent' participants. The sharing in the planning of projects by the participants helps to make sure that any changes will be school wide and not just confined to individual classrooms. Further, it assists in long term development of projects and guards against them running down if particular teacher leaves the school.

The processes involved in planning for utilisation of the additional resources are an integral part of the Program. The analysis of needs and existing school structures and the consideration of various choices likely to lead to improvement in practice and learning outcomes, seem likely to bring benefits to the school which can far exceed in value of the resources themselves.

There are basically two things done with the additional resources. Firstly, decisions about the kinds of projects to be funded must be made locally. This grass-root level of decision making is one of the major values entrenched in the opinion of the Schools Commission. In Tasmania, whilst the Priority Projects Committee obviously has a very genuine interest in what it funds, it acknowledges that needs and preferences vary from school to school and that a locally devised project is likely to give rise to greater enthusiasm and commitment than one formulated from outside the school.

Secondly, the stress is on schools undertaking specific projects rather than utilising funds to bolster up some traditional thrust that has in the past not served the needs of disadvantaged pupils very well. The Program is cautious of funding resources to be used to provide "more of the same" unless it can be shown that this is likely to be an effective means of increasing pupils achievement levels.

#### A NEED FOR 'WHOLE' SCHOOL APPROACH

The stress on specific projects need not necessarily result in the Priority Projects Program in the school being a separate or isolated thrust. It is accepted that the extra endeavour schools make in utilising resources provided for by Priority Projects will need to "fit" with the general philosophy of the school and assist with other thrusts being made to attack disadvantage. There is, however, some real benefit to be secured by schools in utilising their Priority Projects resources to set up programs in "new" and different areas. Such programs should have built-in evaluation component so that it would be possible to gauge if they do contribute to alleviating the disadvantage. Moreover whether they can ultimately become part of the schools curriculum. If the Program is to aid schools to more accurately reflect the needs of their disadvantaged pupils some

experimentation in types of projects is required.

The effects of the implementation of the additional resources can only be ascertained if there is a regular monitoring of programs.

### IMPORTANCE OF LANGUAGE DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS

It is hardly surprising to note that in disadvantaged schools language development projects have attracted a greater part of the Program funds. The Australian society highly values the ability to comprehend the English language, both written and spoken, of the mainstream culture. If there is a failure to do this, the range of opportunities and the life choices available to any person regardless of socio-economic factor or ethnic background, is limited. This limitation is aggravated, however, by the powerlessness that is the consequence of poverty.

Low socio-economic groups continue to be disadvantaged in the Australian society while they have little power, or control over their circumstances. The acquiring of mainstream language and communication skills in schools is an important part of the process of securing that control but is not enough in itself to make sure the full development of a person's talent. Thus, to be competent in English language can be perceived as an instrumental, rather than a terminal goal of the Program; it is a means to an end (the alleviation of "disadvantage") and is not intended merely as an end in itself. The accomplishment of such competency broadens choices available to students for changing their circumstances, since it expands their opportunities. At the same time, however, new opportunities cannot be seized unless they are commensurate with needs and values as defined by the student's own community and identification at the local level. It is therefore incumbent on the school, as a social institution within that community, to find out these needs and values and to plan programs which develop in students skills and knowledge which

the community regard as being valuable, side by side with those which concentrate on mastery of the basic skills of the mainstream culture.

#### RANGE OF PROJECTS

As a consequence of the broad nature of Disadvantaged Schools Program's objectives there is a wide range of projects which are funded. In Tasmania projects can be categorised as:-

competency based, such as literacy/language, numeracy, remedial;

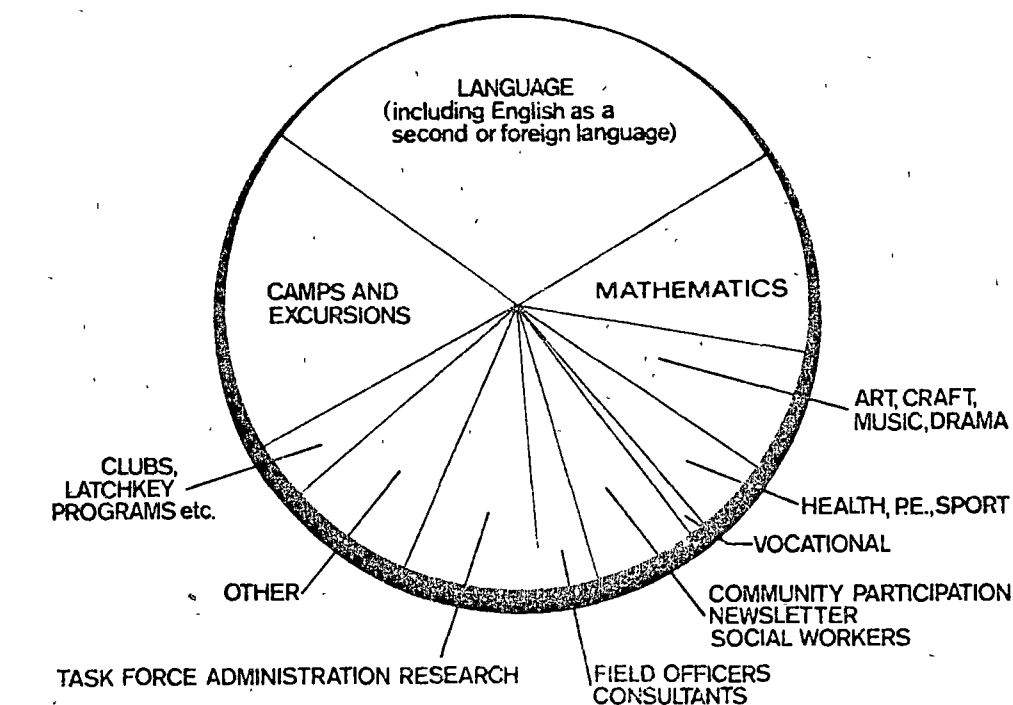
experience based, such as excursions, travel, camping;

school environment approach, such as extra resources, works;

extra personnel based, such as a reduction in pupil/teacher ratios and/or individualising instruction; health or nutrition based; and,

parent involvement/information based. The figure shown below shows the general categories of projects funded by the Disadvantaged Schools Program.

FIGURE 1  
PROJECTS FUNDED BY THE DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM,  
RECURRENT GRANTS



Source: Schools Commission. Report for the Triennium 1976-78.  
Canberra, AGPS, 1975.

## ACTION - RESEARCH

The Disadvantaged Schools Program embraces the ideas of action-research. What is action-research? It is conventionally defined as "small-scale intervention in the functioning of the real world, usually in administrative systems, and the close examination of the effects of such interventions."<sup>2</sup>

Action-research tries to bring together two professions, social research and administration, which have traditionally been kept apart and which have developed their own separate methods. They are drawn together, in what we can call "experimental social administration" by a shared interest in some public or political problem to co-operate, so to change the world by comprehending it.<sup>3</sup>

Definition of action-research used by Social Science Research Council is "research commissioned to monitor and evaluate the operation of specifically implemented policy schemes so as to enable policy makers and administrators to assess the effectiveness of such schemes."<sup>4</sup>

The Disadvantaged Schools Program is based on the principle that teachers will be more effective if they are prepared to test out ways of improving what they do. Action-research is a basic process operating within the Program. No group of teachers or parents knows THE answer to the problems facing children in disadvantaged schools. Each school and community will have to come up with its own set of solutions, which are appropriate to their particular context. Nevertheless, all schools within the Program are encouraged, through the process of developing submissions, to consider the problems and to set in motion processes which will lead to some answers.

Basically action-research is a process consisting of four complementary aspects, namely: the development of a plan of action aimed at improving what is already happening; the action necessary to implement the plan; the observation of the effects of the action in

context in which it occurs; and reflection on the effects of the action as a basis for further planning, action and so on through a succession of cycles."<sup>5</sup>

In Tasmania, the Priority Projects Program attempts to embrace the ideas of action-research. Its process is a particularly appropriate type of operation because:

- (a) the Program aims to bring about changes by having them initiated where they will have their effect, that is, in the schools,
- (b) we recognise that one of the disadvantage we find in our schools is the failure of the traditional curriculum to prepare some children for a confident role in society - this leads to a belief that change is best initiated by the schools themselves.

#### EVALUATION AS PART OF THE PROCESS

Since 1978 the Schools Commission has encouraged schools to continuously assess what they are doing to improve educational opportunities for their students. The Program being project-based in nature assumes that teachers, when they design an educational program, will at the same time plan effective methods of monitoring the progress of that program. The role of the Research Officers of the Education Department in this respect becomes important. They are the people who have the expertise and experience, and teachers are well advised to utilise their expertise and experience on matters regarding evaluation. The aim of evaluation is constantly to improve teaching and learning practice taking place in classrooms. Randell defines school-level evaluation as: "the ongoing, reflective activity which is designed to improve education in schools."<sup>6</sup> A recent Curriculum Development Centre document defined evaluation in these terms: "evaluation is the process of delineating, obtaining and providing information useful for making decisions and judgements about

the educational program at the school."<sup>7</sup>

In Disadvantaged Schools, school-level evaluation is the constant monitoring of the educational program in relation to clearly defined objectives and the modification of those objectives where necessary. This involves pre-planned systematic, continuous information-gathering which delineates strengths and weaknesses in a program, allowing adjustments to be made to seek more effective methods of operating. Evaluation in this context is part of the everyday process of curriculum development and implementation, and it contributes to the professionalisation of teachers. It is, of course, better informed when parents are involved in the process.

The on-going nature of the Disadvantaged Schools Program requires that teachers be constantly enquiring into the directions being taken by projects. Evaluation is required:

- \* To provide information and insights so that the quality of the educational program can be improved
- \* to allow reassessment of aims and objectives
- \* to allow decisions to be made to change the program or consolidate positive aspects of it while the program is in process
- \* to keep programs going at an optimum level of impact where both students and personnel are gaining the maximum benefit from them.

Evaluation should be initiated and undertaken by those who are most closely associated with the Program. In disadvantaged schools this involves the school community itself, including teachers, students and parents. There is considerable value to be gained from a collaborative effort among all of these people with appropriate expert assistance. The Rokeby School Case Study in a later chapter will indicate the value to be gained from a collaborative effort among all the participants in the School's first preparation of a submission to the Priority Projects Committee of the State Education Department of Tasmania.

Malcolm Rosier has supported the concept of evaluation by 'critical friends', an idea he adapted from work being done in the United Kingdom's Educational Priority Areas.<sup>9</sup> Critical friends are independent of the school and are able to approach it with a fresh perspective. They are seen to be objective, drawn as they are from another part of the system or from an independent institution rather than from another school, and do not necessarily use sophisticated methods of analysis. They are 'critical' in that they review objectives and information with professional integrity and they are 'friends' in that they are sympathetic with the aims of the Disadvantaged Schools Program and the processes involved in it.

One of the most crucial aspects to be evaluated in the Disadvantaged Schools Program is the process of shared decision-making involved in it. There are essentially three questions which need to be asked: Who are the participants in the decision-making? How is the data to be gathered? What are the organisational strategies for implementing programs? The progress of individuals through the program in the light of anticipated outcomes also needs to be assessed. Here traditional measures of student achievement, interest and attitude are crucial. Further, it is important to have subjective material recorded, records of interviews made, and so forth. Another important aspect is the merit of the extra resources employed, be they human or material or both. The intended and unintended effects of the program on those who are not directly involved in it and on other aspects of the school function, for example the school policy, should be appraised. A need for financial evaluation is important too, as grants are made on the assumption that they are spent as indicated in the budget.

#### EVALUATION OF THE EFFECT OF THE DISADVANTAGED SCHOOLS PROGRAM ON THE COMMUNITY

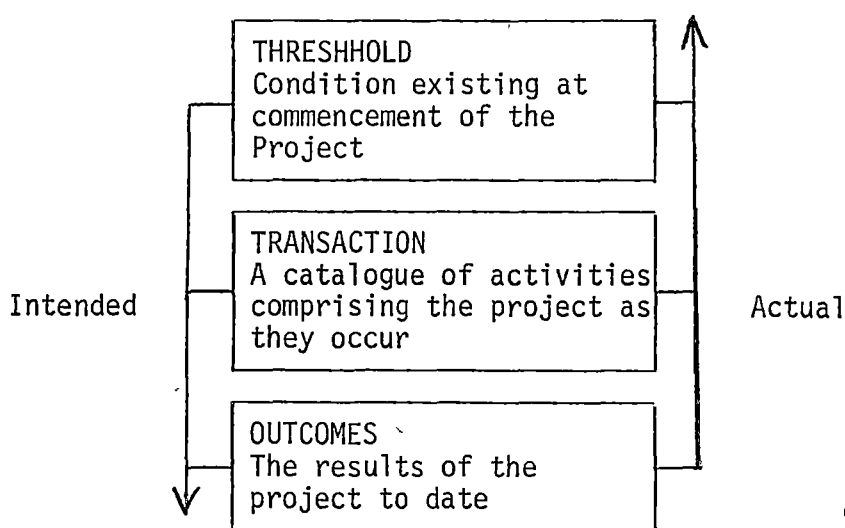
In 1977 the National Task Force of the Disadvantaged Schools



Program had a discussion about school-community interaction. It admitted that the Program had nothad a marked impact on the Australian community as a whole. In response to that problem the Schools Commission investigated a National Dissemination and Communication Project which attempted to inform the general public about what was taking place in disadvantaged schools. Where the Program has made a significant impact, it has been on local communities, and as a consequence of a school involving its community in its educational program.

The New South Wales Department of Education released a booklet in 1976 for use in the Disadvantaged Schools Program. It is of immense value in Tasmanian Education Systems. It discusses how to evaluate a program intended to increase community involvement in the school.<sup>10</sup> It suggests a model for evaluation which examines programs in three distinct stages: threshold, transaction and outcomes. The model in diagrammatic form is illustrated below:-

Fig 2.



Threshold phase. At the outset of a community involvement program, it becomes essential to ask a series of questions.<sup>11</sup> For example: Can we describe our community accurately? Are our assumptions and beliefs about the community accurate? These questions can be answered by seeking information from parents, students, local agencies, councils, press and church authorities. Further, one should ask this question:

What need is there in our area for community involvement? To answer this question one has to investigate the available data on current community involvement needs. Measurement can be made of attendance at Parent and Citizens meetings and parent-teacher nights. Records of formal school visits can be kept by means of a visitors' book, and the response rate for letters and questionnaires which are sent out to parents can be measured. How accessible to the community is our school? There should be a discussion of how free parents are to contact the principal, the staff or the students during the school hours, whether the community has a fear of institutions like the schools and what are the constraints to attendance since most likely both parents are working during the school days or are on shifts. How accessible is the community to the school? It should be assessed whether home visits by teachers have been urged, or whether service organisations welcome school representatives. What can the school do and how will action ultimately benefit the school? What should be required is a clarification of the aims and objectives of the community involvement program.

What resources do we have and what will be needed? There should be a compilation of a community resources file. This file should record all of the abilities and skills that are available in terms of personnel, equipment or facilities already in the community. For example, the Rokeby District Action Group since 1975 has worked to facilitate the provision of community resources on a co-operative basis.<sup>12</sup>

Transaction phase. The transaction phase comprises essentially all of the activities of teaching and learning while the educational program is in progress. During this phase we are required to ask what did we do and who was involved?<sup>13</sup> Records can be kept for what we did and participants involved.

Outcomes phase. Lastly an evaluation project will examine the result of the program to date. How has each of the groups in the school responded to the increased involvement?<sup>14</sup> Consideration should be given to whether student morale is up and whether there is any change in the attitudes of students to the community. Discussions could be held informally with staff and during staff meetings about the short-term effect of community involvement and any carry over into the long-term to see whether staff are more aware of the community's roles and needs. To check on the reaction of the community to the increased involvement, a comparative examination at this point could be held of records reviewed in the threshold phase, for example, has attendance at meetings improved? Changing attitudes are often reflected in press and within other organisations or agencies. Informal parent interviews can also give an example of community reaction.

In the outcomes phase we need also to ask whether change has occurred that was not anticipated. Has community involvement increased or decreased tensions within the school community?

Has there been a greater identification and cohesion of different groups within the community? There should be records kept for any feelings expressed by these groups. Also, at this moment we should ask whether the program should go on in its present form or whether some changes should take place. If there are some changes to be made in the program, then its aims and objectives should be again looked at in the light of information which has become available.

There are other important questions which need to be asked in the outcomes phases about the process which has been involved. These are: What problems have been faced? Have they differed in different classrooms? What skills do teachers, students and parents need to develop in order to proceed with the project? How have these skills been developed? What special resources and organisation

arrangements have been needed? What issues or questions have emerged that merit further research?<sup>15</sup>

## FUNDING

### Selection of Schools

The school is the unit of funding and action in the Disadvantaged Schools Program. The selection of schools is determined by reference to the 'needs indices'. Originally these indices were calculated for each school on the socio-economic status variable. Many States, in addition to including this variable, have extended the notion of needs indices to include other factors such as tests of pupil ability and achievement, behavioural characteristics and performance levels of pupils, percentage of non-English speakers, percentage of migrants, percentage of Aborigines, staff experience, teacher turnover rates, number of children on free books, and condition of school buildings.<sup>16</sup>

The Interim Committee for the Schools Commission took the view that it should make its needs assessments along two dimensions: inputs of resources to schools and school systems, and the degree of disadvantage of groups of pupils in particular schools.<sup>17</sup>

The Interim Committee recognised that some schools required greater than average provision of resources if they were to serve their pupils effectively. It argued that such schools were best identified using a complex index of socio-economic level, and work was undertaken by its support staff to develop such a measure using data from the 1971 Population Census of Australia. The unit of analysis employed was the collector's district and the attributes examined were: occupation, housing, schooling, employment, migration, residential mobility, family structure, ethnicity and religion.<sup>18</sup>

The table shown on the next page further subdivides the above-mentioned attributes into individual variables. The measures derived from the Socio-Economic Scales were used to identify the relative extent of the

disadvantage in different States and different regions, and to identify schools serving collector's districts and neighbourhoods where there was expected to be a relatively high level of disadvantage.

Table 1

## VARIABLES USED FOR ANALYSIS OF COLLECTOR'S DISTRICTS

<i>Group</i>	<i>Individual variables</i>
Occupation . . . . .	Variables expressed as proportion of appropriate work-force: Upper professional (male) Managerial and self-employed (male) Clerical and related workers (male) Shop assistants (male and female) Farm and rural workers (male) Miners (male) Drivers (male) Operatives and process workers (male) Operatives and process workers (female) Service industry workers (male) Armed services (male) Lower professional (male) Craftsmen and foremen (male) Labourers (male)
Housing . . . . .	Variables expressed as proportion of private occupied dwellings: Dwellings occupied by single family units Dwellings in which kitchen and bathroom facilities are not shared Housing authority tenanted dwellings Rented dwellings Total number of bedrooms Persons living in improvised dwellings as proportion of all persons
Schooling . . . . .	Variables expressed as proportion of the appropriate age group: Children at school Persons with post-secondary qualifications Full-time students Persons undertaking post-secondary studies Persons who did not proceed beyond the first secondary grade Persons who did not proceed beyond the third secondary grade
Employment . . . . .	Unemployed persons (excluding persons looking for first job) as proportion of the workforce.
Migration . . . . .	Variables expressed as proportion of actual persons: Recent non English-speaking settlers All non English-speaking settlers Persons under 25 with non English-speaking parents
Residential mobility . . . . .	Persons living in same division as at 1966 Census as proportion of all persons Persons who were usual residents of the dwellings as proportion of all residents
Family . . . . .	Ever-married persons who were separated, widowed or divorced as proportion of all persons Married women in employment as proportion of all married women
Ethnicity . . . . .	Aborigines as proportion of population
Religion . . . . .	Variables expressed as proportion of total persons: Catholic and Roman Catholics Presbyterians Hebrews

Source: Australia, Report of the Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission (May, 1973). Schools in Australia, Chairman: Professor. P. Karmel. (Canberra: AGPS.) p. 167.

As persons in the State Education Departments came to use the rankings of schools on the Socio-Economic Scale in assessing the disadvantage, they became dissatisfied with the information they were given.

It was argued that the scale was relatively crude, that it was partly obsolete because it used census data which has been collected two years earlier, and that it gave evidence personal judgement for schools on the margins being disadvantaged and of normal standing.<sup>19</sup>

In Tasmania, a list of disadvantaged schools was first established in 1973-74 using socio-economic data obtained from the 1971 National Census. Since 1974 some other sets of indices have been developed and used as the basis for selecting schools. The indices currently being used are:

- (a) A socio-economic index developed from the National Census data;
- (b) four indices of the outcome measures type; namely,
  - (i) 10 year old literacy test,
  - (ii) 10 year old numeracy test,
  - (iii) intelligence quotients test at Grade 5 level,
  - (iv) assessment of Grade 1 intake by Infant Mistress or Principal.<sup>20</sup>

The socio-economic index contributes a total of 20 and each of the other component indices contributes 5 to the total index of 40. These indices are applied to all Tasmanian primary schools and primary section of district high schools. Selection of high schools is determined by reference to the needs indices for secondary schools.<sup>21</sup>

#### Quality Programs

Funds in the Disadvantaged Schools Program are not distributed on a per capita basis but on the basis of the quality of a project. Particularly significant 'lighthouse' projects may attract extra funds

if an education system believes that a particular project is worth concentrating on with respect to the outcomes it may achieve. However, it is not the Schools Commission's intention that regional committees in the Program should hold a big stick over schools when demanding quality programs. The quality basis is particularly important in terms of the processes that have been engaged within the school to determine the project.

#### Guidelines for Allocating Funds - Tasmania

The Priority Projects Committee have devised a number of principles which form the basis for allocating funds.<sup>22</sup> First of all, the Committee does not accept per capita funding. In this respect the Committee espouses the view of the Schools Commission. Second, a proposal or submission will not be considered for funding unless there is evidence of staff and community participation in its formulation, and an attempt to establish needs of pupils and the basic reasons for pupils' disadvantage. Thirdly, the Committee has outlined the characteristics which contribute to making a quality proposal. These characteristics are: the extent to which the Program, in the light of available evidence, is likely to help reduce disadvantage; the extent to which staff, parents and the community are involved in the processes leading up to the formulation of the submission; strong and positive leadership with high staff morale and levels of thrust and teamwork; a child-centred curriculum; links with resources beyond the school; some element of change is evident in the approaches; and plans for teacher development. Fourthly, the neediest schools should be given special consideration. Fifthly, it is recognised that differing levels of funding may occur from year to year as the Program develops and changes in each school. Sixthly, the Committee may enter into commitments that may extend beyond one or two years. Seventhly,



the Committee retains the right to fund proposals other than those originating from schools. Eightly, submissions should be based on a review of existing programs and a report of the review conducted should be included as part of the submission. Nineth, if Proposal Committees request that their current program be refunded (with only minor modifications) into a second year, supporting evidence in the form of a review report should be provided. Finally, if a Proposal Committee requests that its existing programs be continued into a third year, it is expected that this request will be based on a comprehensive major review of the effectiveness of the program.

#### Developing Quality Proposals

Regardless of the need for quality, the Program is a needs based program and it would be anticipated that the neediest schools attract additional funds. However, as is always the case the neediest schools are not the ones who initially come out with the best proposals. When this situation arises, it becomes particularly important that school communities have the backing of consultancy services to develop the quality of their projects. These services are provided by the Tasmanian State Department of Education.

#### Shift in Demand for Resources

After the first four years of the Program's operation there has been a shift in demand for different types of resources.<sup>23</sup> In the first few years of the Program's operation there were requests for equipment, materials and excursions. The latter part of the four year time span witnessed requests for human resources, namely, remedial teachers, curriculum development co-ordinators, social workers, community liaison teachers, life enrichment teachers, home visiting teachers and so forth. Although the Schools Commission would welcome the involvement of extra staff in schools, believing that very often it is in specialist resource personnel that the most benefit can be gained, nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that

commitment of funds to teacher-aides or to extra teachers does reduce the flexibility of future funding.<sup>24</sup> It is essential for schools to be constantly evaluating their programs and are determined to change directions if necessary, even at the risk of offending or discontinuing funding a person who has been engaged to a particular program. It may be important for an additional personnel to be available for a period of appointment longer than one year if a project is to be a success, and the education systems can make provisions in the Program for funds to extend over two or three years for a particular project. It is also vital that extra persons employed through the Program understand their role in relation to the whole school, and the school and the community should be responsible for the definition of that role.

#### Support from Systems and Institutions

Education systems and tertiary institutions have recognised the crucial importance of support for disadvantaged schools. System support both in attitudes and actions can have marked effects on schools in the Program. Some systems now differentially fund staff and resources to favour disadvantaged schools. This includes the Tasmanian Government Education System. The attitude of the principal and his or her competence and commitment are also of crucial importance to the Program. There is a requirement for more effective consultancy support and developmental activities for both parents and teachers including exchange visits among schools. Universities and technical colleges can give support to the staff of disadvantaged schools if they are in close proximity and the staff are aware of the assistance that can be provided.

#### Inter-School Co-operation

There is an increase in co-operation among schools in the Program. Within the Tasmanian Catholic System funds are shared both in terms of personnel and equipment. For example, in the Cygnet area

there is now a considerable co-operation between St. James' College and the Cygnet Districts Schools. There are other examples across Australia where support is provided across school and systems. The principals of a number of disadvantaged schools in South Australia come together regularly to work on curriculum development in each of their schools. The principals discuss proposals, go back to their staff, implement programs and then come back together and regularly report on progress being made. Similar co-operation occurs among principals in schools under both Tasmanian Systems.

## CHAPTER 3

### A CASE STUDY: ROKEBY PRIMARY SCHOOL

This case study attempts to describe the process of preparing the school's first submission to the Priority Projects Committee. Some of the main emphases of the Priority Projects Programme will emerge as the process of preparing a submission is described. These are the use of resources, parent-teacher involvement in decision-making at the school-level, the role of school staff and the ideas of action-research.

#### Background Information to the Study

##### The Priority Projects Committee

The Committee is entrusted with the overall responsibility to administer and monitor the Priority Projects Programme and in particular for the dissemination of the Programme guidelines and philosophy, selection of schools, and the allocation of Schools Commission funds to recurrent programs, minor works programs, individual teacher curriculum projects and centrally funded initiatives.

The State Education Department's Co-ordinator acts as Chairman of the Committee. The Committee's membership is limited to sixteen members consisting of representatives of schools, parents, services and University. There are no regional or area committees. Members act as Counsellors to school Proposal Committees. The Counsellors visit schools at times during the year to provide information to Proposal Committees and help them to prepare submissions for proposed programs.

The Consultant to the Programme is accountable to the Committee and is the principal medium by which the Committee keeps itself abreast of the functioning of the Programme in schools. The schools ask for his advice and assistance concerning all aspects of the Programme.

##### The Priority Projects Committee's needs

At the commencement of the year 1981 the Committee felt the

need for some research information about the Priority Projects Program in order to assist the Committee in tailoring its decisions to the needs of Tasmanian schools. A number of questions were put forward for discussion which the Committee would have preferred answered:

How could we define the assense of Tasmanian disadvantage? What was the long term impact of the Priority Projects on the Tasmanian schools? What responses do schools need to make to the expectation of the programme?<sup>2</sup> Although all the questions seemed crucial, nevertheless not all could be answered using the limited resources at the Committee's disposal. One solution seemed to be a case study of one school as a possible method of acquiring useful information about the processes in which a school needs to engage as it joins the Programme and formulates its first submission for funds.

#### Origination of Study

"(The Chairman of Committee) mentioned the need for some special research work to be undertaken as a control initiative in 1982. One strong possibility was for a study to be done on schools coming into the programme and the procedure by which they are brought into the programme and on subsequent changes and developments."<sup>3</sup>

The Research Branch of the Education Department was entrusted with to undertake the study. A Research Officer was given the task of monitoring the processes at Rokeby Primary which joined the Programme in 1982. As schools are required to make their submission by the end of October, the process of framing proposals went on in the period prior to this. The monitoring period at Rokeby Primary was between June-October 1981.

The Committee employed a 'sensitive observer' whose job was to monitor processes such as the selection of Rokeby Primary School's Proposal Committee, the maintenance of staff involvement, the selection of priorities for the proposal, and so forth. The Research Officer

acted as an observer as well as help with the school's record keeping and to prepare a report for the Committee. During the monitoring period the Research Officer called on to the school weekly, participated in group discussions and social talks. He took about 20 interviews, and prepared and collated two questionnaires. This case study is based on this body of evidence.

### School's Background

The location of Rokeby Primary School is on the Eastern Shore of Hobart. The Suburb was initially a mixed farming area. Now it is a major residential one for both families of the affluent and the disadvantaged children. The 'well-off' families live around Rokeby Heights, whilst the disadvantaged ones reside in the Housing Department area.

Rokeby Primary School was opened in 1972 to fulfill the needs of all children from the most disadvantaged to the well-off. In numerical terms, children from the Housing Department area as distinct from Rokeby Heights have dominated the school enrolment from 1975 and beyond.

The School was built as an open-plan school but now the larger areas have been subdivided into single and dual units. In 1981 the School had 720 pupils. Its student population peaked in 1979 with about 1,000 pupils. At the time of the research study the School had about forty on the staff, with eight senior staff members.

Even prior to being accepted as part of the Disadvantaged Schools Program, Rokeby Primary School was well served by both the State Department of Education and Commonwealth Schools Commission, and over the years the School's staff initiated some programmes to cater for the disadvantaged child. Most notable among these were the special education programme for under-achievers, the motor co-ordination programme and the financial assistance policies for needy children.

The staff of the School voiced a great concern for the plight of the socially disadvantaged in discussions and in their answers to the first questionnaire as devised by the Research Officer.

Parental involvement in the school: in the early days of the school (and of the Rokeby community in the 1970's) the polarity of outlook was clearly evident. Tensions in the community manifested themselves in heightened political activity among residents and many factions and pressure groups were formed.<sup>4</sup> It became a political issue as to who was to control the school's Parents and Friends Association. The Principal of that time felt that it would be wiser to disband the Association entirely rather than let it become a plaything of local politics. From that time to this there has been no Parents and Friends Association in Rokeby Primary. During early 1981 a parent-teacher council was formed which acts as a substitute for the Association. Parental involvement has also been promoted on project basis such as camps, school functions and classroom learning.

After the acceptance by the school staff to join the Priority Projects Programme in July, 1981, a Proposal Committee was formed consisting of equal numbers of parents and teachers, and the preparation of a submission for funds for the 1982 school year.

#### FRAMING A SUBMISSION

##### Management of Process

The process of proposal preparation was managed by a group of senior staff members who worked together smoothly and efficiently. This group was well versed in making most of its interactions productive. At a later time a larger team of concerned staff members was formed. This larger team was responsible for providing a pool of ideas on which the project was based as well as a reliable core of willing hands as the tasks unfolded.

In the opinion of the outside observer there was an indication of three key principles in the actual management process of proposal preparation. These principles were explicitly referred to on some occasions. At other times they could be implied from people's actions. These key principles in summary form are as follows:

1. The quality of the process itself is very crucial in the sense that the people engaged in it are learning skills and attitudes which will be essential for the programme next year.
2. The process should continue to be open and questioning as long as possible to maximise the number of available options.
3. Principle 2 should be balanced by tasks which are conducted in an efficient manner and are completed as the process demands.<sup>5</sup>

A number of subsidiary issues emerged from all these principles. For instance, concerning the first principle forced the team to examine very thoroughly at the following:

- who should be taking part in the activities? The answer was those who need to learn in order to make decisions;
- the human atmosphere of each planned task, because it was one of the aims of the process that the participants should establish positive relationships through their common involvement.<sup>6</sup>

The kind of subsidiary issues which arose from the second principle were:

- inclusion of a number of activities which were designed to bring into the open differences of perceptions and opinions in the form of discussions and open-ended questionnaires;
- distrust of instant answers to problems even if these came from powerful people;
- distrust of clear-cut 'final solutions' to problems, the logic being: "if clear-cut universal solutions existed we would have heard about them by now, therefore they most likely do not exist and Rokeby



- will have to work out partial answers which suit Rokeby"; and
- the proposal itself being formed in terms of a programme the school would like to try, thousands of options still available within this, rather than in terms of some material addition to the school (facility or building) which only offers limited options for use.<sup>7</sup>

The following decisions flowed from the third principle:

- the senior staff made certain that sufficient resources were available to complete tasks in the right manner;
- a consultant was requested to work with a group to plan a schedule of tasks to be completed;
- it was emphasised that tasks needed to be performed (not drag on) and consequently the staff, and later the Proposal Committee, appreciated the necessity of finishing their given jobs within an agreed time-frame.<sup>8</sup>

#### Role of Principal in the Process

The Principal's influence was decisive, while all members of the senior staff had tasks given to them and all made major contributions. Other staff always ensured that they kept the Principal fully informed of their activities and had his backing. The process of keeping the Principal convinced and supportive helped to clarify the team's intentions and plans. The Principal's cautious attitudes and his attention to practical details balanced the more idealistic approaches of others.<sup>9</sup>

"I felt I erred in not being more involved in the decision-making process particularly the meeting with (the consultant) - but felt that my involvement may have inhibited other members of the Team who would have been less forceful or involved."<sup>10</sup>

#### Working on the Proposal

##### Calling nominations for the Proposal Committee

What the Chairman and the Consultant of the Priority Projects

Programme expected from Rokeby Primary was to see that the Proposal Committee members represented both teachers and most importantly parents.

As a result the Principal invited nominations for the Proposal Committee. The means of communication was through the medium of the school's newsletter dated July 1981. Parents could simply put their names for nomination. Only the self-motivated ones reacted to the Principal's invitation. At this stage the assumption was that the project in the school was to be the Proposal Committee's concern. However, this assumption was queried later and the Proposal Committee was not called together until September. In other words, to call for nominations was not the most appropriate way to proceed during July 1981.

#### Teacher Involvement in the Programme

A wide-spread teacher involvement in the Programme was emphasised in a discussion among the senior staff members. It was emphasised that every classroom teacher had an opportunity to make the education of the disadvantaged child more effective, and therefore any future program must reach the classroom teacher and help him in his teaching. Teachers were given opportunity to make an input and shape the programme according to their ideas.

There was another reason for getting all the teachers involved in the programme. Towards the end of July the Principal sensed that the whole concept of disadvantage must be re-examined. This meant that a wide input of thoughts and perceptions became desirable in order to challenge the then current feelings of self-satisfaction with the programme the school offered to disadvantaged pupils which was a feeling shared by many staff members. Teachers' views on Priority Projects, Disadvantage and related issues.

These views are derived from a Report on the Questionnaire

which was prepared by the Research Officer from the Education Department.

One of the important points the staff made was that it would be presumptuous for the school alone to decide where the community's disadvantage lay and what to do about it. The answers they felt, must be sought in the community and must be unearthed by some sort of interaction between the school and the community. Some teacher comments were:

"continue to build upon the rapport that exists with the main community"; and "I think the schools should be receptive and responsive to the needs of the community".<sup>11</sup>

It was agreed among the senior staff team that the parents and teachers could come together in discussions.

#### The 'Kitchen Conferences'

To decide where the community's disadvantage lay, collection of information was through the medium of small group discussions between parents and teachers. Meetings were organised in the homes of a number of parents. These small group discussions became known as 'kitchen conferences'. They were meticulously planned.

The co-ordinator and the teachers co-operated in finding hostesses who were willing to have the discussions in their houses and were happy to welcome neighbours and friends. About fifty parents and eighteen teachers participated in the kitchen conferences.

Each kitchen conference was attended by two teachers, one to lead and one to record the meeting. The topics for discussion were:

1. what do you think are the good things about our school?
2. what would you like to change and why?
3. what do you expect the school to do for your children?
4. do you consider your children are adequately catered for at present?
5. how could the school play a greater part in the community?<sup>12</sup>

The teachers were asked these questions by the co-ordinator:

What do you like about the School? and What would you like to change and why?<sup>13</sup>

The teachers' answers were eventually collated with the parents' answers.

#### From Information to Submission

##### Collation of Information

All the records from the kitchen conferences and from the staff meeting (28th September 1981) were gathered by a senior staff member. With the help of the Research Officer these information were collated into a more manageable form. The organisation of a collation sheet was based on suggestions made by both parents and teachers in the discussions. (Appendix III)

The three major areas of concern were:

Communication - The parents felt that their relationships with the school were not that good and they suggested that there should be some development in the area of parent-teacher communication. They wanted to have conversations with teachers on various matters concerning their children and the local community in general. Some of the things discussed were: more social meetings, group discussions, parents in classrooms, times and functions of the roles of people like Guidance Officer, School Sister and other Support Personnel of the school. In short, the parents wanted to feel that the school was an open place and part of their community.

Curriculum - In this area the parents wanted to know more about it. Also they wanted to help more with the education of their children. Some of the general matters suggested by parents related to school organisation, e.g. dual units, physical surroundings and learning patterns of individual children, consideration of individual children and teacher relationships, pastoral care of children clearly defined, e.g. dealing with children's problems. The more specific matters related to parental involvement in classroom with reading, mathematics, homework in general, preparation for high school and vocational awareness,

emphasis on basic subjects like reading, mathematics, spelling, social development, survival skills, first aid, computer awareness, reading for future trends, knowledge of community people, e.g. Doctor, Police, and so on.

Physical Resources - The parents felt that the school's physical surroundings and equipment could be improved in some of the following ways; possible extension of canteen, provision of hot meals, better food, nutrition programme, provision of drinking fountains, provision of changerooms and up-dated toilets, kitchen facilities for use by children in their cooking lessons, and provision of more sport and playground facilities.<sup>14</sup>

#### Identification of Major Aims

The Proposal Committee members listed its major aims as follows:

- a) improvement of parent-teacher co-operation;
- b) improvement of educational outcomes; and
- c) improvement of the Rokeby children's life-chances by building up their knowledge and expectations of what adult life can offer.<sup>15</sup>

#### Identification of Major Strategies

It became the responsibility of the senior staff team and the Research Officer to devise an educational programme for the school to achieve its major aims. The Vice-Principal of the Infant School submitted an Early Intervention Programme as part of the proposal which she perceived as being important in achieving the first two aims with parents of young children. The aims which were singled out as crucial by both parents and teachers expressed a deep concern with the outcomes and direction of the school's curriculum. The nature of these aims suggested that what was necessary was a re-vitalisation of classroom teaching and learning.

This meant that all the teachers in the school had roles to

play in the proposed programme. All participants singled out improved literacy and numeracy levels as a major focus, but it needed imagination to search for strategies of achieving this. The Proposal Committee came up with three strategies and these are reflected in the rationale of the final Proposal:

- improve parent-teacher co-operation in order to create a more unified learning milieu for the child;
- improve the children's self respect and feelings of self worth in order to make them more confident learners; and
- improve the children's vision of adult life.<sup>16</sup>

#### Identification of Support Required

It was the Proposal Committee's job to identify what support teachers and parents needed in putting these strategies into practice. Because of the nature of the Priority Projects Programme this support had to be stated in terms which could be purchased with money.<sup>17</sup>

It was seen that the teachers at Rokeby Primary were already working hard and therefore any additional commitment or any changed practice could only be reasonably expected of them if they were given adequate support. This is exactly what the submission attempted to set out by engaging part-time teachers. The part-time teacher's main role would be to support the classroom teachers in organising and participating in parent-teacher interactions ('Forming Teams'), and in providing the children with a greater appreciation of adult roles and occupational skills ('Life Enrichment').

#### Some Lessons Learnt from the Process

Generally both the Proposal Committee members and the senior staff team felt that involvement in the process of preparing a submission was tough work in the sense that it required substantial amounts of their time and effort.<sup>18</sup> However it was expressed that

most participants benefited from their involvement in proportion to the effort invested, but the effort needed was great. The involvement of a parent participant in the process clearly shows in this comment: "I think next year when we have to prepare our proposal we should start earlier so it does not become so rushed as it started to this time. We were starting to have long meetings so we could get everything through. Long meetings make people stale and their thoughts are not always as stimulating when they are tired."<sup>19</sup>

Apart from expressing a sense of achievement, all members of the Proposal Committee felt that being part of it was a learning experience. As one parent commented: "Some time ago I didn't know what 'curriculum' or 'special education' was. Now I can even talk about them with teachers."<sup>20</sup> Further, most teachers learnt something from the parents; "It showed teachers that parents are interested in what happens and can comment on the school in a positive way." (teacher)<sup>21</sup>

Another important thing that came out from the process was that kitchen conferences played an influential part in the interaction between parents and teachers. Parents had an excellent opportunity to express their concerns and thoughts about the school.

Most parents and teachers expressed the idea of kitchen conferences in approving terms, such as: "It (process) laid the foundation for improved teacher-parent interactions by having the kitchen conferences thus making an informal atmosphere for parents to talk and ask questions of teachers, on their own ground." (parent)<sup>22</sup>

"I think the idea of kitchen conferences was much better than a list of questions sent to parents." (teacher)<sup>23</sup>

"Opened up new ground to have teachers in their homes rather than parents on our grounds (i.e. in school)." (teacher)<sup>24</sup>

The Disadvantaged Schools Program has always emphasised that community-school interaction usually involves two sets of

practices. Firstly, those in which the community comes into the school, and, secondly, those in which the school goes out into the community.<sup>25</sup>

The devise of using kitchen conferences for parent-teacher interaction is one way in which the school (teacher) goes out into the community (parent).

Some participants in the proposal making process expressed the following reservation about what the kitchen conferences achieved in the area of parental involvement. As one teacher commented: "We have involved more parents in the kitchen conferences. But sometimes I think we are already interested in their children's welfare at school. What about the rest of the parents whom we cannot reach?" Another teacher stated: "Reaching" parents who can't or don't want to be "involved" is always a problem, but the kitchen conferences certainly helped in that regard. They reached a wider range of people than would otherwise have been possible."<sup>26</sup>

#### Follow-up to the Kitchen Conferences

Though the school's social worker was given the responsibility to visit some more families who felt reluctant to get involved in their children's welfare, he found it hard to elicit information about the school. There are two reasons for this. First, there are families in Rokeby who do not trust the system enough to believe that the questions are genuinely asked for the reasons given. Secondly, they simply feel that it might become a burden to be involved in any kind of educational debate.<sup>27</sup>

As one teacher commented: "Some parents at the kitchen conferences...were interested in their children's welfare, but were too shy to talk about it. One mother commented that she had never "talked so much in her life". I hope we can meet with the same people again as they relax and "open up" more."<sup>28</sup>



### What has been done to involve more parents in school?

In any activity concerning the school (i.e. canteen, help, mother help, parent teacher council help and meetings), Rokeby Primary has found that less than 10 per cent of parents were involved. It was felt among the school staff that they should at least be attempting for 50 per cent participation or better. One teacher felt this is important because otherwise you have the same people doing all the work.<sup>29</sup>

If the children are to be taught to feel more socially equal by giving them more opportunities through the Priority Projects Committee, then more parents should be enticed to school to make them feel socially equal too. Rokeby Primary has gone a long way to achieve this by providing babysitters for their parent teacher council meetings, having discussions in the home with parents and teachers present, printing the weekly newsletter, and mothers and fathers helping in classrooms and sporting activities.

### Implications for the Priority Projects Committee

#### The Role of the Proposal Committee

It was stated that the role of the Proposal Committee should include:

- (a) collection of information about school operation and analysis of this information to identify where pupils are likely to be most disadvantaged;
- (b) planning of programs to help reduce disadvantage and making a submission for funding of this program."<sup>30</sup>

Both points became very crucial in the school because they led people's attention away from an abstract consideration of the disadvantages in the community and focused it on the school and its role in alleviating the perceived disadvantage. These points are in line with the general thinking of the Schools Commission: "the

Disadvantaged Schools Program should be project-based and school-focused. That is, funds should be allocated in response to proposals formulated at the school level. Parents and teachers should participate in the formulation of... proposals."<sup>31</sup> (emphasis added)

The visit of the Chairman and the Consultant of Priority Projects and their initial meeting with some of the parents provided a 'reactionary effect' because subsequently the latter became members of the School's Proposal Committee. Even the visit of the Chairman and the Consultant gave the School staff the impression that the School had become part of a worthwhile programme. The visit of the two officers of the Programme inspired a renewed interest in the concept of educational disadvantage and in the school's role in overcoming it. The visit, and the Programme's short paper provided as a catalyst for action; they conveyed an ethos and general expectations but they were not designed to clarify ideas concerning disadvantage or the school's possible actions in the future.

The actors involved in the operation of the school wholeheartedly supported the formation of a Proposal Committee. There was agreement on the composition of the Proposal Committee. The only move away from the Committee's suggestion was the school's decision not to hold a Proposal Committee meeting until the school members felt prepared for it. In Rokeby's case, teacher involvement had to precede the task of the Proposal Committee.

#### The Role and Value of the Facilitator

It was the Priority Projects Committee's idea to put an 'observer' into the school to monitor the process involved in making the school's first submission. At Rokeby, monitoring was conducted as events eventuated in the school, to avoid the effects of hindsight, vague memories and the justifying effect of a task performed. Monitoring while the process is taking place has very large implications

for the role of the person engaged with the intention to monitor.

It was agreed among the participants that the role of a Research Officer should be that of facilitator-monitor. The facilitator brings different perceptions and experiences to the problems of the school, arranges for resources needed for the process and performs as the 'oil in the machine' by optimising group's interaction.<sup>32</sup> The facilitator has frequently been tagged 'the critical friend' in the literature. In this role, the researcher can justifiably be part of the process. Also, his monitoring role may be strengthened, if the researcher has developed a deeper insight into the process, he may become better at deciding what is valuable to record.

In my opinion the Research Officer had played an important role in the process of preparing a submission at Rokeby Primary. She acted as a catalyst in discussions. Further, being out of school, she brought an element of objectivity to those school staff involved more closely with the daily operation of the school. She was receptive to the views of others in discussions within the school. Her help in the collation of records from kitchen conferences was well organised as shown in Appendix III of this dissertation. She was very familiar with the Priority Projects schools because for the past five years she had worked in them in various capacities. Her various prior experiences helped when it came to assisting the Rokeby project.

#### Assignment of Other Outside People

Both the Priority Project Consultant and the Research Officer were in close touch throughout the period of proposal preparation. The Consultant provided the Research Officer with advice, information and assistance on specific matters relating to the Rokeby project and the Priority Projects Programme in general. In turn, the Research

Officer attempted to keep the Consultant informed about the major developments in Rokeby. The consultant paid two visits to the school and during those visits he tried to lend his full assistance to what the school did or planned to do.

Each disadvantaged school is assigned a 'counsellor' by the Priority Projects Committee. This assignment is part of the Committee's methods of operation. The counsellors are expected to attend their schools to convey the ethos and expectations of the Programme, and to assist the school with the preparation of its submission. Further, they represent the school's interest in the Committee. The Report goes on to comment on the work of Rokeby's counsellor in these terms: "Rokeby's counsellor was significantly involved in the process. He is the Principal of another Priority Projects primary school and therefore he was likely to have understood some of Rokeby's problems. It was obvious that his advice was taken seriously and his support was keenly sought."<sup>33</sup>

It was crucial that all the 'outsiders', the Research Officer, the Project Consultant and the Counsellor highly valued the School's efforts and on the whole conveyed very similar or complementary messages.

## CHAPTER 4

### Conclusion

Basically, disadvantaged schools are places in which the attainment levels of many pupils are not high. Both overseas and Australian research has indicated that the academic performance of school pupils are attributed to social class differences. But there is little research evidence to point out to us whether, or to what extent, this is necessarily the case. However, two facts are definite. Firstly, in Australia, even among pupils of the same high ability groupings, those from higher status families have a much greater chance of finishing secondary schooling than those from lower socio-economic groups. Secondly, those groups of pupils that can be identified as disadvantaged - the poor, Aborigines, migrants - have not reached anything like the level of participation in primary and secondary schools consistent with their potential.

The identification of ways in which pupils learn is far more difficult for some schools than others. Some children adapt readily to traditional patterns of school teaching, largely because their home and school background is capable of coexisting with the values of the school. But more than fifty per cent of the pupils in any disadvantaged school come from families whose life-style is unfamiliar to most of the teachers. These pupils meet the demands and routines of the school alien for them.<sup>1</sup>

The recent Commission of Inquiry into Poverty found that "one in every six of all dependent children in Australia is poor through no fault of their own and in circumstances which they cannot influence."<sup>2</sup> Moreover, the poor families who congregate in areas of cheap housing are generally not only poor in income but in standards of formal education, confidence and power. As the rich gain certain advantages from choosing to congregate, the poor experience certain

disadvantages from being forced to do so. Community poverty compounds some of the disadvantages suffered by individual and reinforces some of the difficulties faced by their schools.<sup>3</sup> These difficulties then become entrenched because they are not to any great degree, shared by those groups in the community with social, economic and political power.<sup>4</sup>

Government systems of schooling in Australia have always been strongly committed to the principle of equal opportunity, to ensuring equal access to schooling and to maintaining a uniform spread of resources among schools. However, the Interim Committee's Report has shown that the concept of equality of educational opportunity interpreted as 'equal access to schooling' was no longer useful in the Australian context. The Report provided evidence based on research both here and overseas to support this view. It interpreted the notion of equality of educational opportunity as meaning 'equality of educational outcomes'.

In 1973 the Interim Committee of the Australian Schools Commission recommended the establishment of a Disadvantaged Schools Program. The Committee's concern was that: "There are schools in Australia which require greater than average resources if they are to be effective with the children they serve. Many of these schools are at present among the worst provided for in terms of building, playing areas and other facilities, and are at the same time drawing their enrolments from communities which might be regarded on both social and educational grounds as being in the greatest need of assistance from their schools."<sup>5</sup>

The philosophy underlying the Program was developed in subsequent Schools Commission Reports. Basic to this philosophy is a belief in social justice, a conviction that all Australian children deserve an equal chance, and that children whose lives

are in general relatively poorer than most deserve a taste of better things at school.

The Commission has taken the view that there is a common culture in our society, and that within this culture there are a range of basic competencies that should be attained by every pupil. Their Report for the 1977-79 Triennium takes the view that "all young people should leave school with the confidence that they are able to make sense of the world as they experience it, to act upon and participate in directing it:, and, moreover, "that the intellectual competencies which give power to that confidence are the special business of school".<sup>6</sup> The Commission also takes the view that there are many ways of developing these competencies and that schools should be encouraged and assisted to search for ways which work best for their particular pupils.

There was another important conviction of those who established the Program. Schools which were ineffective required change. Funds made available from the Schools Commission should be used for experimentation and practical research to seek more effective educational programs and processes. The Program thus shares a number of the objectives of the Commission initiatives: the devolution and sharing of decision-making; diversity between schools within common resource standards; and, closer community participation in schooling.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program is based on two distinct propositions: that the poor as a group are disadvantaged in our society, and that their children, as a group, fare disproportionately badly in our schools. The Program should not, however, be perceived simply as a version of overseas compensatory programs based on ideas of cultural deficit. It is far more concerned with what schools can do than with what parents or society have failed to do. The Program is essentially pragmatic, based on what can be seen, what is already

known and understood, and what can be done. In short, the Program is an action-research program - finding out, through action, the best way to proceed.

The Program is a response to the fact that poverty is a disadvantage generally and that, in particular, the effects of poverty can create obstacles to learning. The Program creates opportunities for participants to examine the special needs of students growing up in poor areas, and to look for more effective ways of schooling these students. The stress is on the needs of students and the ways in which schools can respond to these needs.

There are dangers in over-emphasising the problems of disadvantage, and particularly in revising and refining definitions. To quote Cassidy: "An over-preoccupation with the measurement of disadvantage, whether this is done solely to achieve an 'ideal' list of Disadvantaged Schools, or whether its purpose is to shed light on the meaning and causal factors of disadvantage, may consume energies which may be better directed to action research into schooling."<sup>7</sup>

The Program's aim is to extend certain principles of good education to all schools. For example, children learn more willingly through experience which seem interesting, understandable and significant to them than through those which seem too difficult, pointless or dull.<sup>8</sup> They are more likely to experience learning problems when there is a large gap between the school curriculum and their own experiences of life.<sup>9</sup>

When the links between home and school are strong the learning capacity of children becomes better.

In communities which are disadvantaged, schools need to work very hard to create and improve links with home. There may be quite wide cultural gaps which can only begin to be bridged by the actual physical involvement of parents in the school's operations.



The Rokeby Primary School Case study has shown that through the device of 'kitchen conferences' parents can get more involved with the school and the education of their children.

Disadvantaged schools, in the Commission's opinion, require positive discrimination in the allocation of all funds through routine channels.

Originally, schools participating in the Disadvantaged Schools Program were selected by government and Catholic systems in each state, relying heavily on data from a Socio-Economic Scale constructed by the Commonwealth Department of Education in collaboration with the then Commonwealth Bureau of Census and Statistics. The Tasmanian State Education Department has since developed its own indices, in the light of local knowledge, for identifying their most disadvantaged schools. These vary slightly from the original analysis of socio-economic data which was used as a starting point.

The Disadvantaged Schools Program gives the participating schools direct control over part of their allocated funds. In Tasmania the Priority Projects Committee has set guidelines as the basis for allocating funds. As part of the process schools are asked to analyse their problems and needs, and to draw up proposals for improvements in accord with the three main objectives of the Program:

- to ensure more effective schooling by raising levels of achievement;
- to make the curriculum more relevant and meaningful and school more satisfying and enjoyable;
- to promote closer interaction between families, communities and schools.

In short, the Program is project-based and school-focused.

Funds are not distributed on a per capita basis, though the relative neediness of schools is taken into account. In Tasmania,

a proposal will not be considered for funding unless two requirements are fulfilled. Firstly, there should be evidence of staff and community participation in its formulation. Secondly, attempts should be made to establish needs of pupils and the basic reasons for pupils' disadvantage.

The quality of the proposal determines the allocation of funds in the Tasmanian situation. There are a number of characteristics which contribute to making a quality proposal, and these were specified in the second chapter.

The preparation of submissions for funds is a daunting task for some schools. A great deal of the practical progress made in the Program's early stages depended on the services of the Program co-ordinators in each system and on the network of field consultants available to support and to stimulate school committees. Though the co-ordinator's role varies considerably from system to system, most have played an extremely active role in maintaining direct contact with schools, receiving submissions, implementing projects, providing links with other related departments and agencies disseminating information, and taking part in in-service teacher training. The Rokeby Primary School Case Study showed the benefits that can be accrued from the roles played by the Research Officer (facilitator-monitor), the Counsellor (Principal of another Priority Projects primary school) and the Priority Project Consultant.

Two booklets produced by the Schools Commission describes a broad cross-section of the projects funded during the first four years of the Program's operation. They fall into such general categories as school-community interaction; curriculum innovation; remedial education; art and crafts; migrant and multicultural education; excursions; and, Aboriginal education.

Overall, the main focus of the Disadvantaged Schools Program

has been on primary schools, the level at which intervention is likely to be most effective. A total of \$605,000 was allocated by the Program for 8,750 students in Tasmania during the year 1982.<sup>10</sup> The Priority Projects Programme funded that amount of money on similar categories of projects as stated above.

Evaluating the effectiveness of the Disadvantaged Schools Program is fraught with hazards. Clearly, the terms of the Program make the schools themselves the main judges of the effectiveness of their work. The New South Wales Department of Education's booklet, Tell It How It Is: Some Guidelines for Project Evaluation, is useful in this respect. It suggests a model for evaluation which examines programs in three distinct stages: threshold, transaction and outcomes. It discusses how to evaluate a program intended to increase community involvement in the school.

Parent involvement in schools has been strongly supported in Tasmania through Proposal Committees and inservice work. Meaningful participation by parents in school decision-making is slow in growth, as the Rokeby project showed, and depends on a number of factors such as openness of school,<sup>11</sup> attitudes of principals and staff, and ways in which schools can find to initiate parents into the education arena. The 'kitchen conference' format used by Rokeby Primary School to collect information tried to show that parental involvement in school decision-making can be encouraging. The Principal and his staff were willing to compromise and be receptive to the views and ideas of the parents.

APPENDIX 1

RECOMMENDED ALLOCATIONS FOR EACH STATE/TERRITORY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED  
SCHOOLS PROGRAM FOR GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS FOR 1983 COMPARED WITH ACTUAL  
ALLOCATIONS FOR 1982.

State/ Territory	1982		1983		Variation 1982 to 1983
	Actual Allocation	%	Recommended Allocation	%	
	\$'000		\$'000		
NSW	9,549	35.56	10,531	35.83	+ 982
Vic	9,104	33.90	9,511	32.36	+ 407
Qld	2,784	10.37	3,092	10.52	+ 308
SA	2,536	9.44	2,684	9.13	+ 148
WA	1,863	6.94	2,263	7.70	+ 400
Tas	605	2.25	700	2.38	+ 95
NT	414	1.54	611	2.08	+ 197
Sub-Total	26,855	100.00	29,392	100.00	+ 2,537
ACT	25		28		+ 3
TOTAL	26,880		29,420		+ 2,540

RECOMMENDED ALLOCATIONS FOR EACH STATE/TERRITORY FOR THE DISADVANTAGED  
SCHOOLS PROGRAM FOR NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS FOR 1983 COMPARED WITH  
ACTUAL ALLOCATIONS FOR 1982.

State/ Territory	1982		1983		Variation 1982 to 1983
	Actual Allocation	%	Recommended Allocation	%	
	\$'000		\$'000		
NSW	1,652	36.68	1,967	37.04	+ 315
Vic	1,870	41.52	2,171	40.89	+ 301
Qld	316	7.01	412	7.76	+ 96
SA	303	6.73	302	5.69	- 1
WA	263	5.84	347	6.53	+ 84
Tas	75	1.67	83	1.56	+ 8
NT	25	0.55	28	0.53	+ 3
Sub-Total	4,504	100.00	5,310	100.00	806
ACT	8		10		+ 2
TOTAL	4,512		5,320		+ 808

RECOMMENDED MAXIMUM ENROLMENTS FOR EACH STATE/TERRITORY FOR  
DISADVANTAGED GOVERNMENT AND NON-GOVERNMENT SCHOOLS FOR 1983

State/Territory	Maximum Enrolments Government	Non- Government
NSW	133,250	24,000
Vic	111,000	25,500
Qld	39,000	5,250
SA	32,500	3,750
WA	28,000	4,250
NT	5,500	- (b)
Tas	9,250	1,000
Act	- (a)	- (b)

(a) No formal maximum enrolment ceiling has been set for government schools in the ACT. Participation in the Program has been limited to two schools.

(b) No formal maximum enrolment ceilings have been set for non-government schools in the NT and ACT. Participation in the Program has been limited to two schools in the NT and one school in the ACT.

(Source: Commonwealth Schools Commission, Triennium 1982-84, Report For 1983, August, 1982, pp.15-18).

APPENDIX IICOMMONWEALTH SCHOOLS COMMISSION - FUNCTIONS

Extract from Commonwealth Schools Commission Act 1973, Section 13)

13. (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 such other persons, bodies and authorities as the Commission thinks necessary.

(2) The functions of the Commission are to enquire 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 connection with the grant by Australia of financial assistance to the States for and in respect of schools and schools systems and to schools in the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory, including matters relevant to the necessity for financial assistance should 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 government 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 curricula 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.



## APPENDIX III

### COLLATION OF INFORMATION FROM GROUP DISCUSSIONS

- \* covers all information from individual sheets in less detail.
- \* information is not ranked in any order.
- \* also includes information from staff meeting (28/9/1981) which considered the first two questions only.
- \* easy to divide this final sheet into three areas -
  1. COMMUNICATION - opportunities for people to meet.  
- ease of getting them together.
  2. CURRICULUM - the things THEY want to talk about.
  3. PHYSICAL RESOURCES.

### COMMUNICATION

#### (i) Opportunities

- more social gatherings.
- group discussions such as these.
- barbecues, picnics, parent/teacher dinners.
- more and more intensive parent/teacher get togethers.
- parents in classrooms.
- extension of playgroups.
- inter-school visits.

#### (ii) Ease of getting people together

- signposting around school.
- maps/plans of rooms and staff members, rooms etc.
- times and functions of the roles of some people, e.g. Guidance Officer, School Sister.
- child care for daytime meetings.
- organised get togethers and group discussions.

#### (iii) Recognition of need of teacher development

- art and craft resource person.
- science resource person.
- in-service activities.
- relief teachers available.
- staff meetings useful and practical.

### CURRICULUM

- school organisation, e.g. dual units.
- physical surroundings and learning patterns of individual children.
- consideration of individual children and teacher's relationships.
- pastoral care of children clearly defined, e.g. dealing with children's problems.

### More Specific

- parental involvement in classroom with reading, maths, homework

- in general.
- preparation for high school and vocational awareness.
- emphasis on basic subjects - reading, maths, spelling.
- computer awareness, readiness for future trends.
- social development.
- drama/movement extended.
- education for leisure.
- first aid.
- sex education.
- knowledge of community people, e.g. doctor, police.
- education for values - politeness, neatness, respect for property, manners, speech, hygiene, department, gifted children.
- survival skills

### PHYSICAL RESOURCES

#### SPORT: - more activities

- games room
- gymnasium
- involvement of younger children
- swimming extended - emphasis on water safety
- cricket pitch and nets
- circuit

#### PLAYGROUND: - shelter, seats

- trees, landscaping
- infant courtyard
- barbecues
- toilet areas, changerooms, showers (outside)
- bike rack

#### BUILDING:

- drinking fountains
- toilets updated and changerooms
- kitchen facilities
- sewing machines
- safe crossing for children
- security angle

#### CANTEEN:

- possible extension
- hot meals
- better food
- nutrition programme (breakfasts/lunches)
- policy on spending

#### FINANCIAL HELP: - subsidize camps, excursions

- adequate notice of spending involved
- clothing pool - bulk buying material for uniforms
  - provision of uniforms and sports uniforms for eistedford and sports teams
- after school child care
- book hire - atlases and dictionaries.

(Source: Education Department of Tasmania, Research Branch,  
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