



The Boys in Schools

BULLETIN → Practical Initiatives Addressing Boys' Needs

PRODUCED BY BOYS IN SCHOOLS PROGRAM OF THE FAMILY ACTION CENTRE

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you know
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Blokes and their kids at school
Turning boys into fine men

*School and
Community
Partnerships*

The Boys in Schools Bulletin

- Focuses on practical initiatives going on in schools
- Puts teachers in touch with others who are trialling new approaches to boys' education
- Supports and encourages a constructive debate on boys' education issues
- Develops materials and programs to assist teachers in their work with boys
- Provides information on new resources directed at boys



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Editorial



Following our very successful Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships Conference, we have some fascinating case studies of working partnerships. Don Weatherburn's research gives us a clear indication that keeping boys in school and keeping them enjoying it not only helps boys reach their full potential, it also reduces crime in the

community. Many of the school–community partnerships in this edition aim to do just that.

From Queanbeyan to Kempsey, Moree to Margaret River, Launceston to Windale, schools are transforming themselves into learning communities that include the many strengths community members have to offer. In the process they are helping boys discover their own talents. This often involves going off the school premises, out into the community and meeting the boys in places they prefer to be, involving them in activities they like to do. Through school and community partnerships these schools have been able to harness the energy and enthusiasm of boys who had disengaged from school and were at risk of leaving early. Many of these partnerships have targeted male volunteers to work with the boys, and have had great success. The boys responded well to the interests and skills shown by the men.

Involving dads and mums and other community members in schools is not always easy. What's inspiring about these stories is the dedication the teachers have shown to making this work, and the willingness of schools to change themselves into places where both community members and boys want to be.

Congratulations to those schools who have received Boys' Lighthouse grants. There was stiff competition, so don't give up the good work if you missed out. I hope the stories here inspire you all to continue opening up to the community to find ways to fully engage boys in learning.

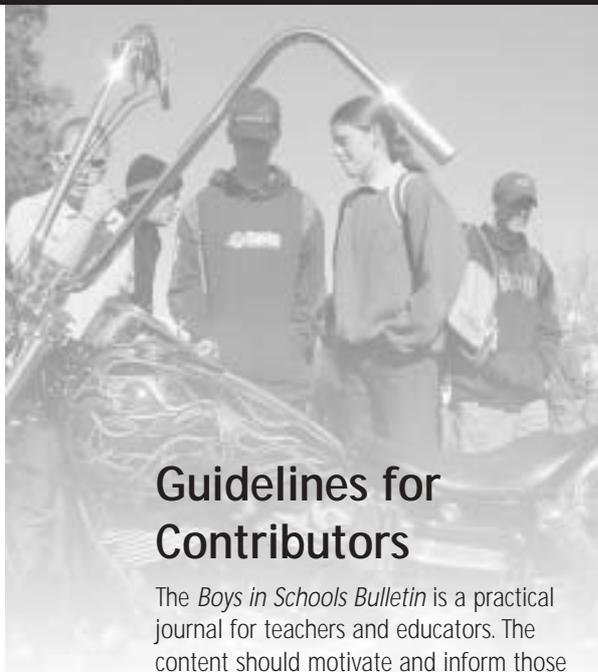
Deborah Hartman
For the editorial committee

Disclaimer

Other than the Editorial, the ideas and opinions presented in the *Boys in Schools Bulletin* are those of the contributors, and do not necessarily reflect the ideas and opinions of the Boys in Schools Program or the Family Action Centre.



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Guidelines for Contributors

The *Boys in Schools Bulletin* is a practical journal for teachers and educators. The content should motivate and inform those who work with boys and young men to try new approaches which benefit the boys, the school and the whole community (including, of course, the girls).

The sorts of questions we use when asking about initiatives are:

- Say a bit about your school: What was the initiative and who was it aimed at?
- What happened?
- What lessons did you learn?
- What advice would you give to other teachers as a result?

This doesn't have to be a formula but the information must be about what is happening with boys in schools. If you are in any doubt, have a look at previous issues of the *Bulletin*. Or contact us and talk about it.

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Boys to Fine Men Conference

School and Community Partnerships

Newcastle City Hall
27–29 March, 2003

The third biennial Boys to Fine Men Conference has come and gone — and what an event it was! The theme this time, School and Community Partnerships, broke new ground in boyswork. It brought together the links between supporting boys in schools, community development and crime prevention. In acknowledging that the task and the privilege of guiding boys on their journey to become fine men is a job for all of us — families, schools and community members — the conference sought to bring together teachers, academics from a variety of fields, community workers, parents and boys.

We're proud of the range of speakers and participants who gathered to create a memorable event:

- The boys themselves: Very active agents in the process of forming their own male identities. They offer a multitude of talents, energy, sense of humour and challenging ideas for us to embrace and include in our classrooms and communities.
- The keynote and panel sessions: Raising issues such as literacy, behaviour and relationships, and resilience and purpose.
- The workshops: Showcasing programs that are the emerging success stories in boys' education.
- The sponsors: This degree of support and cooperation between sectors and departments, between schools and community would not have seemed possible ten years ago.

Things really are changing in boys' education. We are beginning to listen to the boys and to see the formation of mutually respectful relationships between teachers and boys. We are moving towards a consensus around the issues and approaches to boys' education, even though our solutions may vary in different circumstances. We are beginning to see the formation of school and community partnerships around educating boys. This can only be good for all of us!!



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If you missed the conference you still have a chance to catch up on the proceedings. The **Boys to Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships Manual** is available now from Boys in Schools. The manual — which includes abstracts from all preliminary and concurrent sessions, biographies and sponsorship details — retails for \$88.00. To order a copy phone Michelle on 02 4921 8739 or email men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au

Primary Section

Men are Voting with Their Feet: They're moving into the school

Kiernan Houlahan tells how they are finding the 'pockets of energy' in the Moree community to form valuable partnerships between local men and the school.

Moree East Public School, NSW, has approximately 300 kids. Of these, about 90 per cent are Aboriginal; that's about 240 to 250 Murri kids. Staff-wise we have three Aboriginal teachers, one male and one female Aboriginal Education Assistant (AEAs), three Aboriginal Male Support Workers and three Aboriginal Female Support Workers. These are funded from Federal Government and State monies. In addition to these we have two women who work in a free playgroup for children up to four years of age, two in the library as assistants and one in the canteen. Those five women work under the Community Development Program (CDP).

Can you tell us how you have developed your work with men and boys?

Going back about six to eight years we had an Aboriginal parent meeting. We took a group of 12 to 15 parents away for three days and we workshopped with them all the school and community issues that came up. One of the areas that developed from that project was the need for our school to increase the number of Aboriginal people working in the school. So we started to go down that track and we wanted to increase the role models for kids. In particular, we wanted to get some fathers in for the boys to be working with, because the boys were the ones getting themselves suspended more — mainly on violence issues and particularly around about the Year 5 level. So we looked around the community. We had one male AEA working. Under funding guidelines our school is supposed to have one AEA for 30 Aboriginal kids and two AEAs for 90 Aboriginal kids. We had 240 Aboriginal kids and we are still trying to get two male AEAs. So the workload here was just absolutely enormous for the existing AEAs and we knew that we had to support them. We took on a number of men and put them through some training, and over time we have been able to retain a few of those fellows.

How did you recruit the men?

There was no formal recruitment process, it was more word of mouth and opinions from the community. It was important that we got it right — it couldn't fail.

There were lots of negotiations, lots of role statements and considerations about how we should work together. The temptation was probably to put them in a group on their own, but when we did that it started to fall apart. So we put them as part of 'grade teams', which meant they became part of the school management structure rather than a specific group. They work under an executive teacher, with teachers and other support people, whoever is a part of that group. These guys are expected to perform and negotiate and communicate and offer advice and act as a member of that group.

Can you say something about how you and the community decided who is an appropriate man to have in here?

Because there weren't many men working around the school we had to look around the community as well, at what these guys are involved in that we might want to tap in to. There were blokes sitting in the community not fully engaged or working but who had an enormous range of skills. And it was through no fault of their own that they couldn't get work. When we took

them up to the school they were terrific workers. Some had building tickets, others had experience coaching sports teams, so there was a whole range of skills that they had that were just sitting out there not being fully utilised.

Was there more discussion about the sort of men you wanted rather than their skills?

That was probably the gut judgement that people made about them — whether they were to be trusted. Whether they should work with the kids or not or whether there were issues around drugs or alcohol or worse; any activities that were not appropriate to be anywhere near kids. We asked the opinions of key members of the community — those that we trusted to give us the right advice — they are the sorts of issues that they can advise you on. It is not stated clearly, it's never stated outwardly, but it is part of the basis of what the decisions are made on.

Are the members of the community that you would go to the same as your Aboriginal Student Support Parents' Association (ASSPA) community?

Yes, they can be. We have the Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (AECG) president on staff as a teacher so we take advice from there. We take advice from parents who are actively involved in the community. Those parents who are actively involved in the school are the ones whose kids are going to be influenced by the AEA's. So we need to make sure that they are comfortable. Sometimes existing figureheads aren't in any way connected with what is going on in the school, so you want the people who are directly involved in the school. We got a lot of permission levels from the original planning meeting about keeping the playground safe and making the school a happy place for kids to come to. That discussion gave us the ability to move forward and gave us focus. And then we had to find the money for it, which is never easy! There is no funding body that gives us money to do this sort of stuff. You know it's all geared around making sure these people are operating and contributing to the educational programs as our first priority. That is the reason

they are employed here and that is why they need to be well trained and well focused in that area.

You mentioned there was some training provided to the first men?

Well, it is ongoing. They go to full staff meetings every week, so any training that the school does — such as skills in literacy or numeracy — these people do too. They receive the same training as the teachers but they then go to grade meetings with their team each week.

This year we've started a regular timetable of release so once every fortnight they will have a two-hour training session about specific things that they want to do. Some of them want to get their drivers licence, learn how to screen-print, or do creative arts, so we'll try and do that.

At the moment in the planning meeting we are doing conflict resolution and communication skills and behaviour training for kids. That is most often the role that these guys fall into managing. How well they communicate with the kids, what sorts of relationships they have with the parents, how they handle a sticky situation are important so that it doesn't come back on to them negatively. We are talking about high-level skills there so we need to make sure of that. I have an expectation that the Aboriginal staff deal with those issues, but my responsibility then is to make sure that they are appropriately trained to be able to manage the issues. These are pretty hot topics.

Do the AEA's and the Aboriginal Support Workers have the same role?

Officially they are linked to specific programs, but in practice they are all very much in the same boat. Warren, who is the male AEA, has the most flexible program out of them. The men in the morning go straight out in to the playground and are on duty at 8.30 am. They are not off having smoko somewhere, they are out doing sports coaching at 8.30 am. They then go to class, have a 15-minute recess break, a half-hour lunch break and, as soon as their half-hour lunch break finishes, they are back out in the playground coaching sports teams. Since they've taken over the sports coaching we've accelerated our sports

There was a whole range of skills that they had that were just sitting out there not being fully utilised.



success quite amazingly. Last year in rugby league we had the boys in the final eight, and win the touch football competition in the north-west, and win a number of knockouts regionally. You know, those guys have got coaching tickets in league and touch football and they are phenomenal. The skills that they have been able to pass on to the kids — the boys in particular — have been enormous.

Have you noticed the parents being pleased with how the kids are going?

Yes, parents are increasingly participating in those things. You know, parents jump on the bus to go and watch sport or help organise an activity on the day — getting the jumpers organised, running the water, getting the team organised, helping out, staying overnight on trips.

There are limited numbers on the bus so you have got to make sure you book. Once it would just have been a teacher, the coach and the kids and that's it, but now that the kids are getting success their parents want to come along. We have a really strong code of conduct. We demand the best behaviour from our kids when they represent the school and in how they portray themselves (well dressed, uniforms right, behaviour spot on). The comments come back. The parents' walk away very proud of their kids, not only in what they did in the sport but how they represented themselves. So I think that is an added bonus. Quite often you can get locked down on the assumption that these kids are coming from Moree so they must be bad kids. We try and change that image a bit. I think that is important.

How did fathers start to be involved in this school?

In 2002 we took a group down to Newcastle to visit the Engaging Fathers Project — we took the AEA, one of the Aboriginal workers (Norm Sampson, who was one of the pops designated to coordinate it) and a female teacher. They had a wander around some Newcastle schools to see what was going on down there. They came back and said, 'This stuff is going well, we need to start to look at doing something like this.' I said, 'What does it look like,' and they said, 'They've got this "Smoko" thing. Let's do something like that. Let's have a morning tea.'

We got a group of about twenty dads for a morning tea but they said, 'There wasn't enough time for discussion.' So we held a barbecue. At the barbecue the discussion went a bit longer — a

couple of hours. Probably over the two activities we had 35 to 40 men and we started talking to them about what sorts of things they would like to see happening at school. And they said they would like to do some camps or something.

The discussion also raised other suggestions: 'Yeah, how about we have a working bee.' 'How about we throw a flag up to show here is the dads doing something.' We talked about what we would do at the working bee, maybe building some vegetable gardens and having the kids grow some vegies. Then we thought we needed a kitchen to cook the vegies. Someone suggested we organise a kitchen through charity groups. We got the Variety Club to come on board to sponsor it. The fathers did the gardens and we got an animal enclosure built for later on. Following that they did some beautification programs: building plants all around the fence line to jazz up the look of the school and watering systems to go with it. That was about a two-day to three-day program.

The vegetable gardens were heavy work and we probably got about 40 m of vegetable garden, all with raised beds. It has taken a while since that was finished at the end of 2002 to get it all together, and we have almost finished the kitchen now. Once we've got that done I think we should have a bit of a party and have some fun with it. Get the dads together for lunch, and have the kids around, take photographs and celebrate it once it all looks good.

That is quite a solid achievement isn't it — to have the gardens and the kitchen?

Yes, and they have got some more ideas of extending it a little bit more with a shade area, and brick paving, some tables and chairs. Whenever we have activities from here on in (like NATSI (National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander) Day and Trop Festival) that will become the food focal point where all the food and offerings and celebrations will happen. It's an important thing to do. We have a lot of barbecues here, what we call 'Get-to-know-you barbecues' where at 12 noon those dads and mums who do work can get away for half an hour to an hour and sit down under the trees and just meet the teachers. The parents find out who the teachers are and they get to know each other. Teachers can change over pretty quickly, so getting them to know who the personalities are and make connections is vital, otherwise they get seen as



not being part of the community and are probably treated a bit differently. There has got to be that trust and connection made, and when you are young and coming into teaching it's not always apparent that that is important. As you get older and a bit greyer you see the importance of it!

How do the employed dads support literacy?

They work in designated class areas, so one of them might work full-time in one class, or between two classes — or sometimes even three classes — and they're in that room working with those teachers all day. They are part of the daily timetable of the classrooms. When reading groups are on they are taking the reading groups and running the kids through it and in rotations — there might be a reading group happening with the teacher, a reading group happening with a dad, there will be kids on computers and kids on listening groups — and they all rotate. So the aide or support person is a pretty good part of that rotation in the day. These guys' skills are quite high. You know, over a number of years and with the training they have had they're now very much more astute at delivering good literacy program support for the kids. It just so happens that they are also sports coaches and dads, and all this other stuff — they are the bonuses.

From 9 am, when the class is on, till 11.00 am the men work with those boys who are easily distracted. We call them the 'scanners' — you walk into the classroom and see their heads pop up and they are checking out everything — what's going on, who is in here, what they are in for. And there are kids on another higher level to that — the kids who might be a bit violent, sometimes they are bullies, sometimes there are kids who need a lot of individual attention to stay focused on their work. The guys have got a role in making sure they are proactive in engaging those kids in their work. If things start to get a little bit tricky with them, the guys distract them, take them away to get them to focus back on their stuff. And so their day is very full-on. It demands a high level of skill, to be good at conflict resolution, to have good distraction and relationship building techniques, communication and so on.

The kids really do trust these guys. They hang off them. If I come in as the Principal with the authoritarian line there is only a certain amount of relationship building you can do. Whereas with these guys they can come in at a different angle



completely and often defuse things or distract things so that small issues don't escalate into big issues. They handle it at a low level and, you know, if these guys aren't working here I'm out of the place first.

So do you use suspension rates to decide if things are going well?

We suspend nine times out of 10, or 99 times out of 100, on violence. So any unprovoked, aggressive attack on another student, or two kids downing tools and holding fists up and going for it, would be automatically out the door. That would be most of our suspension rates. And they

are high coming off a holiday break. Unresolved issues of community violence or family conflict are sometimes brought in to school, either from over the weekend or the holiday break. Those issues take a lot of solving. The men are involved if two kids have a fight. The kids have to come into an office area or a working-out area, sit down and each get to tell their story. Then, over time with our men, we help these kids come to a solution. 'How do we work this out? How do we fix this up? What do you have to do to fix it? Is that the end of it? If anything else happens come and see me straight away and I'll be there. Don't go getting in a blue because I'll be here and will help you out because we don't want you out of school again.' So the guys have got a heavy role in preventing suspensions.

Where would you like to see the father involvement develop?

I'd like to see the men that we have on staff working in these roles get higher levels of skills. That way they can become contractors for this sort of work in schools on a wider basis than we have currently. We can't secure ongoing State or Federal funding for these programs. It's a continuous battle as to how we keep these guys involved in the school.

All I know is that the school cannot operate without them. It really is a dilemma. At some stage for them personally I would like to see them get the opportunity to capture their own energy to up-skill themselves — maybe to become private contractors for the different skills they have in sport or art or whatever. As for the fathers generally in the school, I think what we have operating here is unique and I don't think there are too many schools around like it. If I tried to

explain what I think is happening, I'd call it a 'fusion' concept. We are taking two elements and putting them together, and what we get is not the same as what either of the original pieces were. It is something completely of its own.

What are the bits that you have fused?

Basically we have a Black community from parent groups giving input to the school and we've got White teachers and White organisational structures. Now we've got a fusion of them working together, we've got staff and parents in the community working together. So what we get when we put them together is not necessarily one of each. It is a completely different package. And I'm just not sure exactly what it looks like but I know it is unique. When you come in to the place you know it is different — different in a very positive sense. I think there are many lessons to be learned from it.

Where do we go to next? Sometimes I think what we do in schools is that we try to invent too quickly. This is what I would call an eight-year to 10-year program — it hasn't just happened overnight. Little steps over time have contributed to it and helped it grow and it has relied on a consistency of approach. You can't come in and recreate this in 12 months or 24 months or 36 months. It is about having a whole philosophy change. It is about a whole way of thinking about getting the community into your school, getting permission levels and ways of communicating with each other, getting permission at different levels for what is going to be shared and what is going to be acted on. You never ever reach a utopia where everyone has full knowledge of how things operate and what can be done, but there is a relationship here that has grown and it is far different from what it was.

With a Diploma in Teaching and a Graduate Diploma in Aboriginal Education, Kiernan Houlahan has been Principal of Moree East Public School for 11 years. Originally, from Moree, Kiernan worked in a one teacher rural school and then in special education for 10 years. He is also a board member of the Moree Aboriginal Employment Strategy. You can contact Kiernan on 02 6752 1733 or moreeeast-p.school@det.nsw.edu.au

It's Not What You Know, It's Who You Know: Alternative partnerships for boys

According to Graham Hawes, the secret of successful student–community relationships is to identify appropriate members of the community and train them in ways of relating to kids — boys in particular. Before commencing any change, however, Graham says it is essential to ensure that the school structure and strategies are at a standard of excellence. In this environment the students learn and develop best when they are surrounded by quality in the organisation, in terms of both personnel and structures.

Graham recognises the value of his staff, who he believes embrace a culture of working to capacity, using the school as a springboard for career pathways and embracing change and technology. All teaching staff use a classroom management plan, a democratically formed set of class rules, and an anti-bullying plan which fits within the guidelines of school policy. In all classes each term students participate in the setting of short-, medium- and long-term goals both in academic fields and in social spheres. This enables students to be motivated by the opportunities the school provides.

Teachers work in a range of executive teams and are encouraged to source people outside the school environment to become involved in the school's activities. The school has developed many opportunities for community members to participate in activities. These include:

- Talk to a Literacy Learner, a program which enables parents to understand and teach their own child in all aspects of literacy;
- Regular organisational programs within the school such as, Parents in Effective Schools, classroom helpers, library helpers, canteen helpers, properties, uniform, physical education;
- Involvement in determining the structure of the school;
- The formation and implementation of key group initiatives for boys' education, the Mentors Program and the Community Tutors Program; and
- Studies of playground issues, such as over-used areas, under-used areas, 'trouble spots' and quiet areas.

Programs for individual or small groups of boys

There were boys whose needs were not being met by the school, its curriculum or society. The staff decided to develop a range of programs that would engage these boys in learning, decrease their negative behaviours and encourage relationships with adults other than their teachers. These programs take many forms, but the forging of relationships with adults from the community underpins them all.

THE MODIFIED CURRICULUM PROGRAM has operated for three years and involves the identification of casual teaching staff and community members who have expertise in suitable activities. Students are withdrawn from their mainstream class to participate in carefully planned activities designed to motivate them into further investigation of the activity. The withdrawal time comprises an element of social skilling, as well as literacy

Queanbeyan Public School has developed a many-layered program to partner community members with those boys who need a little extra care to bring out their strengths. Principal Graham Hawes discusses the program with the *Bulletin*.

With 800 students, Queanbeyan Public School, ACT, caters for a diverse group of learners with differing cultural backgrounds in a variety of educational settings. These settings take the form of distance education, special education and a variety of unique mainstream classes designed to meet specific individual student needs. Designs include classes using enrichment, multi-grade, inclusive structures, pods, language, computer centred, and parallel formats. The school culture emphasises inclusion, personal excellence, responsiveness and improvement, centring on the individual through an inquiry model of learning. Special programs for both boys and girls are testimony to the desire of the school to meet the needs of all students and their families.

Currently staff, students and the community are developing and furthering partnerships and relationships as a means of promoting the education of boys and girls.

and numeracy connected with the day's planned structure. The program usually concludes with a completed task, project or culminating activity.

Currently, the modified curriculum is being presented by a visual artist. During the term the group of boys will be exposed to a variety of media and styles such as, watercolour, landscapes, perspective, modern art and sculpture. Here, Graham talks about previous programs.

One time the class went bushwalking to identify plants. After the identification of plants in the wild, the kids identified the same plants in a local nursery then bought a selection to plant at the school. They then looked at the quality of the soil, what they needed to do to build up the quality of the soil and added appropriate fertilisers, so that they could plant the seedlings they had identified growing as native plants in the bush.

One of our community people is a keen fitness person, so he took the kids and the teacher to the gymnasium. He discussed the styles of equipment, demonstrated their use and had the kids go through the process in the gymnasium. As a consequence we are having some light weights brought in to the school for different groups of kids to undertake fitness regimes.

THE SOCIAL SKILLS PROGRAM involves the flexible use of teachers' aides to link with teaching staff who plan strategies for a small group of students. Within this small group there will be one student who is being specifically targeted. The group learns a variety of life skills tailored according to the needs and nature of the students. Such activities include communication, diet, growth, manners and etiquette.

Over the past few years one teacher in particular has done a lot of research in social skills, writing up her own programs of what kids need, what skills they need to have as they develop. She has made charts of different social skills, such as what it means when you are have a particular feeling. We look at the kids' feelings, talk to them about their feelings and what they can do to stop their feelings escalating into an aggressive angry sort of feeling — that is one part of it.

LEADERSHIP All senior students participate in leadership opportunities at their own level of potential. Throughout the school all students undergo training in speaking before a variety of groups. Such activities include class presentations, assemblies run and organised by students, debates within the school, oral presentations across grades and optional public speaking. This prepares a platform for leadership. Such leadership opportunities include prefects, captains, library monitors, peacekeepers, buddies, peer tutors, canteen monitors, technology reporters, editors, technicians, and gear stewards.

We have a person on our staff who goes to Toastmasters. He uses these skills and experience to run public speaking courses within the school. Our school culture is that all kids need to be able to talk in front of different groups in a variety of situations so it's not seen as an activity for sissies. Everyone puts their names down because it is seen to be 'cool' to be a public speaker and a debater and a person who can get up and run an assembly.

It links in with all the programs run at school because there is an emphasis across all the classes on public speaking and overall speaking. So we find that with the boys there is a culture of being confident in the school, even if you are a slow learner. For instance, we have a Special Ed area and over the last few years we have had a prefect who had a disability. So a person with a disability got up in front of audiences and made speeches. Our inclusive culture means you don't see the Special Ed kids with their dunces' caps. They are included in classes and everyone is developing an understanding of what it is like to have a disability and how those kids need to be treated.

TECHNOLOGY PROJECT A team of students, including some presenting difficulties, was chosen to control the flow of communication and operation of the school's intranet, classroom technology and newspaper publicity. In these roles students need to take responsibility, develop skills in effective listening, writing editing and proofing. It also means becoming conversant with technology, web sites and electronic portfolios.

We have a couple of technology projects where we have identified some kids to record events happening within the school. They are trained to be reporters, proofreaders and publishers and it is their role to liaise with newspapers. They are supported by another group of kids who are programmers and technicians, whose role is to keep the computers functioning in the school. Our teacher is training these kids to be the people who are the technology specialists. They also prepare the articles that go on our web site on a regular basis.

Each Friday they meet for an hour to work out what the programs are for next week and what special events are happening. At least one of them attends the event in the role of a journalist or photographer, so they take notes, write the notes up and present the article to the technical person responsible for putting it on the web site. The local newspapers also attend these events and these kids liaise with the media. Some of the boys in this program are kids who usually muck up, but because they are being motivated to participate they are just not mucking up.

Following several years of action research some classes are using technology as the basis for gathering and publishing information. These classes, from Year 2 to Year 4, allow staffing to be creative, using the expertise of teachers with an interest and philosophy in futures with computers. There are many advantages for boys in these classes.

For the past three years, through our action research, a group of teachers went to the Apollo Parkways School in Melbourne to look at the way their technology-based classrooms run. Unlike Apollo we are a quite poor school so we had to drastically modify their set-up, while retaining its essence. Essentially, computers become the central point of the classroom. Computers become the source of information, means of research and method of publishing for student work. We can't afford all of them to be set up, but at the moment we have two classrooms where there are about eight computers in each room. Consequently, the kids in those classrooms have access to the computers whenever they want. It becomes this thing that is like a pen and paper in a room but it is a computer.



The school is also currently employing an identified community member who is exposing a group of students to the use of technology in futures driven society. Through Lego, Lego-technics and robotics, the boys are actively putting their minds to positive problem solving.

MENTOR TEAM Volunteer community members are encouraged to work with small groups of students, often involving kids with social difficulties. Genuine and consistent role modelling of these people (most often males) has a very positive effect. Some gains have also been made by involving the grandparents of students with learning difficulties. Results are difficult to measure, but positive outcomes have occurred in the area of art, sport, literacy and music.

The mentors work with groups of kids in the classroom for a minimum of half-an-hour per week and build up a relationship with them. We try to encourage male mentors — usually retired blokes — who build an affinity with the kids. Within that group would be our targeted kid.

There was one boy who was having difficult times at school and at home. He was unable to settle and his behaviour was disruptive to his and others' learning. We approached his grandmother to work in his classroom one morning a week with the notion of building a consistent relationship at the school. At first the boy was embarrassed but as time went on he began to look forward to her being in his classroom and would sit proudly doing his work. Over a six-month period his behaviour gradually settled, even though some of his home-life problems continue. An additional spin-off was the restoration of relations between the grandmother and the parents, which was very beneficial for the boy.



DANCE AND MUSIC GROUPS The school has employed a young male with outstanding personal qualities who is presenting the personal development physical education program as part of release time. In partnership with an experienced progressive teacher, students are being exposed to movement, warm ups, cool downs, agility and dance in an excitingly 'cool' manner. This is linked with separate boys' and girls' dance groups during the lunch break, emphasising the personal choice of students to follow pathways and interests and develop expertise.

One of our teachers, who goes to gym, identified an aerobics instructor as a person who would be fantastic with our kids. Consequently, I now employ him two days a week to do dance with boys and girls. It's been so successful that we entered Wakakirri, a national competition in dance. We did really well in the ACT section, and we also went on to the national finals. We did extremely well with all the boys with behavioural issues. We didn't choose our best groups. We trained these particular boys and made them into a Dance Group. It was fantastic to see these muck-up kids change before your eyes. They were motivated by this young fellow who is probably twenty, dresses like the most fashionable person you would see down town, with the hat on back to front and all that sort of stuff. He has impeccable manners and behaviour himself and is a fantastic role model for these kids. The kids admire him for his personal qualities and his dance skills, not simply because he's a cool dresser. They model his actions and manners. It is so superb.

For many years the school has developed a standard of excellence in its choirs. Currently, with great dedication at staff level, targeted students are included in both band and choir, which again motivates their thinking about future pathways. Staff and community are always open to alternative methods of learning while maintaining the emphasis on literacy, numeracy, other key learning areas, while the whole learning community is embedded in its core values.

We have absolutely terrific choirs and the culture in our school, in all of our assemblies, is that we sing. So when we audition for the choirs, quite often these muck-up kids come along because they are used to singing and often have fantastic voices. This year we are doing an individual item at the Opera House concert, so it will be just our school before a packed Opera House audience. Some of these muck-up kids are also in our band. One of our worst behaved kids is one of our best performers — one of those people that can play by ear. It's fantastic to see him up on stage performing in an environment and in a manner he would traditionally not have considered or been able to access.

COMMUNITY TUTOR PROGRAM Our Learning Support Teacher teaches groups of senior citizens from our community in the skills they need to teach students reading. The students are withdrawn from classes to spend time one-on-one with these senior tutors.

When you walk throughout the school you can often see these people in nooks and crannies, just one-on-one with kids doing their reading. Not only are they getting reading skills, they are also having positive conversations with an older male or female tutor who is feeling good about themselves for helping but really assisting the kids to feel good about themselves as well. And that happens daily with a whole host of mums and dads and grandparents in the school.

It is obvious that Queanbeyan Public School would be a very different place without its volunteers, despite its highly motivated and dedicated staff. The building of relationships and partnerships that reach into the community not only lightens the load for teachers; it also adds a diversity and excitement to learning that changes the lives of boys who would otherwise be falling through the cracks in the system. As Graham says:

We have over 200 volunteers. It's not that this community is different to any other, but you can sense it is when you come into the school. People will say to me, 'Gosh, you can feel that we've got so many beaut teachers but also so many mums and dads who give up a bit of their time each week.'

Graham Hawes began teaching in 1969 in a one-teacher school at Rydal, near Lithgow. He has been Principal of Queanbeyan Public School since 1997. An avid hockey coach, Graham authored, 'Conference Coaching' (in *Sportscoach*), a system of achieving potential for developing and elite athletes. Graham can be contacted on 02 6297 2144 or email graham.hawes@det.nsw.gov.au.

Blokes and Their Kids at School: Making it work for men in Windale, NSW

Can you tell me how Schools as Community Centres operates?

Liz: Schools as Community Centres (SACC) is a State-Government-funded interagency program managed by the four NSW departments of community services (DoCS), health (HDNSW), housing (DH), and education and training (DET). The Department of Education & Training is the lead agency responsible for the administration of the program. The program has a focus on children aged up to eight years of age and makes sure we do everything we can to ensure that, when children do go to school, they are in a greater state of readiness for learning. Many children in Schools as Community Centres (SACC) don't go to pre-school. Quite often it is too expensive or there is no access to a pre-school.

Another part of the program is looking at supporting the family by teaching parents how to play with their kids, how to talk to them, how to read to them and the importance of all of these factors. For many of these parents school has not been the happiest of experiences, and quite often they are reluctant to come to school. So when we have a SACC — which is generally located in the school grounds but quite often separate from the front office — people feel comfortable going there. That helps the transition in terms of those parents being able to access the school and its support services, and feel comfortable about being in the school.

The critical partners are DET, DoCS and the two departments of health and housing. They are our key partners. At Windale we also work closely with Lake Macquarie Council. The NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (formerly the Ageing and Disability Department) is another group that we need to have greater contact with and we are focusing on that. They are the main government agencies. They all have a very significant role to play in terms of setting up the best conditions possible for these young people and their families.

Getting all of these different agencies to work together is the trick of creating a successful SACC. It is definitely a challenge! It takes a lot of commitment and time because it also challenges the way people work. Because we all work in our own departmental way we've all got our own different language. For example, we all plan and report on our outcomes in very different ways. Once you have established really strong relationships with the different partners, when there is a hiccup, you can always go back to that base relationship and look at what we were doing, why it didn't work for that person, and what can we do better.

How is Schools as Community Centres funded?

Liz: There is a commitment from DET, and in Schools as Community Centres we are the lead agency. In a District Office, for example, where I am based, we have to make a decision about how that program is resourced and supported. Not in terms of financial resources but human resources — how we are going to find the time to provide the required level of support. There is no extra funding to run the program. That is a challenge, I can assure you.

The Windale Schools As Community Centre is building a strong community partnership in Lake Macquarie, NSW, and making a difference by engaging men in the education of their kids. Wendy Lawrence and Liz Rushton speak to the *Bulletin*.



For many of these parents school has not been the happiest of experiences.

*'Unequal in Life'...
identified the
Windale community
as the most
disadvantaged
community in NSW
and Victoria.*

Wendy: My actual position and salary, and the centre itself, are funded in a minor way by Families First. The program budget as it stands receives \$10,000 a year to run the program in the community in addition to my salary, to implement the service in the community.

Why was the Windale area chosen?

Liz: In Windale's case it was very much driven by Professor Tony Vinson's 1999 report *Unequal in Life*, which identified the Windale community as the most disadvantaged community in NSW and Victoria. So there was a whole of Government approach to address the findings that Tony had made.



In the past SACCs were often placed where there was excess capacity, basically, free room, but we have argued against that because we want the centre based in a place where it is needed. So DET has made a commitment, and this, I think, is a very positive one, to ensure that demountable buildings are actually brought to the site that has been identified as the most appropriate place for the SACC. Then we form a management committee at the local level that plans what they are going to do, the vision and aim for the project, looking at how it is going to be managed and how we are going to work together.

Do you have any parents on the management committee?

Wendy: Not on the management committee, but there are two levels of management and advisory. One of the things we have in our centre, which

lots of centres probably don't, is a local advisory committee. This is made up of on-the-ground workers — people who are doing the work at the coal face — and a very wide representation of community people who are all parents and mostly people within our target range (parents with children aged up to eight years).

You talk about a strengths-based approach. Can you expand on that?

Wendy: Traditionally community-based development was based on the enactment of a needs analysis in which people went into the community and found out what was wrong with the community and 'fixed it up'. It doesn't work. And it probably hasn't worked for a really long time. Consequently, communities such as Windale — that over time have had lots of community development trying to be enacted — have found themselves in the same place they have always been. What we do is a strengths project, looking at the way in which the community has strengths and assets. We work from the basis of 'let's work with what we've got' rather than look at what is wrong and try and fix it up.

What strengths did you identify in your community?

Wendy: The very fact that the community wants its children to do well. They support them in education and support the fact that education, health and wellbeing is really important to their families. The individual strengths of families, looking at parenting and organisational skills and the willingness to participate. All of those types of strengths that we needed to actually implement our program. Over time we continue to develop that register of community strengths and work with that rather than focusing on what is wrong with the community.

So what is the flip side? What challenges did you face?

Wendy: I guess the fact that we are a new service to an area, and coming in on the tail of fifty years of social intervention. The first thing they wanted to know was how long I was going to stay. We are not a program that has a finite term so, the fact is, yes, we are here for the long haul and we are working with them, not in spite of them. It was really about looking at what was great about Windale and working from that. I mean perceptions, too. We would be a bit silly to think that schools themselves were au fait with this sort

of service. That was a challenge for everyone — establishing a community centre smack in the middle of a school.

Liz: We have been working with bureaucratic systems in some of our funding. We apply for special funding and we write strengths-based funding submissions that actually say, 'We have got all these great things going on in our community but we really need the money to make things better.' It is a very different way of looking at funding, because traditionally to get funding you would have to find out how rotten everything was in order to get funding because it was that 'fix it up' model.

It is so much healthier.

Wendy: It is healthy and it is empowering. It is saying to a community, 'You have all these resources. Use your resources to make your community a better place for your children and for you.' I think also it is a community-building philosophy rather than a community-denigrating philosophy, as sometimes it might otherwise have been seen.

Why did you target the involvement of men?

Wendy: Lots of agencies have a policy of not working with men because men always seem to be the perpetrators of everything that isn't wonderful. In our community unemployment remains an extremely volatile challenge. So we had fathers hanging around with excess spare time. Often they were suffering from depression at not being able to work or were on sickness benefits. There were also a lot of kids without good male role models. We decided (well, we didn't decide, it was decided for us when we looked at what we needed to work with) that men were left out of the education perspective. Because we have very few male teachers — we have a very feminised education department at the moment — we needed to work with men, and men needed to be involved in education. We became involved with the Men and Boys Program and the Engaging Fathers Project from the Family Action Centre quite early.

How did you go about involving the men?

Wendy: Well, with men — and particularly with men who probably don't have a high level of education — it is about the way in which you

actually engage them. It is about being interested in their interests. I know more about darts and football now than I ever thought I would in my whole life. We worked with what they see as relevant to them.

But how did you actually access them?

Wendy: I hung out a lot! Part of the strengths-based philosophy is built on relationships. That building relationships within the community actually increases community safety. So I just made it a purpose to go out and talk to fathers. If they were out in the playground or bringing their kids to school I just went out and talked to them.

And what was their reaction?

Wendy : I think they thought I was going to do something terrible to them actually! Many of them were extremely reticent. One of them didn't talk to me for three months and every time I went near him I thought he was going to run away. Eventually he understood I wanted to find out what he felt was relevant because he is bringing up a daughter as a single parent — and very well might I add. Now he actually does all the maintenance on my centre, he works in the Red Cross Breakfast Club and is probably one of the most responsive males in the community.

What types of activities are the men doing now?

Wendy : They are working across the board. We have quite a few programs looking at transition because the community has quite a lot of difficulty in accessing pre-school. Two of the transition programs are funded so we are able to hire and train local people to work with children, so we have mentor programs. In one program, where children's transition to school may be influenced by the fact that their attendance and behaviour is less than wonderful, we work with those kids. We have men working in that program and it is extraordinarily successful — it has been absolutely brilliant. When that program finished this year all of the men actually went on to volunteer in those kids' classrooms so they can go on working with them.

We have men who have now become Teachers Aides in the school. We have men who work with two of our playgroup. Men also bring their kids to playgroup, which is something we are fairly chuffed about because that is one area in our community where a lot of men didn't participate.

It is saying to a community, 'You have all these resources. Use your resources to make your community a better place for your children and for you.'



The behaviour of boys really is very different.



We have men who are involved in the Breakfast Club, who read with kids and are involved in our reading program. We have men in the learning centre who are working with kids. One of our dads is also extremely skilled in technology and he teaches our community computer class and he looks after all the computing in my centre as well. So, we have men working in just about everything we do.

What is the Breakfast Club?

Wendy: It is funded by the Red Cross. We have two community people every morning who, for 20 cents, give kids breakfast (well, for 20 cents if they have got it and if not for nothing). A lot of our kids simply don't eat a good breakfast and we think it is really important for them. It is a really good social atmosphere as well and is great for group skills. From 8 am to 9 am each morning we have a breakfast at the school for the kids — we have about 26 kids every morning. Every day one of our dads is there, which the kids really love — it's great.

Have you noticed any particular impact on boys from this program?

Wendy : Yes, it does have an impact on boys. Because we are able to have really good role models for boys in every sphere that we operate, it is very normal now to have men around the school. It 'de-demonises' the whole thing about

men in a very low socioeconomic community as well. It is very easy to blame men for everything that goes wrong and it is quite traditional to demonise men. It has really taken that whole business away of men not being involved in education and boys particularly, I have noticed, start building really great relationships with them.

Do teachers report any changes in boys' behaviour?

Wendy: Yes. One of the most successful initiatives is when we team men up with boys to work with them and build relationships. The behaviour of boys really is very different. We had one young child who was very attached to his mother and found it difficult to form relationships with men. So one of our grandfathers (who is actually a custodial grandfather with a grandchild he looks after full-time) was paired up with this young fellow, and within seven weeks of starting school he had not a problem. And this child was kicking and screaming when he was first brought into the program. He just loves this fellow.

How do the men themselves feel about their involvement?

Wendy: I think the very fact that they have stayed on even after the end of the paid part of the program, when a lot of the programs finish, shows that they really value what they are doing. When we have any funding that comes into the centre, it

is part of our philosophy that it should stay within the community. So they know that we are promoting the economic development of the community as well. We hire people from the local community and the skills and strengths they have is amazing. Our IT person has been unemployed for quite some time, but his skills are absolutely amazing! He was actually told last week that if his address wasn't Windale he would get a job, which is really disappointing. He teaches technology and we put together pieces of a computer yesterday and he has taken it home to rebuild me another computer so the kids can have it in the centre to use for homework.

Do you have anything that either of you would like to add?

Liz: I think that while we might say we have had a lot of challenges, and we would be foolish to deny that, the main thing is that it has been exceptionally rewarding. Rewarding to see the power of what all of these agencies and people who are so committed to young people and their families can do when they work together. I think it is a much more powerful service because it is a coordinated service and you see a more holistic person, rather than seeing a person who comes in for this bit of the treatment or that. I think the other thing we have as our major driver (and the community, I believe, are starting to really value this) is valuing education and that education is a way to break the cycle of poverty. Really, many of the parents think that this is the way forward for their kids and that they will have every opportunity in life, so they are very supportive of what is going on at the school. I think what it has done is very much put the school back into the heart of its community. When Wendy is having a tough day or people at the school are tired, it makes it worthwhile to see that what they are doing really is making a big difference for a particular family and their children.

Wendy: Another spin-off is that a lot of our fathers have gone on to get work out of the training and participation they have had in our programs. That in itself is really what we are after — because employment is a significant factor in turning families around. The employment we are able to offer, and then their going on to get other employment, has been really satisfying and it happens quite a lot.

When you were saying how the men have learnt to value education for their kids, I thought there is probably a kind of reassessment for themselves about education too. As their skills increase and they get more training, I'd imagine it brings them into the cycle of education as well.

Wendy: Our person who teaches the technology class has gone back to TAFE and now he is an accredited assessor. There are lots of things like that happening. You know, when people realise that this is a way out and are given the opportunity to use their skills and feel valued for using them, that gives them that extra oomph to go back and do some more training. A lot of our parents have also gone back to adult literacy courses because their literacy was poor and they knew it was holding them back. That, for us, is terrific.

I think what it has done is very much put the school back into the heart of its community.



PHOTO: EDWARD CROSS

Wendy Lawrence is currently the Facilitator at the Schools as Community Centre at Windale. Wendy has been involved in community development roles with the Department of Education & Training since the early 1980s. She worked for most DET programs which attempt to increase the access and equity for students and families who live in communities with socioeconomic disadvantage. Wendy can be contacted at Wendy.Lawrence@det.nsw.edu.au

Liz Rushton is currently District Superintendent of Lake Macquarie District, with responsibility for the provision of quality educational outcomes in the 70 schools in Lake Macquarie. Liz has had a wide variety of educational experiences, most recently being Principal of a large high school of 1400 students in a socioeconomically disadvantaged community. Under her leadership, Lake Macquarie has implemented many significant initiatives to improve learning outcomes for students. Liz can be contacted at 02 4974 4000 or liz.m.rushton@det.nsw.edu.au

Research Section

Turning Boys into Fine Men: The role of economic and social policy

Don Weatherburn, Director of the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research, recently gave the keynote address at the Boys To Fine Men: School and Community Partnerships conference. We thought it was worth repeating.

I want to begin by stating the obvious: crime in Australia is a serious problem.

In the last international crime victim survey Australia had higher rates of crime than any of the other seventeen countries surveyed.¹ I hasten to point out that the international crime survey doesn't measure the prevalence of very serious crimes, such as homicide or shooting incidents. We don't look so bad where these offences are concerned, at least by comparison with the United States. The crime problems we do have, though — such as burglary, motor vehicle theft and assault — are serious enough.

Every year in Australia about one in 20 households suffer a break-in, about one in 60 suffer a motor vehicle theft and more than one in 10 young males aged 15 to 19 suffer an assault, usually at the hands of another young male.² Many people are put in fear of crime by threats, intimidation and verbal abuse. As with most categories of crime, these sorts of offences are overwhelmingly committed by young males.

During the last five years, more than 26 000 young people appeared in the NSW Children's Court charged with criminal offences.³ More than 80 per cent of them were boys. Yet the juvenile crime that washes up on the shores of our justice system is but a fraction of the total that exists. Surveys of secondary school students indicate that, by the time they reach Year 10, nearly 20 per cent of boys have broken into a house, shop or building to steal something. By the same age, about 13 per cent have stolen or helped steal a motor vehicle of some kind.⁴

Shocking though these figures are, they aren't unique to NSW or Australia. Similar Surveys in the United States and Britain have found similar results. The question they beg, as ever, is this: Why do so many young people, and young boys in particular, end up involved in crime?

Social approaches to juvenile crime

There have been two broad approaches to answering this question: one of which finds fault with society and the other of which finds fault with the individual and/or his or her family. These two different approaches have led to big and sometimes bitter differences over what should be done to control crime.

Back in the 1960s and early 1970s the dominant theories of crime were social. Kids got involved in crime, it was thought, because their opportunities for legitimate income and social status were blocked by poverty and unemployment. The solution to crime, in this view, was to alleviate poverty

and unemployment and reduce the level of social and economic inequality.

This theory made a great deal of sense, because it explained why poorer areas always have higher crime rates, and why so many of those arrested by police are poorly educated and unemployed. All the same, the theory wasn't without its problems.

No-one could satisfactorily explain, for example, why so many young unemployed people *don't* plunge into crime, why so many in fact settle down, get a job, have children and live law-abiding lives. Complications like this were happily ignored during the long lazy summer of the 1960s when crime rates in most western countries remained low and stable.

More than 70 per cent of Sydney residents in the early 1970s believed that crime was caused by some combination of poor parenting and socioeconomic disadvantage. Less than a third at that time favoured tougher law and order policies over primary prevention, as the best means of dealing with crime⁵. The same was probably true in most Western countries.

By the late 1970s, though, social theories of crime and the welfare programs they'd spawned were in serious strife. The problem was rising crime. A decade after the War on Poverty in the United States had begun, most general indicators of economic and social disadvantage were on their way down, but crime rates were on their way up.⁶ The same was true in Australia.

Between 1964 and 1980 in this country:

- Serious assault and motor vehicle theft rates more than doubled;
- Home burglaries more than tripled; and
- The robbery rate quintupled.

Against this backdrop, throwing money and social support at poor families to combat juvenile crime began to look like a dangerous form of naive idealism. Like the judge in Jean Genet's *The Thief's Journal*, many people began to believe that unemployment is just an excuse for crime, not an explanation.

The anomalies that had been happily ignored a

decade earlier now struck everyone as too obvious to be ignored. 'Why didn't crime rates rise during the Great Depression?' the critics asked. 'Why don't all poor families or unemployed men get involved in crime?' Good questions, to which no-one had a satisfactory answer.

The air started to fill with talk about the need to hold offenders accountable, to make them responsible for their actions, to make sure that those who do the crime do the time, as the saying goes. Crime experts, not for the first time, found themselves on the back foot. Policy-makers, not for the last time, began taking their advice on crime control from public opinion pollsters and talk back radio hosts, rather than from those whose job it is to try and understand and find ways of preventing crime.

Individual-level approaches to juvenile crime

With the popularity of social theories of crime on the wane, theories that ascribed crime to individual or family factors came to the fore.

The idea that juvenile crime might have something to do with poor parenting was hardly new. During the 1980s, though, a veritable mountain of research emerged confirming the importance of parental behaviour to juvenile crime.

Poor parental supervision, lack of emotional attachment between parent and child, family violence, child neglect and abuse, and erratic discipline were all found to increase the risk, duration and seriousness of juvenile offending.⁷ Of course, the process isn't always uni-directional. It often starts with violent or antisocial behaviour on the part of a child, which parents then unwittingly reinforce.

Such complications, though, don't alter the basic fact that parents exert a profound influence on the risk of juvenile involvement in crime. Psychologists often measure that power by seeing how much better than chance they can do using information about a parenting factor to predict delinquency.

Knowing nothing more about a parent than how much time they spend doing things with their children can improve your capacity to predict whether those children will become delinquent, by between 30 and 50 per cent.⁸ Discoveries like these didn't immediately lead on to new prescriptions for crime control.

During most of the 1980s the focus of crime control policy in the United States, Britain and Australia remained firmly fixed on the need to get tougher with offenders. In the 1990s, though, evidence began to emerge that early intervention could actually *prevent* juvenile crime.

Even something as simple as providing practical and emotional support to families, and a more stimulating intellectual environment for children in the first five years of a child's life, was found to more than halve the risk that a child would grow up to become a chronic delinquent.⁹

Interest in early intervention grew still further with the emergence of evidence that early intervention didn't have to be that 'early' to be effective. Interventions with adolescents, such as those designed to counter the influence of criminal gangs and the use of weapons, also turned out to be moderately effective in reducing the risk of juvenile involvement in crime.¹⁰

Soon, even flint-hearted economists got into the act. The RAND corporation, a fairly conservative American think-tank, surprised everyone when it came out with a report suggesting early intervention was a more cost-effective way of dealing with crime than conventional sanctions, such as imprisonment.¹¹

None of this, of course, dampened public and political enthusiasm for tougher law and order policies. But it did produce a wave of enthusiasm for early intervention programs, which began springing up everywhere, attracting support from conservatives and reformers alike.

Conservatives liked early intervention because it was predicated on the assumption of parental rather than social responsibility for crime. Reformers liked it because it offered some relief from the endless demand for tougher penalties and more police that so characterises public discourse on law and order.

In all the excitement about early intervention, though, everyone seemed to forget that poor parenting, like delinquency, also has its causes;

factors that deserve no less attention than the relationship between parenting and crime. Everyone also seemed to forget that involvement in crime for many young people is just a passing phase: one that usually ends not long after it begins. These two facts challenge both the popular preoccupation with punitive law and order policies, and the notion that we can deal effectively with crime without going any further than the offender and his or her family.

Let me now take a closer look at these two issues.

The influence of economic and social stress on crime

No social group has a monopoly on poor parenting. Wealthy families are just as capable of neglecting, rejecting or abusing their children as poor families. Families where both parents are present are just as capable of bringing up delinquent kids as sole parent families.

At the margin, though, parents facing economic stress, in the absence of social supports, are more likely to experience problems with parenting that put their kids at risk of involvement in crime.¹² Those parenting problems are precisely the ones I mentioned earlier as common precursors of juvenile involvement in crime: things like poor parental supervision, child neglect and erratic, inconsistent discipline.

This is not surprising when you think about it. The task of rearing kids can be difficult at the best of times. Even those on a good income often have trouble balancing the competing demands of work and family life.

It's more difficult for someone who has two or three children, no supportive partner and who survives on social security or a low-wage job. It's more difficult still if you're a sole parent living in poverty with no close friends, relatives or neighbours to call upon for support. It's even worse if, in addition to these problems, you also have a drug problem or suffer from depression or have to put up with an abusive, violent partner.

These things don't make it impossible for someone to be a good parent. But they do make it a great deal harder. Inevitably, and tragically, some families fall by the wayside.

We should hardly be surprised to discover, then, that people in this position are more likely to reject, neglect or poorly supervise their kids, or

discipline them in a way that is abusive, erratic and inconsistent. We should also hardly be surprised to discover that kids living in areas with high rates of poverty and unemployment, and high rates of family breakdown, are more likely to get involved in crime.

And that's exactly what we find. The first graph (right) shows the per capita rate of juveniles convicted of a property or violent crime in each urban postcode of NSW, plotted against the corresponding poverty rate (i.e. households earning less than \$16 000) for the postcode.

(If you are wondering why there are so few points, it's because I've grouped the postcodes in blocks of 20 to make the graph clearer.)

As you can see, the higher the percentage of households living in poverty, the higher the percentage of its young people who have a conviction for a property or violent offence.

You see much the same result when you look at the relationship between family dissolution and crime: the higher the rate of family dissolution in a neighbourhood, the higher the rate of juvenile participation in crime.

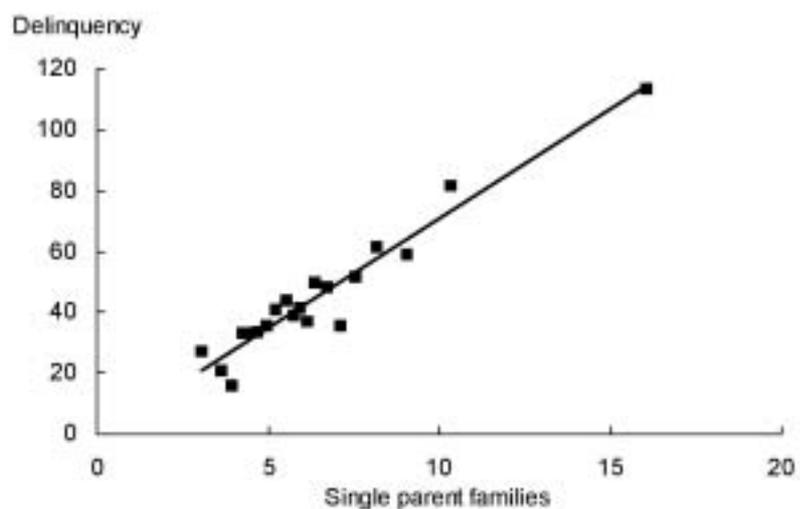
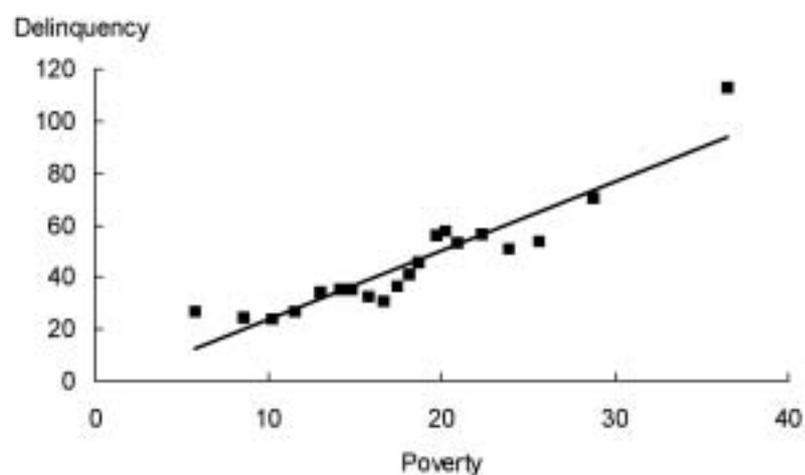
These findings aren't coincidental. This is not a case of the so-called ecological fallacy. The importance of poverty and family dissolution, as predictors of poor parenting, has been shown in studies of individual families, in which other important factors have been taken into account.¹³

By and large, then, poverty and unemployment don't influence crime by prompting otherwise law-abiding citizens to offend. The process is much more insidious than this. Economic and social stress influence crime by exerting a corrosive effect on the parenting process. But things don't just end there.

To understand the full effects of economic and social stress on crime we need to step back from individual families and look at the neighbourhoods in which they live.

A poor family living in a lower middle-income neighbourhood has only its own problems to contend with, and might be lucky enough to get practical or emotional support from neighbours or local civic institutions.

But consider what happens in neighbourhoods where household poverty, unemployment and family dissolution are rife. Kids in these



neighbourhoods, rendered susceptible to involvement in crime by poor parenting, grow up surrounded by other kids in a similar predicament.

Teenagers who are unsupervised, unloved or rejected by their parents are much more susceptible to delinquent peer influence.¹⁴ So in poor neighbourhoods with high rates of family dissolution, the rate of entry into crime is much greater, fuelled on the one hand by inadequate parenting, and on the other, by the influence of delinquent peers.

You can see this in the second graph (above), which is based on data I've drawn from the West Australian Child Health Survey. It shows the differing effects of poor parental supervision on juvenile offending, for families living in crime-prone versus non crime-prone neighbourhoods.

As you can see, while poor parental supervision greatly increases the risk of involvement in crime,

wherever you live, the effect is much more pronounced for families living in crime-prone neighbourhoods. The differences are significant. But so too are the effects.

In neighbourhoods characterised by high levels of economic and social stress, the crime problems of one generation plant the seeds of disorder for the next generation.

Transient and persistent juvenile offending

Well, all this must sound terribly deterministic and depressing. So let me try and inject a note of optimism into the picture.

You might have got the impression from what I have said so far that the slightest defect in parenting is enough to send boys off into a life of crime. Nothing could be further from the truth.

A lot of crime committed by boys is transient and opportunistic. They arrive in adolescence drowning in testosterone, desperate for excitement and lacking the self-restraint that will later come with adulthood. Being caught by their parents, the school or the police is usually enough to stop the vast majority of them from further offending.

You can see evidence of this in the graph below, which shows the number of court appearances for each of 34 000 young people we tracked from their first juvenile court appearance to their last.¹⁵

As you can see, 70 per cent of juveniles who appear once never return. Eighty-five per cent only ever appear twice.

Most young boys who find themselves in trouble with the law, then, are only transiently involved in crime. They commit a few offences; usually of a non-violent kind, and then stop offending by the time they're in their late teens or early twenties.¹⁶

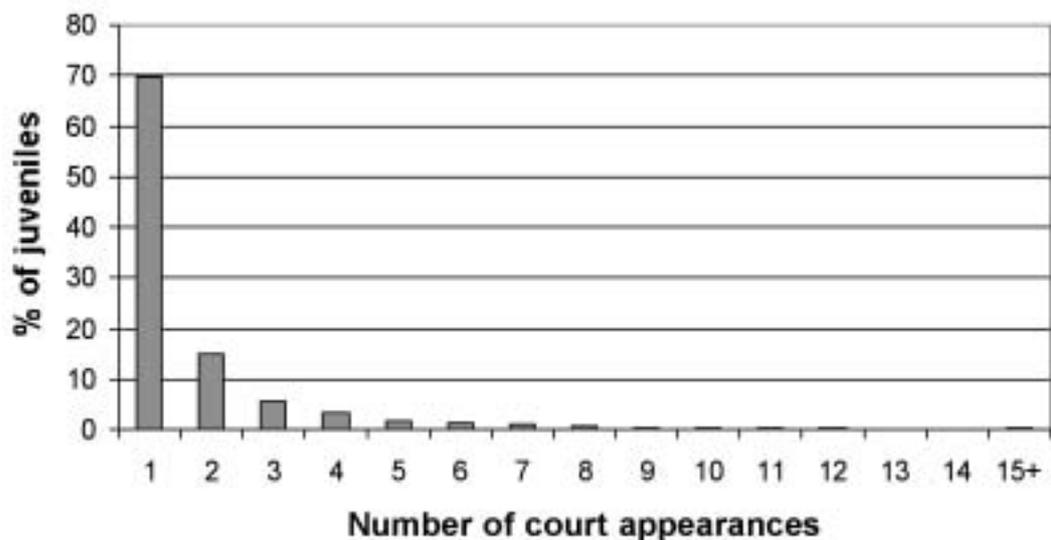
Sadly, for a small but influential minority of boys this isn't true. They come from homes where the parenting has been seriously inadequate and they reach adolescence with a long history of aggression and antisocial behaviour toward their parents, their peers and their teachers.¹⁷

They get into trouble at a rate that sometimes beggars comprehension. Almost half of all juvenile court appearances come from the 15 per cent of boys who have more than two court appearances. More than a third come from the nine per cent of kids who've been arrested four or more times.

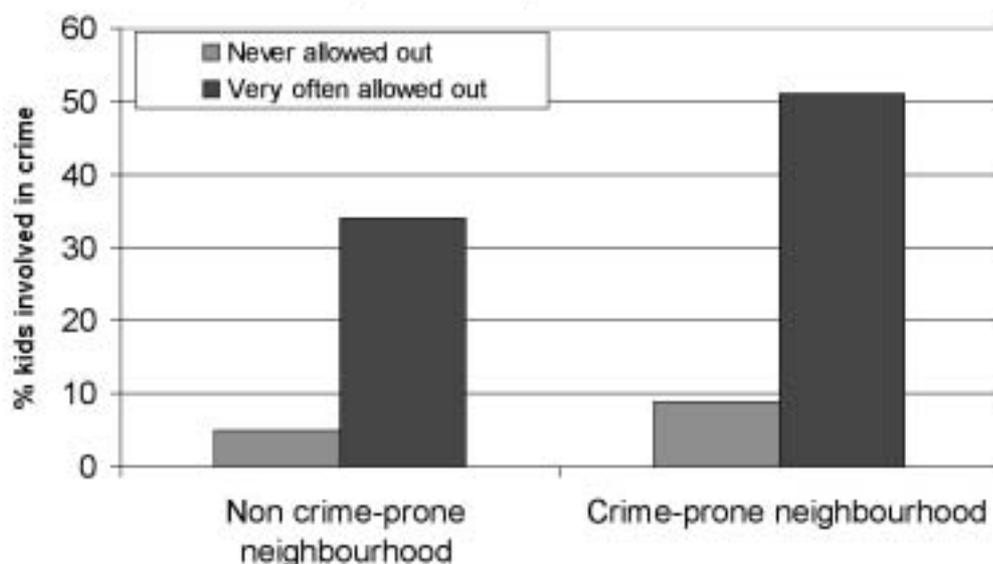
Even so, these young people are not beyond redemption. What happens to them from adolescence onwards depends upon a host of circumstantial factors:

- Whether they make it through school;
- Whether they get a job;
- How long it takes them to get a job;
- Whether they get into a good relationship;
- Whether they become dependent on drugs; and

Distribution of the number of court appearances



Effect of neighbourhoods and parental supervision on crime



- Whether they find ways of making money from selling drugs or other illegal goods.

Among these things, school, work and drugs stand out as particularly important.

For a boy who fails at school the transition between school and work is likely to be a long one, and the rewards from his effort to find a job fairly meagre. If he gets through school but there are few jobs when he leaves, the same problem will occur.

Each month that passes without work further tips the balance in favour of crime as opposed to legitimate income-earning activity.¹⁸ Each subsequent criminal conviction further diminishes his job prospects, thereby further tipping the balance in favour of crime.¹⁹

Each plunge into heroin, cocaine or amphetamine use to escape depression and low self-esteem increases the risk of dependence or brain damage, and thereby further increases the risk or depth of involvement in crime.

Reducing juvenile crime

So what are the implications of all this for juvenile crime prevention? Well, the implications differ greatly, depending upon whether you are talking about transient or persistent juvenile offenders.

Few transient offenders ever get caught, and those that are caught, by definition, won't re-offend. This fact tempts some people to say we should ignore them, that non-violent property crime is just a case of kids playing up on the way to growing up.

But we *can't* afford to ignore the crime problems caused by transient juvenile offenders. Their individual contributions to crime may be small, but their collective contribution is enormous. Non-violent crime is not trivial.

Just ask anyone who's come home to find their house trashed and their belongings gone, or whose kids can't use school or playground facilities because they're constantly being vandalised.

This said, there's no point throwing the book, in terms of harsh penalties or even family intervention, at kids who won't reoffend anyway.

The best way to deal with the crime problems caused by transient offenders is to reduce the opportunities and incentives for crime. There's plenty of evidence, for example, that young people are less likely to offend when the risks of apprehension for crime are high, than when they are low.²⁰ Random breath testing is a good illustration of this.

But there are also ways of reducing the opportunities and incentives for crime that don't

The money we spend incarcerating juvenile offenders would, in many instances, be better spent treating or trying to rehabilitate them.

involve increasing the amount of contact between police and young people.

Things like:

- Increasing school retention rates;
- Reducing school truancy;
- Providing adequate recreation opportunities for young people;
- Rapid repair of vandalised facilities;
- Enforcing restrictions on the sale and consumption of alcohol; and
- Prosecuting businesses that buy stolen goods.

All these things are helpful in dealing with transient offenders because they're opportunistic and impulsive. None of them, though, is likely to be of much help when dealing with the crime problems caused by persistent juvenile offenders.

So what do we do with them? Most persistent offenders acquire a criminal record, so one option is to increase the rate at which we imprison recidivist juvenile offenders. However, even the most optimistic research to date suggests that incapacitation is not a very cost-effective way of reducing juvenile crime.²¹

The money we spend incarcerating juvenile offenders would, in many instances, be better spent treating or trying to rehabilitate them. There's good evidence that treatment for drug dependence is an effective way of reducing re-offending.²²

There's also good evidence, despite earlier suggestions to the contrary, that it is possible to rehabilitate offenders using methods such as conferencing, cognitive behavioural therapy or training in basic life skills.²³

These options, though, have their limitations. Many young people, for example, in the early stages of drug dependence, won't admit they have a problem and don't want anything do with drug treatment.

Rehabilitation is a goal well worth pursuing, but existing programs don't yet produce effects dramatic enough to affect overall levels of crime. It would clearly be better if we could reduce the rate at which young people *become* persistent offenders, rather than increase the rate at which we catch them, put them behind bars or put them in treatment.

Early intervention programs offer us one avenue for achieving this, but it's doubtful whether early

intervention on its own will ever be enough to deal with the parenting problems that lie behind juvenile crime.

Last year in Australia there were nearly 130 000 reports of child neglect or abuse.²⁴

And this is just the tip of the iceberg. Many chronic cases of poor parenting pass without ever coming to official attention. It would be an impossible task trying to identify every family where the kids are at risk of involvement in crime.

Even if we could do it, governments simply don't have the resources to provide three to five years of intensive intervention to every family whose children are deemed to be at risk.

This leaves us with just one option: doing more to ameliorate the conditions that foster inadequate parenting in the first place. Which brings me to the main point of my talk.

In many ways the last 25 years have not been among the most congenial for family life in Australia, particularly for families living at the bottom end of the income scale.

The proportion of people unemployed for more than two years grew from negligible levels in the 1970s to about 150 000 people now. That's 20 per cent of the total unemployment pool.²⁵

The most disturbing thing about this growth in unemployment is that it hasn't been uniform. It's been concentrated in our poorest areas. Between 1975 and 1991, the poorest five per cent of Australian neighbourhoods lost 38 per cent of their employment and 23 per cent of their household income, while male unemployment in these suburbs rose from around five to around 16 per cent.²⁶

More than 20 per cent of sole parent families are now living in poverty.²⁷ During the 1990s the percentage of couples with children living in poverty also rose significantly.²⁸

Many families struggle: trying to earn a decent wage, trying to find time for their children, trying to find time for themselves and their partners. They're caught between their duties as parents and their obligation to provide an income, in a world where working hours have become longer and more unsociable,²⁹ and where housing has consumed an ever larger share of the household budget.

Doing something about this state of affairs is vital

to long-term juvenile crime prevention. We need to reduce long-term unemployment, encourage more flexible working arrangements for parents, and ensure that poorer families either get access to quality childcare or adequate income support if they elect to stay home during the first year or so of a child's life.

We also need to slow down the spatial concentration of poverty and revitalise neighbourhoods where disadvantage and crime have become deeply entrenched.

How might we do this?

By dispersing public housing, rather than concentrating it, we can help prevent the spatial concentration of poverty and disadvantage.

By making a special effort to improve school performance in crime-prone neighbourhoods we can reduce the risk or period of unemployment.

By investing in targeted labour market programs we can help break the nexus between chronic unemployment and crime in areas of high unemployment.

By strengthening local institutions, such as schools and sporting clubs, we can combat the influence of delinquent peers and provide some of the supervision that parents may fail or find themselves unable to provide.

Of course, you sometimes hear people say there's no need for special measures of this kind, that economic growth alone will eventually bring an improvement in the quality of life for everyone, just as a rising tide lifts all boats. But the rising tide analogy, if you'll forgive me, doesn't hold water.

The growth in long-term unemployment, the spatial concentration of poverty, and rising crime have all occurred against a backdrop of strong economic growth. To be useful as a crime prevention measure economic policy must aim at far more than economic growth. It has to be directed toward creating an economic and social environment that strengthens rather than weakens family and community life.

In saying this I don't want to be taken as suggesting that reducing economic and social stress is the only means available to us to reduce the size of our crime problem. There are other ways.

We can increase the rate at which we arrest young

people or go down the American track of quadrupling our prison population, in the hope that this will do something to reduce crime. Most people, though, would probably prefer not to lean so heavily on coercive forms of social control, at least where juvenile offenders are concerned.

Many young offenders have known nothing but neglect or coercion at the hands of adults during their short and unhappy lives. It would be a pity to have to respond to the effects of this neglect and coercion by offering only more of the same.

There are dangers, too, in over-reliance on criminal justice solutions to crime control problems. Arrest and imprisonment are so common in some Aboriginal communities they're worn as a badge of honour rather than as a badge of shame.

Getting tough on crime is easy to do. Getting tough on the causes of crime is a lot harder. For my money then, economic and social policy do have an important role to play in juvenile crime prevention.



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He has published on a wide range of topics, including criminal justice administration, crime prevention, economic factors and crime, sentencing policy, drug law enforcement policy and trial court performance. His book, *Delinquent-prone Communities*, co-authored with Bronwyn Lind, was published in 2001.

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Margaret River: Making the most of every opportunity

Margaret River refers to both the township and to the wine-growing region in the south-west corner of Western Australia. Locals describe the community as 'eclectic' because of the diverse backgrounds, lifestyles and values of its population. These include dairy farmers, viticulturalists, professionals, small business owners, environmentalists and alternative lifestyleers, and the unemployed. Because of this diversity conflict is inevitable. However, one of the community's strengths is the way in which many of these conflicts are managed and resolved through dialogue. After being in Margaret River for only a short time, a number of things strike you:

- The number of diverse groups that make up the community, and the community strength that seems to come from this diversity.
- The 'can do' attitude in which formation of committees and sourcing of external funding for projects is second nature to many.
- The large number of services and facilities within the community that tend not be present in many other communities of similar size, including the Aquatic Centre, Skate Park, and Youth Café.
- The value that the community places on education and, hence, its strong support for local schools.
- The strong focus on youth and the generally positive perception of youth in the community as compared with largely unfavourable perceptions of youth in many other communities within the State (Office of Youth Affairs 1998).

The school

With an enrolment of approximately 600 students from years 8 to 12, and approximately 50 teaching staff, Margaret River Senior High School provides secondary and senior secondary education for the entire Augusta–Margaret River Shire. It is centrally located in the Margaret River township at the 'top' of the town and evidence suggests that the community looks up to the school both literally and metaphorically.

The school has extensive linkages with, and enjoys strong support from, a wide variety of community sectors. These sectors include:

- the small business sector (through participation in structured workplace learning (SWL) and enterprise education);
- the viticulture and other rural industry sectors (through the school farm and vineyard);
- the shire council (through student and staff participation in the Youth Advisory Council and through staff membership of the shire's waste management steering committee);
- other educational providers (Curtin University, Edith Cowan University and TAFE through the proposed Centre for Wine Excellence);
- the health sector (the hospital's Director of Nursing is a member of the School Management Group);

Margaret River Senior High School was examined by the Centre for Redearch and Learning in Regional Australia as part of the Centre's 'More Than an Education' study. The study found a school successfully harnessing the energies of their community to build a strong school–community partnership.

Margaret River, WA, is a community with a strong focus on youth, but it has not always been this way. The community went through a difficult period in the early 1990s, when inter-generational trust was low and youth engagement in the community declined. It was only after a concerted effort by schools and a community leadership committed to change that the situation was gradually reversed. By adopting a whole-of-town approach to education a new network of relationships developed and began to work together in ways never before considered. Margaret River was one of the first communities to introduce a Youth Advisory Council. Margaret River Senior High School was one of the first schools in the State to introduce structured workplace learning and to set up a community advisory committee to manage its structured workplace learning program. Today Margaret River is a community which recognises and celebrates the contributions of its youth. The role of the school in facilitating this change is the focus of this case study.

- voluntary emergency services groups (through participation in the State Emergency Services (SES) cadet scheme);
- the local media and parents (through participation in the P & C and School Management Group);
- local churches (through the school chaplaincy); retired citizens (through participation in the school's volunteer reading program); and
- special needs groups (through the community networking program for disabled students).

In addition, close ties were formed between the school and a local service club in 1995, when the incoming president of the service club was also the newly elected president of the school's P & C group. This partnership has seen the realisation of a number of ongoing linkages which have further enhanced the school's capacity to contribute to the community. These linkages include a mock interview program (which links service club members and senior students), partial sponsorship of the school chaplaincy (together with sponsorship provided by local churches and the school's P & C group), and sponsorship of a variety of scholarships and leadership opportunities for youth.

School contribution to the community

Margaret River Senior High School contributes to the community by way of curriculum-based and resource-based contributions. Curriculum-based contributions are those school–community linkages that have been built specifically to support the development of curriculum options for students. Most interviewees in the More Than an Education study felt that the curriculum reflected the philosophy of formal school leaders to make the school as inclusive as possible, and to provide 'a holistic education using a whole-of-town approach'. For example, inclusivity was fostered by programs which targeted specific groups, such as disabled students and students with low levels of literacy and numeracy, while holistic education was fostered by a variety of school curriculum offerings that represented a balance between vocational and general education. A whole-of-town approach, utilising the resources of the entire community, was central to many curriculum offerings. While the curriculum options were considered effective by most interviewees in

fostering inclusivity, a small number commented on the need for additional school structures and initiatives to be put in place to facilitate the assimilation of students from the Augusta community into Margaret River Senior High School. Most interviewees also commented favourably on the holistic focus of the school curriculum, although a small number of interviewees perceived that a better balance was needed between the strong academic focus of the school and the less 'academic' areas of student development such as the creative arts.

Resource-based contributions refer to the use of shared resources such as the community aquatic and recreation centre (which is a shared school/community facility) and the commercial kitchen located within the school, which is shared between the school and TAFE. There are a number of other instances in which the school makes its facilities — such as the school auditorium — available for the use of others. This situation is facilitated by a proactive Education Department policy on community use of school facilities.

However, it was noted by one interviewee that issues such as insurance (for example, the cost of public liability insurance) may be prohibitive for some small community interest groups wishing to utilise school premises to run short courses and workshops.

The school also contributes significantly to the community through its human resources, that is, through students and staff using their skills and expertise for the good of the community. This is in keeping with the philosophy of formal school leaders that the school should lead its community. The following parent, involved in school governance, explains:

There is a very clear policy on the part of [the principal] and backed up by his very able deputies, that this school must interact with its community and must welcome its community and must lead its community . . . it's [the principal's] vision and it really has made the school as inclusive as it is . . .

Because of the extensive nature of the contributions of Margaret River Senior High School to the community this case study cannot do justice to all those contributions. Instead, four

areas have been selected for discussion: three represent curriculum-based vehicles for the school's contributions to the community (vocational and career programs, school recycling, and the volunteer reading program), and the fourth represents a resource-based contribution (SES cadet scheme). These areas have been selected as being representative of the nature and extent of the contributions of the school to the community.

Vocational and career programs

When it gained senior high school status in 1995 the school needed to develop a curriculum to meet the needs of its new cohort of senior students. In designing this new curriculum, school leaders made a conscious decision not to offer discrete vocational programs but to offer instead 'a comprehensive general education that would best prepare [students] for further study, employment, enterprising self-employment and citizenship' (Gorham 1998). This included the introduction of a Work Studies program incorporating SWL, where senior students are mentored by local business owner/operators as they participate in a total of 120 hours of structured work experience spread over their school holidays. The program also includes an enterprise education component, designed to foster entrepreneurial skills and attitudes in youth. As part of enterprise education students participate in activities such as the annual Enterprise Day, which brings together students and local small business owner/operators. Enterprise Day was pioneered by the Margaret River Business Enterprise Centre (BEC) in 1996 and has since become a national model.

Both SWL and enterprise education were first implemented in Margaret River in the mid-1990s. Keen to adopt the newly-developed national vocational education model of structured workplace learning for senior students, the school's VET coordinator recommended to the principal that funding be sought to implement the program. The recommendation received strong support from the principal as it fitted well with the school philosophy of education using a whole-of-town approach. At the same time, the BEC was in the process of revising its focus and goals to better meet the needs of local small business operators. Following a survey of the needs of local

small business operators, the BEC decided to target youth training and development as a key focus for its activities. It attracted funding to implement a pilot enterprise education program for school students, which facilitated a close working relationship between the BEC and the school. The relationship is built on shared core values: the school philosophy — to provide a 'holistic education using a whole-of-town approach, which lifts the self-esteem and confidence of all . . . eliminating . . . any investment in the "tall poppy syndrome"' (Gorham & Collins 1999) — is consistent with the philosophy of the BEC, which considers enterprise education in Margaret River as the responsibility of the school, the business community and the BEC (Maidment 1998).

As with most other initiatives introduced within the school, the process of implementing SWL and enterprise education was carefully researched and planned to align with the needs of students (in terms of vocational, career and personal development) and the community (in terms of increasing vocational awareness, knowledge and skills amongst youth). They were also designed to align with key industries in the region (local small businesses, hospitality/tourism, viticulture), and to draw upon the wealth of expertise and skills available within the community. In developing the initiatives, the school's VET Coordinator and the facilitator of the BEC each played a key role in gaining the trust and support of local business people. Speaking of his role in building employer support for SWL, for example, the school VET Coordinator highlights the importance of communication and consultation:

[We] let the employers know that they are part of a process and we always talk of them as business partners and there's no such thing as we've decided to do this, it has to be a process of consultation and how would this go down.

To ensure community concerns and interests were represented, key community stakeholders were involved in the planning and development of the vocational programs offered through the school. For example, stakeholders from the business sector participated in reference groups, convened by the BEC, to determine the direction of enterprise education, while a committee of school staff and community members (including the facilitator of the BEC, the President of the P & C, and key

Inclusivity was fostered by programs which targeted specific groups, such as disabled students and students with low levels of literacy and numeracy.

industry and service club leaders) was formed to manage the SWL program. Its members were recognised as leaders in the community, with extensive networks within and outside Margaret River. Committee members were able to ensure the program was well received and supported by the business sector, and also undertook the day-to-day organisation of the program, including the recruitment of new employers. The following committee member, himself a small business owner/operator, believes the leadership role of the committee has been one of the strengths of the program:

I think that is one of the strengths of the program that [an employer having problems with an SWL student] rang me and not the school, yeah, I think that just shows how strong the committee was . . . and people recognised that the committee were very much part of running the show, that they could talk to us and that was as good as talking to the school.

The committee has been so successful in empowering employers to take control of the program, that it has gone into recess. Several of its members are now involved in other planning committees, including planning for the new Centre of Wine Excellence that will see a university presence in Margaret River.

SWL is now essentially self-managing, with individual employers initiating contact with the school as appropriate. The business community now has an expectation of ongoing participation in the program, which would suggest that the sustainability of the program seems assured. However, on our return visit to the site in June 2001 to present findings from the study, the Principal and VET Coordinator expressed concern about the future of SWL due to recommendations contained in a recently released state government review into Post Compulsory Education (Curriculum Council 2000). The review recommended an integration of general and vocational learning, which would see SWL offered only as an extension program for some courses, rather than as a program in its own right. There is some indication, however, that the position presented in the review may not have received widespread acceptance within the State. Coupled with this review, the school reported a growing reluctance among students to participate in SWL

during their school holidays. As a result of both the review and student concerns, the school is currently in the process of reviewing its SWL policy and procedures.

School recycling

The school runs a recycling program, which includes paper recycling and a worm farm designed to use waste products from the school farm. It is coordinated by a member of the teaching staff, as an integral part of the curriculum for a Year 10 maths class requiring extra numeracy tuition, and also receives support from other students. The recycling program began in 1999 as a result of the teacher's concern about paper wastage within the school. The idea of introducing a school recycling program was subsequently supported by formal school leadership. Initially, the teacher did much of the coordination of the project in his spare time, but support by the allocation of non-contact hours to coordinate the program has since been provided by school administration. School recycling efforts are enhanced by the support of several other staff members who assist in publicity and the preparation of funding applications. The program has been successful in attracting funding from several government and private sources, which has allowed the project to develop more quickly because funds have been available for the purchase of large items of equipment. The recycling program also receives community support. For example, a local bricklayer has offered his services to build large composting bays so that paper recycling can be undertaken on a larger scale, and the resulting compost fed back into the school vineyard. As the program develops, it is expected that more community support will be sought.

As well as reducing paper wastage within the school, the program has raised school and community awareness of the need to recycle materials where possible. It has provided a model and source of leadership for the community-recycling program instituted by the shire council only recently. In addition, the teacher in charge of the school recycling program is a member of the shire council waste management steering committee, and runs workshops on worm farming and composting for the shire. This further facilitates the sharing of knowledge and expertise

between school and community. The program is also a source of enterprise education for students who, at the time of our visit, were in the process of planning, developing and marketing wooden newspaper stackers to aid community members in newspaper recycling.

Volunteer reading program

For students with identified literacy needs the school has been operating a volunteer reading program, which started in 1998. The purpose of the program is to match community volunteers with students in need of extra literacy tuition and support in terms of developing self-confidence. It mainly recruits retired members of the community as volunteer literacy tutors/mentors to work with students on a one-to-one basis once a week. Community volunteers are recruited largely by word of mouth, through service clubs and the church community. The coordinator describes why the program intentionally targeted retired community members:

We felt that's what would be best for the program, the students would feel comfortable with a grandfather, or a grandmother, figure . . . I thought they would have more time to give.

The idea for introducing a reading program in the school first came from the school's literacy teacher, who worked with the school literacy committee to plan its implementation. Because of her workload, the literacy teacher was unable to coordinate the program, so the school librarian — who was also a member of the literacy committee — volunteered for the position. Although it is modelled on a state-wide community volunteer literacy program, the school runs its own program independently, as the state program was oversubscribed and the need in the school for additional literacy tutoring was pressing. No funding was available to set up the program, 'just the time that we gave to it', although some school library funding was used to purchase initial resources. Subsequently, school administration has allocated a small amount of annual funding to the program.

There have been some problems caused by lack of sufficient space to accommodate tutors and students, and the heavy workload of the coordinator in terms of the amount of time needed to research, develop and implement the

necessary procedures to provide adequate support and protection for both students and community volunteers. The program is still evolving, and solutions to these concerns were being considered at the time of our visit.

Despite the concerns noted above, the volunteer reading program has achieved a level of success in terms of improving the literacy, interpersonal skills, and self-confidence of students. It has also provided an outlet for retired people, a hitherto largely untapped resource in Margaret River, to contribute to the community.

State Emergency Services cadets

In 1998 the school also set up an SES cadet scheme. The purpose of the program is to foster leadership development within youth, particularly amongst the '80 per cent of kids who are just average kids, they'll never need special help and they'll never be high flyers'. The program was established as part of the cadet-in-high-schools scheme, an initiative of the Western Australian Office of Youth Affairs. With the support of the principal, a representative from the Office of Youth Affairs facilitated a public meeting to gauge community support for the initiative. Senior high school staff and P & C representatives attended the meeting, as did representatives from the region's other schools, and a number of individuals already involved in emergency service groups, such as the Bush Fire Brigade. The community indicated their support for the initiative at that meeting and a teacher from the school accepted the position of cadet coordinator. It was decided at the community meeting to run an SES cadet scheme, rather than a military cadet scheme, to reflect the strong environmental focus of the community and in recognition of the activities of the SES in respect of a recent coastal tragedy in the region.

Although the scheme is strongly supported by formal school leadership, and makes use of school facilities and equipment, it does not operate as part of the school curriculum, as is the case in some other schools within the State. Instead, school leaders decided the program would be run on an optional basis out of school hours. The reason for this was to ensure greater community involvement, ownership and, ultimately, sustainability of the program.

The program relies, to a large extent, on the

support of individuals from the region's various emergency services groups (including the State Emergency Services and Bush Fire Brigade), who provide many of the physical and human resources necessary for cadet training. The teacher who coordinates the cadets has spent much time building this support base, both within the school and community. A school staff member explains:

[Name of teacher] runs that program, now he's the one with the vision, the drive, the enthusiasm to make it happen. No community member would come in and make it happen within the school. So he's the key person there, but you know he's got the nous to realise that he's got to get other key people on side. So, he's got our fire chief from the local district involved in that . . . he's got parents involved in that, he's got other teachers involved in that, he works with student services who have got people like our chaplain, school psych and our year leaders, and because of that one key person, then engaging all of those others, it happens . . .

Parents are also important resources, providing assistance according to their abilities and interests. For example, by voluntarily taking on responsibility for arranging organisational details like transport and equipment for camps, parents have freed up the coordinator to undertake other activities. The principal explains:

Schools don't have to worry about going and organising support structures and trucks and stuff like that . . . they [community members] put up their hands to organise bits and pieces which is great . . . that's why I think we can sustain the programs, because without their support you couldn't sustain it . . .

As well as providing leadership opportunities for youth and community members, the cadet scheme has increased young people's awareness of the intrinsic and extrinsic benefits of community volunteerism.

Summary

By forming strategic alliances with community leaders from a number of different areas, including the shire council, the business community, service clubs, and emergency services groups, the school has developed a number of innovative curriculum-based and non-curriculum-based initiatives based

on a whole-of-town approach. In particular, formal school leaders have developed relationships with two key community individuals — the P & C president, who runs his own professional practice, and the facilitator of the Business Development Centre (formerly the BEC) — which have been central to the development of a number of school–community linkages. These individuals have used their positions of trust and respect within the community to build support for school initiatives.

It is an intentional leadership strategy that the school contributions featured in this case study have been 'pushed out' into the community. This strategy has seen some initiatives intentionally operated out of school hours (for example, SES cadets and SWL), as well as the planned participation of community members in the management, operation and/or funding of initiatives (for example, the SWL management committee, the use of community volunteers in the volunteer reading and SES cadets programs). By giving the community a sense of ownership of the programs, and by actively encouraging and supporting individuals to undertake leadership roles in school initiatives, formal school leaders have put in place procedures likely to ensure the development and sustainability of school–community linkages.

For the future

As a vibrant community located in one of the fastest growing regions of Western Australia, Margaret River has much to look forward to in the future. Opportunities provided by the planned Centre of Wine Excellence, for example, include a university presence in Margaret River and proposed links between the university, TAFE and the Margaret River Senior High School in the delivery and articulation of viticulture education. As the community continues to grow and attract business investors, opportunities for commercial property development and for the local building construction, and associated industries, have increased significantly.

The innovative and forward-thinking approach of the community is very much reflected in Margaret River Senior High School, in which new opportunities to meet the needs of students and to increase the linkages between school and community are actively sought. If the school is to continue its role as a leader within its community,

it will need to not only consolidate its linkages with the educational, business and local government sectors, but also continue to value the diversity of the community's population and the school's philosophy of inclusivity. To this end, there would seem to be further scope for the school to explore the possibility of extending its linkages with two community groups: the elderly and those representing lower socioeconomic groups, including the unemployed. The volunteer reading program has proved an effective starting point for involvement of retired citizens in the school, but it would seem that retired citizens are still a largely untapped resource in Margaret River. Regarding the school's relationship with community members from lower socioeconomic groupings, it would seem that representatives from this group would benefit from support and active encouragement to take a greater role in school governance, in terms of membership of the P & C and the School Management Group. This would further enhance the decision-making capabilities of the school, by ensuring more broad-based community representation.

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This case study forms part of a study, *More Than an Education: Leadership for rural school–community partnerships*, and was undertaken by Dr Sue Kilpatrick and her team Susan Johns, Bill Mulford and Ian Falk* from the Centre For Research and Learning In Regional Australia at the University of Tasmania. The full report is available in hard copy for \$10 from the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation E-shop or can be downloaded for free from RIRDC's website: www.rirdc.gov.au/fullreports/hcc.html

* Ian Falk has recently moved to the Northern Territory University

Secondary Section

Doing Whatever It Takes at Brooks High

How did a school in such a depressed area turn around the lives of boys, receive a Ministerial Award for Excellence in 2001 and be referred to by the Prime Minister as 'a shining light to the nation'? According to Chris Brooks, it's forging unusual partnerships and 'doing whatever it takes'.

Brooks High School, Tasmania, services Launceston's Northern Suburbs, an area geographically defined by the North Esk River and the Tamar River. Throughout its history, this area could best be defined as a working class environment, and in the last forty years has been the location of three major housing services subdivisions. These have stigmatised the community as welfare dependent and created a sense of economic and social underclass.

Much of the low-cost housing in the areas closest to Launceston's CBD have become the base for industries. Additionally, and ironically perhaps in the context of the social fabric, the University of Tasmania and the Australian Maritime College are both located in the northern suburbs, on the site of the original Brooks High School.

Social and economic indicators all illustrate the high level of need within the northern suburbs. Unemployment is significantly higher than for the rest of the State, family incomes are generally low and educational outcomes and expectations largely mirror the low educational attainment of adults within the community.

A foundation of mutual trust

The principal was on the phone, my first day in the new job; a boy had locked himself in the dunny and wouldn't come out . . . can I help? Yes . . . a home visit got him out of the house but what then? I brought him to our off-campus youth centre and started to build a relationship with this timid, small-framed Year 7 boy from a housing estate near the school. I taught him the basics of using a spray gun and we started restoring a Mini, which was later to become a theme car for the centre, a decommissioned fire station. The Mini, with the help of about 30 plus boys, became a little red fire truck complete with ladder, flashing light and siren.

I was also directed to another new Year 7 boy whose father had committed, over a year earlier, a particularly cruel crime and had been jailed for a life term. Again, we built a connection, a relationship, we established a non-judgmental foundation of trust; an equality not based on power or control. The involvement in practical projects, aside from the normal classroom environment, again proved a useful model.

Both these young men are now stable in their school worlds, regularly attending school and, despite difficult backgrounds, are establishing lives of value for themselves and others.

A regional environment

Brooks High School is located in the regional city of Launceston, Tasmania. The city has approximately 80 000 residents and an additional 70 000 residents in surrounding areas. The school is located near industrial sites that offer business partnerships and considerable support.

Since the 1950s there have been three major broad acre housing developments built by housing services, which have cemented the notion of welfare dependency in the area. The community around the school is relatively isolated from the city where most support agencies are located. However, as Launceston's oldest high school there is a sense of loyalty, especially now that Brooks is seen as 'successful'.

The Birribi Youth Centre commenced its life in 1997 as a centre for the exclusive education of fifteen 'naughty' boys who, as a result of the centre's programming, became isolated from the main school community. In 2000 this model was replaced by a concept of a large number of students attending a wide range of programs for a limited time each week. A focus was placed on offering programs for students from the mainstream of the student cohort. Gifted and Talented programs, student leadership team training days and grief counselling sessions went a long way to diluting a

ghetto mentality, to the perception that the centre was only for young people who were drop-outs and losers.

Birribi does whatever it takes to assist young people in this school to become fine young people. One of the program's key elements is the support staff team, comprising social workers, guidance officer, youth worker and senior staff, who meet weekly to plan and implement strategies to support young people in many areas of need. This team is crucial to Birribi's ongoing program.

In the bush near the school a philanthropic neighbour has allowed young people to build a humpy, drive old bush-basher cars and set up a place for themselves on his land. This community partnership is informal and unstructured. The landowner provides an after-school program of a nature that fits with the cultural world of these boys. Their learning continues into the early evening with bushcraft and basic construction in the school environment of their own making. I went to visit them on their terms, in their out-of-school world, and I also took the social worker on one visit. Visits like this have a profound effect. However, to not carry the badges of authority and power is essential. If we show one centimetre of respect for their lifestyle choices and for them as people, then they will show us a metre of respect in return. I couldn't help myself though, when these young fellas were screaming around the bush on high powered motorcross motorcycles with their helmets not done up. I found my previous life as a senior rider training instructor coming to the fore and strongly impressing upon them the need to do up the chin strap. Taking risks and not just pushing the boundaries, but smashing them, is a normal way of life for these boys and as adult supporters we need to appear unphased by their actions and place our value judgments on hold, leaving to one side our middle-class world view.

The following short list of our activities will paint a part of the picture of what we use to build bridges to the world of the young people in our school. However, completion of the projects is not the

goal, they are a means to building cooperation, problem solving, anger management, task completion, opinion sharing and decision-making skills in the students' lives.

- Car restoration
- Motorcycle rebuilding and sales
- BMX bike rebuilds and sales
- Murals
- Aboriginal craft
- Multiple art genres
- Equipment maintenance
- Antique restoration
- Basic landscaping
- Gifted and talented art program

Picture, if you will, six Year 7 boys walking to the centre. When they arrive we hear of fights, objects being thrown, one fella in tears. This is how they begin their time with us. By the end of the term they can walk back to the main campus without hitting each other and peace reigns. The goal has been achieved and this behaviour then spills over into their classroom lives. The feedback from classroom teachers attests to the validity of this claim.

I gleaned (or borrowed?) and modified a certificate award system from southern Tasmania's Sorell High School's automotive program and called it the 'Birribi Skills Register'. When a student receives one of these simple certificates for doing a good job on a particular project it does have a profound effect on their self-esteem. The small amount of effort required by staff to produce and hand out such awards pays dividends down the track.

We recently opened up the centre on a Friday night for the local community. We slid open the huge glass doors of the old fire station and held a 'drive-in theatre night', complete with big screen movie and larger than life sound. Free coke and chips enticed many young people to the event. The Launceston Drug Education Network sponsored the night, which we advertised as a 'Drug Free event'. Young fellas who normally wouldn't grace the doors of a youth centre joined in and became part of our little community that evening.





Chris Brooks has a BEd from the University of Tasmania and is currently undertaking a Grad Dip in History Education with Monash University. He is married with two adult sons and a girl age three. He spent seven years in full-time Youth Work before taking the new direction of teaching. He commenced his role at Brooks High in 2000 and refers to himself as a Teacher/Youth Worker. He is a member of God's Squad Christian Motorcycle Club. Chris can be contacted on 03 6326 6430 or email madbiker@vision.net.au

(Thank you to Kelly Hudson for his contribution to this article)

What sort of people does it take to operate such a centre? Author, Richard Foster writes,

'Superficiality is the curse of our age. The doctrine of instant satisfaction is a primary spiritual problem. The desperate need today is not for a greater number of intelligent people or gifted people, but for deep people.'

Adults who have the needs of others as a core focus will win the minds of young people and they must be souls who are evidence of genuine care for others. On a personal note, as a person who holds a carefully considered Christian world view, I take a watchful note of the word of the Hebrew prophet Micah who wrote, 'What does God require of you, oh man, but to do justice, love mercy and to walk humbly before Him.' (Micah 6:8)

Being off-campus is an essential element of our successful impact on young people's lives. The normal school rules and norms can be relaxed or discarded away from the inherently conservative school environment. We frequently have adult visitors, either my mad biker mates, customers for our BMX bikes or interested local people who would not have easy access to an average school campus. This community life is a partnership with a wide field of adults. These adults model the mores of behaviour we would like to see our students learn. The students at the centre soak up this role modelling through a form of 'phantom osmosis'.

Sadly, many young people who struggle with the traditional school environment rarely complete the tasks they undertake. We have found that task completion by all who attend the centre, including the staff, is a valuable life skill that these boys can transfer to other areas of their lives. It involves sacrifice and financial commitment on our part but it's worth it.

Nationally recognised innovative programs

Brooks High has a range of innovative and cutting edge programs as a part of a broad undergirding philosophy of 'whatever it takes'. All these programs form a network in which we hope to catch students who otherwise might fall through the cracks. It is difficult to measure our influence on students outside of their school lives, but we hope to put in place preventative boundaries to help them from losing their way in a complex

post-modern world. As Slamet points out: 'The more we can do to create a flexible environment for people to be included — as opposed to being excluded — the better the social outcomes' (*Australian Educator*, no 34, p 26).

The No Dole program, which is being informally franchised in other regional centres throughout Australia, provides career advice, work placement and experience. The program seeks to ensure 100 per cent retention to employment or further education for all school leavers post-Year 10. (Tasmanian state high schools only offer to Year 10 level. Secondary colleges then offer years 11 to 12).

Brooks has a Learning Support team which would be the envy of many schools. It has a range of teaching and support staff, who have expertise in supporting young people with their literacy and numeracy needs in order to raise their levels to a benchmark standard.

The school's Agricultural Science and Adventure Education programs provide a range of activities that enable students to build life skills, establish disciplined personal behaviours and prepare for adult life.

The off-campus Zone Youth Service Centre provides access for young people, aged 12 to 25, to public services in the wider community. Services such as Centrelink, Anglicare, Community Health programs, TAFE and legal assistance.

Spanners commenced, in an off-campus facility, in term three, 2001. This program offers an introduction to basic automotive skills.

Approximately 25 per cent of the school student population opted to join the program. Spanners was pioneered by senior staff in the school in order to offer an alternative educational environment, especially for boys whose challenging behaviours demanded we not only think outside the box, but construct a new box.

Former USA President Franklin D Roosevelt said, 'It is common sense to take a method and try it. If it fails, admit it frankly and try another. But above all try something'. The success of our program in assisting young men depends on our constant assessment of our programs, devising new activities, considering youth culture, addressing post-modernist trends and doing *whatever it takes*.

The House of Youth

Why the House of Youth?

It had become evident to many of those working with young people in Kempsey that media stereotyping of young people as criminal or antisocial was rampant. It was not uncommon for headlines to claim 'Youth Run Wild' or some such in response to young people being involved in some mayhem. The 'Crime and Punishment' agenda was in full swing, with our local MP instituting a petition asking for harsher penalties for young offenders. Groups of young people, particularly young boys who were disenfranchised from mainstream education with little opportunity for positive recreational experiences, were constantly in the media for the wrong reasons. Much hand-wringing resulted, but little movement toward positive change. There were few programs or constructive opportunities for these young people to access.

There were some alternative TAFE and other programs, however, a cohort of young people found even these difficult to engage with and other options were needed. Arts and cultural activities were difficult for young people to access within this community, programs which acknowledged the chaotic life of these students, whilst giving them responsibility to achieve, were rare. The House of Youth aims to change this by offering young people the chance to discover talents, learn new skills and experience artistic community within a supportive environment.

Initiated by North Coast Institute of TAFE in partnership with the Kempsey Youth Network and Kempsey Shire Council, the program at the House of Youth aimed to attract these disconnected young people, engage them in a project to establish a youth centre in Kempsey, encourage responsible ownership of their environment, and with the overall overt aim of assisting in the creation of a positive image of youth for the wider community. Despite an over-representation of young men in this group, it was felt the creation of a learning community in which young participants interacted with peers of both genders would be most beneficial to positive socialisation and group process.

The house is as home-like as possible, with a kitchen, barbecue area, laundry and garden for young participants to practice life skills in a supportive community environment. There is the capacity for informal and formal book work to take place, however, most learning is group- or activity-based.

Matt Higgins, from Regional Extended Family Services in Kempsey, NSW, talks about an ambitious community partnership aimed at creating opportunities for disengaged youth, which in the process did much to restore their positive image in the community.



The community needed to demonstrate to its young people they were worthwhile citizens and had a role to play in society.



I'm doing better at school now. You have to not fire up when people get at you.

MALE, 16

The house overlooks the Macleay River in South Kempsey, part of the Dhunghutti nation on the boundary of a large community of indigenous peoples. It is a high profile site, next door to a developing PCYC, but with few neighbours and great views.

How was it developed?

Two years ago, following extensive consultation, the Kempsey Youth Network identified a need for a youth activity centre, targeting those young people most at risk. The community had been through a difficult but successful process of establishing a skate park, however, this was not a panacea for the issues that affect this group. These included:

- Early school leaving, with resultant poor skill and self-esteem levels;
- Few positive recreational options for those without the family and financial resources to engage with organised sport;
- Social opportunities for over-18s revolve around alcohol;
- Concerted negative media image of young people;
- Minimal arts and cultural development options; and
- A real issue of youth-related crime resulting from boredom and perceived lack of opportunity.

There was a need to create a benevolent environment for those who do not experience this naturally. The community needed to demonstrate to its young people they were worthwhile citizens and had a role to play in society.

So how did you establish HoY?

TAFE submitted to HYPAR — Helping Young People At Risk — in partnership with Youth Network and council. A course was developed which would fulfil the optional component of Certificate of General and Vocational Education and Foundation and Vocational Education (TAFE years 9 and 10). The course object was for 'at-risk' youth to facilitate the development of a youth centre. Council provided a venue, electricity and phone; TAFE provided money for teachers, access to resources, infrastructure and project materials; Jobs Placement Education Training (JPET) program, funded food program; Community Health and Welfare services donated time on a structured or casual basis, providing opportunity to engage. Students were encouraged to drive the project, by resourceful shopping, participation in its steering

committee, and skills development. This was seed funding which required sustainability of project after five months!

How did you sustain its operations?

The House of Youth faces an ongoing issue of security of tenure and funding. To date we have accessed funding through a variety of sources. Under the TAFE-funded Get Skilled program the students ran an activity program for young people from the community as a school holiday program. There was strong participation from Indigenous and non-Indigenous service providers with the employment of an elder funded by Djigay Student Association (an Indigenous organisation that supports young people and at-risk youth). Further funding came through Get Skilled and Welfare for a Statement of Attainment in Community Welfare and Community Arts. JPET continued its support of the food program and Djigay bought the house a coin-operated pool table. The Djigay Centre of Excellence in Aboriginal Education moved its Performing Arts course to the House of Youth for one semester.

This Year we have secured funding from Djigay's Links to Learning program to run the House of Youth as an early leavers course. Regional Extended Family Services (REFS) will auspice the house, increasing our access to funding opportunities, and will place a 12-month project worker at the house to develop a leadership course for young people. There is also a current submission to The Foundation for Young Australians to establish a youth-managed 'Fruity Loops' circus school.

The House of Youth employs teachers, artists, musicians and youth workers to share their knowledge and skills and connect with young people in a community-learning environment. The involvement of other local youth service providers — including Djigay, the Indigenous organisation which manages JPET and Links to Learning programs; REFS, Kempsey Shire Council, Kempsey Family Support and Community Health — allows at-risk young people to develop relationships with health and welfare workers in an informal setting. This assists in removing barriers these young people commonly experience when accessing support services.

Who are your students?

Our current primary target group is 14 to 24 year-old youths who are early school leavers not

currently engaged in education or employment, although this has evolved as our funding sources have changed. These kids often have multiple welfare needs and issues. Their failure to successfully engage with mainstream education options often is a result of chaotic personal lives, dysfunctional family situations and an inability of mainstream schools to adapt to and support the needs of this group.

Up to the present, 55 per cent of enrolments have been boys, 40 per cent Indigenous. Boys present with a greater affinity for 'hands on' aspects of the program. They need to apply themselves to readily achievable construction projects, or to learn new performance skills quickly to effectively engage. Propensity to violence is regulated to a great extent by group process. Boys tend to be more reluctant to attend and sometimes require outreach assistance. Major crises in personal lives may lead to periods of unnotified absence, however the students usually return to the program. The development of a 'buddy' system to mentor new participants with existing students, and the use of group activities to approach the changing group dynamics caused by new entries, has been effective in assisting new individuals to fit in. Feelings are acknowledged and discussed on a daily basis through the use of the 'HoY Barometer', where all present in the house rate their current emotional state.

A former graduate in the House of Youth program is employed in a position as youth mentor at the house, a paid position with concrete responsibilities. This young person contributes to the program one day per week and is concurrently enrolled in a welfare diploma course at TAFE.

Students are referred from a variety of local agencies and services, including local high schools (commonly students recently expelled); REFS Reconnect program, TAFE (those at risk of disengaging or those unable to cope with the demands of class work and classroom culture), JPET, Juvenile Justice (some young people are able to negotiate community work commitments as part of their attendance and participation), and Kempsey Youth Refuge (the house can provide short-term activity for those in acute crisis). Many students are self-referrals or enrol after a number of drop-in visits. The acceptance of enrolments at all stages of the course is seen as a fundamental requirement of those service providers working with young people at risk that may refer their

My involvement with the House has provided me with many opportunities. I feel I have been moulded into this position. It was hard to adopt the new role, but as time progressed I became more confident. As a mentor I experience some common ground with the students, being a small town you know everyone, you come from the same background.

MICHAEL HUDSON
YOUTH MENTOR
HOUSE OF YOUTH

Being based on a solid structure as an educational program makes it much more than a drop-in centre. The regular attendance of participants gives the workers the ability to utilise group dynamics to achieve outcomes. The individual and group empowerment that results is tangible.

PETER MCGRATH
YOUTH SUPPORT WORKER
KEMPSEY FAMILY SUPPORT SERVICES

Accessible, engaging, belonging. These are all important and difficult to achieve. It is a credit to the staff of the House of Youth and the community that this program continues to survive. It is resilience in action! The coordination of many services has meant these young people are connected and a part of the community again.

GREG HEHIR
YOUTH DEVELOPMENT OFFICER
KEMPSEY SHIRE COUNCIL

The circus stuff and doing the show ... it's great.

MALE, 14

I learnt a lot of circus things at HoY and how to control my anger a bit.

MALE, 17

clients to the House of Youth program.

What is your program?

Our aim is to provide an innovative program for young people who have failed to engage with mainstream education options for a variety of reasons. We want to establish pathways for their re-engagement to education, society, employment or future training and assist with support to meet this group's high welfare needs. We engage young people in the process of building an accessible, youth-focused venue with involvement by students in a series of community interactive events and performances. Maintenance of the house and surrounds are the responsibility of the young people involved and creative art and decoration is encouraged. Young people have developed a garden, a graffiti board, a UV light room provides opportunity for exploration of different media and ongoing local newspaper articles relating to the facility has created a positive profile within the community.

The program has the following compulsory components:

- A morning circle at which all students participate in daily planning and allocation of tasks, group discussion on issues affecting individuals, the house and the group, and planning for community events.
- Structured workshops which informally explore issues of identity, tolerance, self-awareness and community knowledge.
- Workshops which allow the development of artistic and performance skills such as juggling, fire-stick twirling, balloon animal tying, screen-printing, devil-stick construction and use, music and drumming, tie-dyeing, rune making etc.
- Maintenance and cleaning of the house.
- Participation in the food program.
- A learning contract in which individual students set goals for their participation in the program. This is a fluid document and is reviewed with an allocated mentor as students refine their interests and develop new skills.
- Participation by all members of the learning community in the development of group agreements, which regulate the rules of behaviour for the group. These are developed on a consensus model, empowering young people to establish their own social norms.
- An afternoon debrief where issues of the day are discussed and learning is reviewed and reinforced.



What's in it for the young people?

Students attending the House of Youth are encouraged to consider pathways toward further study or employment. They also have informal access to health, education and welfare workers.

A supportive group is formed with underpinning ideas of tolerance of others, respect for yourself and your environment and supporting each other in trying new ideas and skills. Students are encouraged to focus on literacy and numeracy as it relates to life skills. Shopping, budgeting, nutrition, cooking and exploration of differing cultures are possible through the food program, which is sponsored by JPET. This program also assists with the engagement of young people, allowing them to practice real life skills and to experiment with culinary proficiency.

Internet connected computers provide further opportunities for learning and research. Young people can sit practice driving tests online or search for information on drug issues, youth culture and ideas for creativity.

The garden and worm farm provide a further opportunity for ownership and pride in the venue, as well as practical horticulture and permaculture knowledge. There are opportunities to learn performance skills and music, chill out and play pool with your friends and travel as a group to beautiful natural places within the local area. Students work as a group towards commonly set

goals such as performing community-based group arts events. This leads to an increase in self and community awareness and the confidence to contribute actively in your social environment.

We actively participate as a group in community events designed to promote a positive image of youth by raising the profile of young people within the community. This assists young people to realise their role within our community.

Enrolment and attendance at the House of Youth fulfils mutual obligation requirements for the receipt of Centrelink benefits.

Why does it work?

The House of Youth aims to provide choices for young people, enabling them to increase their artistic potential, assist in self-development and promote a positive image of youth for the whole community. The philosophy of the house encourages supportive relationships between students and staff. Students are encouraged to own their choices and behaviours and participate in the program based on these choices.

Engagement with each student is a major part of the process, and coercion and authoritarian attitudes by staff are discouraged. The community profile the House of Youth has achieved through positive media and community performance has added to a sense of credibility among the young people we serve.

Our future

The House of Youth is continually seeking sustainable funding to allow for some level of planning and security in its operation. Due to the high needs and behavioural difficulties associated with our student group, a minimum of two staff are required at all times to address occupational health and safety and staff and student support needs.

Ongoing access to TAFE funding sources such as 'Get Skilled' and HYPAR is not available. Links to Learning will play a strong role in facilitating a secure future for this important community resource.

Regional Extended Family Services is looking at options of auspicing the house as an independent community facility to facilitate access to appropriate funding and provide administrative and professional support for staff. REFS also plans to place a part-time project worker in the house who will be developing education and leadership programs for young people.

Due to pressure from our neighbour, the developing PCYC, the House of Youth is itself 'at risk' and we may soon find ourselves homeless. It is hoped our strong relationship with Kempsey Shire Council and Djigay Student Association Inc — combined with our future relationship with REFS and strong support from the community sector — including Kempsey Family Support Services, will provide a pathway for continuing this program.

The House of Youth helped me to get my life together and feel better about myself.

FEMALE, 15



Matt Higgins trained as a Psychiatric Nurse in Victoria and has practised in mental health areas as diverse as prisons, community health centres, Inpatient units and a Psychiatric Crisis Response Unit. He currently chairs the Mid-North Coast Regional Council for Social Development. He is presently employed as Team Leader for Regional Extended Family Services, NSW, managing a team of youth workers reconciling potentially homeless youth with their families. He has a passion for alternative ways of connecting with young people and is a proficient juggler, fire twirler, singer and guitarist, using these skills in his work. He is father to four children of whom three are boys. Matt can be contacted on 02 65623211 or reconnectteamleader@midcoast.com.au

Bulletin Board

■ Lighthouse funding announcement



The Honorable Brendan Nelson MP (pictured right), Federal Minister for Education, Science and Training, has announced the results of the call for grant applications for the Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme.

The Curriculum Corporation received 1367 applications for grants under Stage One of the programme. The number of grants to be awarded was extended by the department in response to this level of interest.

Representatives from government, Catholic and independent schools sectors in five states were involved in the shortlisting and selection process. The selection panel considered that an overwhelming number of projects were worthy of commendation, and the final list of 110 projects involving 227 schools is only a small proportion of the good ideas presented.

The department has requested that those schools that missed out on funding maintain contact and, where possible, try to implement some of their ideas. They have asked these schools to register as Associate Schools by emailing Boys.Lighthouse@curriculum.edu.au. This will ensure the schools receive regular email information and resources of relevance to boys' education. These projects will then become part of a survey of good ideas in boys' education across Australia to be circulated to all schools in November.

Boys In Schools will be involved in a number of Lighthouse projects, so we will keep you updated as to the progress of these particular projects. We would also like to hear from other schools and clusters implementing projects to share their stories with schools across Australia. So, if you are one of the lucky applicants, let us know how you're going.



If you would like to have a look at the range of funded projects for The Lighthouse Programme visit the DEST website:

www.dest.gov.au/schools/boyseducation

and click on the link

Boys' Education Lighthouse Schools Programme

or go straight to

www.boyslighthouse.edu.au

■ Review / Sometimes Magic: Celebrating the Magic of Everyday Learning

This simple, compact yet powerful kit was developed by Kevin Vallence and Russell Deal, and distributed through St Luke's Innovative Resources.

Vallence and Deal have strong backgrounds in the education and welfare sectors. They readily acknowledge that everyday learning is not as valued by learners as success, and conversely failure, in formal education. Vallence and Deal have succeeded in developing a tool which prompts conversations about learning and learners. These prompts shift the balance of any conversation about learning away from the teacher 'expert' back to the learner. In doing so they have created a useful tool for classroom teachers, specialist teachers, community mentors, counselors and social workers as they seek to empower learners' self concept, particularly those who have 'failed' in formal education.

Sometimes Magic scaffolds learners to look at themselves through their own eyes and as the expert in their own learning. It does this by providing 32 conversation prompts in a non-threatening format. How, you might ask do they do this.

The kit consists of 32 laminated cards. The face side of each card contains one simple, yet highly detailed, drawing of an Australian animal. Along with the drawing, the face side also includes a 'Sometimes magic happens' statement, describing a characteristic of the animal's behaviour which can easily be related to everyday learning. The reverse side details simply those qualities or behaviours that assist the animal to achieve its uniqueness and strength and allows the animal to make magic happen for itself.

The cards cover such qualities as perseverance, patience, goal setting, cooperation, flexibility, resilience, self-awareness and pride in

achievement. A support booklet accompanies and completes the kit.

Sometimes Magic is applicable in a range of settings with a broad range of ages. While the age and experience of the learner will determine the approach taken, the cards appeal to younger learners because they provide interesting information about Australian animals, a topic readily taught in primary schools. The cards can therefore be used as a preventative measure. With older students, they provide a comfortable distance between personal experience and qualities of successful learners, regardless of the setting of the learning experience. Boys identify with their themes, content and purpose since the cards are non-confrontational and gender neutral.

If you are looking for a kit which is easily handled, stored and transported and has the diversity for use as a preventative measure, tool of reassurance and empowerment then *Sometimes Magic* is well worth investigating. All too often so-called failed learners see learning as something that starts and ends at the school gate. The uniqueness and strengths-based approach in this kit readily challenges a deficit view the learner might be developing or already exhibiting. Sometimes magic happens statements serve as positive affirmations useful in every setting.

For ordering details, see back cover of this *Bulletin*.



Reviewed by Shayne Player who has many years' experience as a high school teacher in rural and regional NSW. She is currently Deputy Principal (Welfare) at Swansea High School and can be contacted on 02 4971 1944.

■ Being a Man Photopak

- Want assistance in negotiating with boys?
- How do boys' notions of being a man fit with what's offered to them at school?
- Are we missing some of the strengths our boys bring to school?



The Boys in Schools **Being a Man Photopak** was developed to assist boys and men to discuss issues related to being a man.

Forty-five photos of men and boys of all ages and backgrounds provide powerful, sensitive and engaging images that display the many different ways that males interact. The situations range from traditional work backgrounds to outdoor activities to intimate personal interactions.



Accompanying the Photopak is a manual which guides the user through the many different ways the pack can be used, offering exercises and explanations.

In a way the photos do the work themselves. Boys and young men readily respond to the images and their implicit values and beliefs as to what men and boys should and should not do. But not all discussions will expand boys' notions of what males can do. At times, talking about difference or tolerance is

frustrating and confronting for the group leader. Finding the right question is the key to productive discussions. To assist those working with the photos a set of questions is provided for each photo.

Being a Man is ideal for use by teachers, parents, youth workers, probation officers, health workers and counsellors.

The Photopak consists of 45 A4 black and white pictures. It retails for \$132 and is available from the Boys in Schools Program. Contact Michelle Gifford:

Phone 02 4921 8739

Email men-and-boys@newcastle.edu.au

Or see order form on the back cover of this *Bulletin*.



■ Professional Development for Educators

*Available through the Boys in Schools Program,
Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle*

At the Boys in Schools Program we are passionate about boys' education. We really want to help teachers and parents get the best **for** our boys and **from** our boys.

Schools, communities and families all over Australia are grappling with the issues of how best to educate boys. Boys' low levels of literacy, poor academic achievement, aggression and harmful risk-taking are seen as serious problems in our community.

We would like to show you:

- How to fully engage boys in classroom learning.
- How to help boys use all of their intelligences.
- How to bring out the best behaviour in boys and develop their self-confidence.
- What a boy-friendly school might be like?

The Boys in Schools Program offers a strengths-based approach to engaging boys, individually and in groups. Our approach recognises the importance of male identity and uses the potential resources of energy, humour and safe risk-taking that boys and older males are likely to bring to any situation. The program offers knowledge and skills development in educating boys for professionals and parents across Australia through workshops, seminars, training programs, postgraduate courses and publications.

Specialised Boys in Schools Workshops

PHOTO: EDWARD GROSS



The Boys in Schools Program offers tailor-made professional development workshops for education staff at a local school, cluster or district basis. You can contact us with your particular professional development needs regarding educating boys, or look out for our one-day seminars in your state. We offer reasonable rates for whole-day and half-day professional development workshops and seminars.

Boys in Schools workshop presenters, clockwise from top left: David Shores, Rollo Browne, Greg Griffith and Deborah Hartman

Our postgraduate programs will change the way you work with boys . . .

In its short history, the Graduate Certificate course has had a major impact, probably due to its practical and innovative nature, as its first students have found:

We've changed our whole reporting system to parents as a result of an assignment I did on benchmarking.

PRINCIPAL, LARGE PRIVATE BOYS' SCHOOL

I've been able to implement programs for boys with nearly every assignment we've done. This is a very practical course.

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL, RURAL CO-ED HIGH SCHOOL

The readings are very exciting. They really got me thinking about boys.

FEMALE PRIMARY SCHOOL TEACHER

Where did you find all this up-to-the-minute information? I haven't seen it anywhere else.

MALE TEACHER, URBAN PUBLIC HIGH SCHOOL

Each of the assignments completed could be used within the school environment in one way or another to improve boy' learning.

MALE TEACHER,
CO-ED REGIONAL HIGH SCHOOL

The Boys in Schools Program offers both a **Graduate Certificate** and a **Masters** program specialising in educating boys. These programs are the first in Australia for practising teachers who wish to develop their professional expertise in educating boys in various settings, primary, secondary, single-sex or coeducational schools.

The programs are available by distance mode through the School of Education at the University of Newcastle, and are delivered by the staff of the Boys in Schools Program. This means you can upgrade your skills and specialise in educating boys, no matter where you teach.

Course Details

The program offers flexibility for busy teachers. At least three courses are offered each semester and students can begin during either semester one or two.

On completion of the Graduate Certificate, graduates can apply to continue to complete the Master's program. To complete the Graduate Certificate students must successfully complete a total of 40 credit points made up of one core course and three electives. Graduates can apply to continue on to the Masters Program. For the Master's program, students need to complete 80 credit points.

The program is full-fee paying, with payment of the fees directly to the university. Costs are likely to be \$750 (inc. GST) per course. There is also a general service charge. Course fees may be a legitimate tax deduction.

Enrolments for semester two of the course are currently being taken.

For more information

Visit www.newcastle.edu.au/courseinfo/handbook/htm

Or contact Michelle Gifford on

Ph: 02 4921 8739

Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au

■ Professional Development for Educators

But don't take our word for it . . .

Stephen Gaul was just one of many teachers grappling with the dilemmas of boys' education: How to develop teaching styles that encourage boys to use all their intelligences; that harness their energy and need for activity in a positive way; that help them communicate with girls in a mutually supportive manner?

After 18 years in teaching he felt his autocratic style of classroom management just wasn't working for him or his students, especially the boys, so he decided to do something about it.

Until recently there have been few avenues open to teachers to assist them with the challenges of teaching boys. However, Stephen enrolled in our Graduate Certificate in Educational Studies (Specialising in Educating Boys) and last year became the course's first graduate, having completed it in one year.

The Boys in Schools Program is at the cutting edge of the [teaching boys] situation. They're the ones who are leading and driving the field. I'd encourage anyone teaching boys to get involved.

STEPHEN GAUL, OUR FIRST GRADUATE



PHOTO: EDWARD CROSS

Changes Stephen has made to his teaching as a result of the course aim to make lessons boy-friendly. This involves more negotiating — giving them choices and consequences, as well as making the lessons more active — getting them out of their seats and encouraging inter-relational skills.

The battle against the 'it's cool to be a fool' trend is also a challenge for teachers. Drawing on the information from the course, such as multiple intelligences and the Rock and Water principles, Stephen teaches social skills in an active way, simultaneously offering boys a different take on what it means to be a man.

Stephen's changes have resulted in more noise in the classroom, coupled with a new enthusiasm and anticipation of what's coming next. Gone are the 'chalk and talk' days of 'sit down, be quiet, open your books and listen'. The change has involved more preparation work initially, but has paid great dividends in a more exciting, interactive teaching relationship.

The unexpected result is that these changes have also been positive for the girls in the classroom. Although girls are generally regarded as more 'auditory' in their learning, many enjoy the activity and relating in small groups.

BEBOP: Boys' Education, Boys' Outcomes Project



A systematic and comprehensive project for professional development and action research in educating boys.

BEBOP enables schools and/or groups or clusters of schools to systematically develop their approaches to boys' education, supported by research staff from the Boys in Schools Program. It involves a series of professional development seminars in school-identified priority issues in educating boys, coupled with supported school-based action research tasks for school staff.



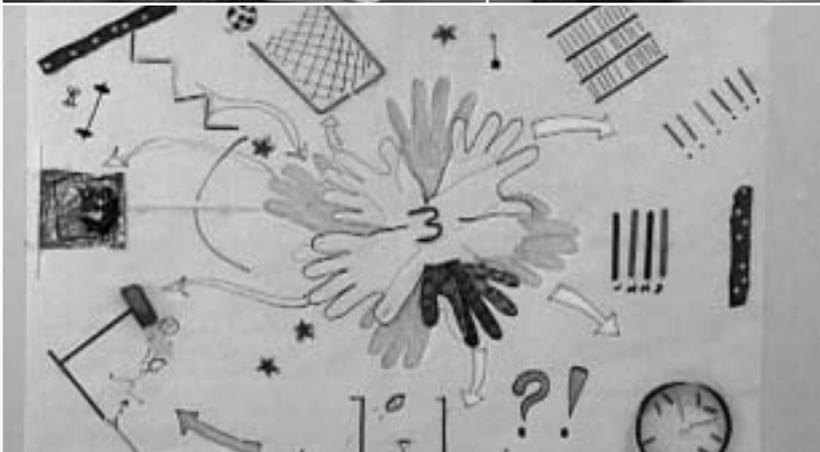
Over a 12 to 18-month period, BEBOP will help you achieve your outcomes for boys. In that time you will see many changes in your boys. They will participate more in the school's activities, improve their academic performance, exhibit more cooperative behaviour, expand their options and increase their involvement in extra-curricula activities.

Schools involved in BEBOP have:

- Developed effective school structures for educating boys and involving the community.
- Improved staff knowledge of the academic and social situation of boys.
- Developed strategies to build good relationships with boys, including effective classroom management techniques.
- Built knowledge of a range of successful literacy strategies, programs and resources for developing boys' literacy.
- Identified skills amongst staff to recruit fathers and father figures and involve them in the classroom.
- Implemented individual action plans to ensure that these outcomes are achieved.

As a teacher in a recent BEBOP says:

I have learnt so much . . . I didn't stay back and whinge about the problems I had but [BEBOP] gave me a strategy and the confidence to go out there to search for solutions and solve them.



■ Professional Development for Educators

Rock and Water

The Rock and Water program is coordinated throughout Australasia by the Gadaku Institute and the Boys in Schools Program and is presented by Freerk Ykema.

The Program

The program offers teachers a new way to interact with boys and girls, through physical/social teaching. Physical exercises are constantly linked with mental and social skills. Simple self-defence, boundary and communication exercises leads to a strong notion of self-confidence.

The program offers a framework of exercises and thoughts about boys and manhood to assist boys to become aware of purpose and motivation in their life.

Topics include: intuition, body language, mental power, empathetic feeling, positive thinking and positive visualising. Discussion topics include bullying, sexual harassment, homophobia, goals in life, desires and following an inner compass.

One-day introductory: The Boys in Schools Program can now offer one-day introductory workshops around Australia with our new qualified instructors who have been trained extensively by Freerk Ykema. The one day workshop provides a survey of the entire course focusing on the first four lessons of the program. These include: standing strong physically and mentally; introduction to the Rock and Water attitude (in physical and verbal confrontation; Rock and Water in the school yard and in relationships (what kind of friend am I? — too rocky, too watery?). It will also include breathing exercises, exercises for boundary awareness and body language. Maximum of 30 participants per workshop. This is a great way to familiarise many staff in your school or organisation with the Rock and Water principles.

Three-day workshop: This workshop provides a survey of the entire course. Day one covers the contents of lessons 1 to 4: standing strong, the rock and water attitude in physical, mental and social context; and dealing with pressure from others. Day two extends the range of exercises and topics: breathing to extend physical power and to keep self-control; the body language of The Tunnel and of The Beach; feeling, setting and respecting our own and other people's boundaries. All lessons from 1–8 are practised. On Day three you will complete lessons 9 to 13; these are best directed at boys only and are more suitable for students aged 14 or older. They address lack of direction, sexuality and personal development.



Rock and Water course developer Freerk Ykema and Michelle Gifford of the Boys in Schools Program.

PHOTO: EDWARD CROSS

National Tour Details

Newcastle, NSW: 30 June–2 July
Boys in Schools Program
Contact: Michelle Gifford
Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
Ph: (02) 4921 8739

NT/ACT/NSW: March and November
Boys in Schools Program
Contact: Michelle Gifford
Email: Michelle.Gifford@newcastle.edu.au
Ph: (02) 4921 8739

Melbourne: October
7–9 October
Parade College
Contact: Sarah Morgante
Email: smorgante@parade.vic.edu.au
Ph: (03) 9468 3300

Melbourne: April
St Joseph's College
Contact: Sue Brooks
Ph: (03) 9758 2000
Email: sue@sjcftg.melb.catholic.edu.au

Western Australia: April & October
21–23 October
24–25 Advanced Training
Wesley College
Contact: Susan Laughton
Ph: (08) 9368 8047
Email: Slaughton@wesley.wa.edu.au

South Australia: April/May & October
14–16 October
Cabra College
Contact: Kathy Hanna
Ph: (08) 8272 4588
Email:
Kathy.hanna@cabra.adl.catholic.edu.au

Queensland
If you are interested in becoming a host school in Queensland, please contact Freerk Ykema by emailing f.ykema@quicknet.nl

Boys in Schools Resources / ORDER FORM

TITLE	PUB NO.	PRICE (INC. GST)	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Boys in Schools Bulletin (school set subscription) — 3 copies of each issue	002S	\$110.00		
The Boys in School Bulletin (single subscription) — 1 copy of each issue	970	\$45.00		
The Boys in School Bulletin 2002 back issues — 1 copy of each issue (=3)	004S	\$40.00		
The Boys in School Bulletin 2001 back issues — 1 copy of each issue (=3)	004S	\$33.00		
New: Sometime Magic	010	\$46.75		
New: Strength Cards for Kids	011	\$49.50		
Being a Man Photopak	979	\$132.00		
Boys in Schools	961	\$28.00		
Leadership in Boys' Education	992	\$33.00		
I Can Hardly Wait Till Monday	001	\$33.00		
Boyz Rulez posters	981	\$33.00		
FatherCare posters	983	\$20.00		
Male Health posters	991	\$33.00		
Boys to Men posters	004	\$33.00		
113 Ways to Be Involved As a Father poster	006	\$11.00		
Rock and Water manual (2nd edition)	002	\$55.00		
New: The Rock and Water Perspective: Theory Book	007	\$35.00		
New: Rock and Water Action Reaction video (English subtitles, high school age only)	008	\$55.00		
New: Rock and Water Basic Exercises video	009	\$55.00		
Man's World: A Game for Young Men (suitable for high school age only)	974UK	\$121.00		

PLEASE NOTE: Unfortunately we cannot send resources on approval.

Please add 15% for postage and handling (up to \$20.00 maximum)

Sub Total	\$
Postage & handling (add 15% to max. \$20)	\$
TOTAL	\$

Make cheques payable to: The Boys in Schools Program (ABN 15 736 576 735)

Contact name: _____ Organisation: _____

Postal address: _____ Postcode: _____

Order no: _____ Phone no: _____

Please invoice our organisation (Australia only) Enclosed is my cheque for AUD\$ _____

Please debit my credit card Bankcard Visa Mastercard

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