



# CATHOLIC EDUCATION OFFICE OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Submission to the "Education and Health Standing Committee"

### Western Australian Legislative Assembly

#### *Current and future resourcing of new methods and activities to improve educational outcomes such as e-learning and school partnerships*

Catholic Education Office of Western Australia is committed to new technologies which enable 21<sup>st</sup> century learning and collaboration between schools. Current work on establishing a system wide Learning Management System will assist schools to deliver more effectively and should be of particular importance to country schools. It is important that educational authorities continue to develop effective and compatible on-line learning resources. For example, the support materials produced by the Curriculum Council of WA to support the implementation and assessment of new courses are available to all schools.

Similarly, it is recommended that the State Government continue to push for the production of on-line resource materials for both teachers and students in relation to the Australian Curriculum. This includes agencies such as the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority (ACARA) and Education Services Australia (ESA).

In terms of partnerships, there needs to be ongoing support for schools to work together, particularly in country areas and in the senior secondary context. Schools also need to work closely with business and the communities, particularly in regional centres. Current partnerships with BHP, Woodside and other resource companies have produced positive outcomes for schools and their wider communities.

For country schools, CEOWA sees value in identifying metropolitan schools which can take on a mentoring/advice/support role. This involves funding issues that are not readily available at present. CEOWA also supports clusters of schools sharing and jointly purchasing resources. For example some lower SES metropolitan schools have explored the possibility of jointly sharing speech therapy services, attendance support, youth workers etc.

#### 2. *Factors influencing positive or negative childhood development from birth to Year 12*

Research shows that intellectual and social development in the first four years of life is critical. Whilst this is historically considered a pre-school period, schools are now taking on an increased role with younger children. To this end, CEOWA is strongly supportive of establishing 3 year old programs with qualified early childhood teachers, child care and out-of-school hours care centres attached to schools. CEOWA also supports the concept of wrap-around services in such centres. For example, a new centre at the former Holy Name School in Carlisle will establish a child care and out-of-school hours centre available for the local community but in addition, other services will be available to parents by private providers on a sessional basis. These will include a nurse, speech therapist, social worker and occupational therapist.

The expansion of this concept, not just for child care, but for early primary education should be supported by the State government. There are many examples of successful models.

### 3. *Facilitating greater opportunities to engage all students in Year 11 and 12*

Currently, most schools have a range of mainstream, endorsed programs and VET to cater for these students. However a growing number of students are at risk of disengaging with education. Many of the disengaged students are not suited to mainstream education.

The key to engaging these students is the provision of a supportive school environment and effective student mentoring. CEOWA supports the expansion of Curriculum and Re-Engagement (CARE) Schools such as at St Clare's School and the Geraldton Flexible Learning Centre. Clontarf Aboriginal College is also an example of another successful model for Aboriginal students. The challenges for these schools are great both educationally and financially. These schools typically have a smaller student cohort and thus are more expensive to operate. Differential per capita funding rates provided by the State government have been an important enabler for such schools. As funding is currently being reviewed as part of the Australian Government Review of School Funding, the importance of maintaining higher per capita funding rates for CARE schools and students at risk should be seen as a crucial component of education funding.

Engagement of Year 11 and 12 students can be difficult in a State as geographically broad as Western Australia. Smaller regional centres and schools with small senior secondary cohorts tend to be impacted disproportionately and thus greater support to these schools is necessary. Research shows that educational outcomes tend to decline the further a student is located from the main city. It is hoped that submissions to the Review of Funding for Schooling which have highlighted this issue will result in policy decisions with a change of focus.

The playing field within country areas is also not level. Government schools have ready access to the School for Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE) however the cost for non-government school children generally prohibits access. Extension of the services to schools from all systems at an appropriate cost and in a timely organisational framework would greatly assist schools with small cohorts in regional centres.

Accessing quality vocational training for students remains an issue, especially in the traditional "trades" areas. The reduction in profile hours available to schools as a result of the split of education and training in WA has reduced the availability of subsidised training to students in skills shortage areas.

There are additional issues for engaging students in many regional and remote centres. Curriculum offerings can be limited and access to Vocational Educational Training is also limited and very costly. Serious consideration needs to be given to providing additional profile funding to regional State Training Providers or other Registered Training Organisations to be made available to these students. This is particularly so for the sole provider non-government schools.

Provision of additional funds to hostels such as that located in Broome provides realistic opportunities for students from remote communities in Kimberley schools to access quality education and training, particularly in senior secondary education. The model of partnership between Catholic Education and the Country Hostels Association has been a successful example of government and non-government providers working together for the betterment of the community. The opportunity exists to significantly expand this facility. However, a return to an "us and them"

approach in discussions to expand the facility using Royalties for Regions funding has been disappointing and fails to recognise the role both parties have played in establishing this Hostel. The provision of similar facilities in centres such as Karratha could also be considered.

4. *Improving access and opportunities for adult learning in regional and remote WA*

Trade Training Centres, an initiative of the Australian Government, may be useful in providing training opportunities for students as well as members of the community. Greater communication and co-ordination of the service providers in remote communities could enhance access and opportunities for adult learning.

5. *Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder; prevalence, prevention, identification, funding and treatment to improve education social and economic outcomes*

Extensive evidence suggests that alcohol and other drug use and misuse is often not an isolated behaviour but one of a number of problems, including mental health disorders and criminal behaviour, which can be influenced by an individual's economic, social and cultural environment.

Schools have an important role to play in the following ways;

- Providing a sense of belonging; the presence of a pro-social peer group; required responsibility; opportunities for success and recognition; and school norms against violence.
- Avoiding risk factors such as experiences of bullying; peer rejection; poor attachment to school; membership of a deviant peer group; inadequate behaviour management; and school failure.
- Establishing supportive and protective school communities which can contribute to a young person's health and wellbeing by helping to insulate them from alcohol and other drug related harm and other problems.
- Supporting the role of the School Drug Education and Road Aware (SDERA)
- The recognition by health authorities (National Health and Medical Research Council) that alcohol use by young people has serious negative outcomes in the short and long terms. Progress in this regard has prompted the development of the document, *Alcohol Guidelines for Children and Young People*.
- Encouraging cross agency collaboration such as in the Kimberley with key alcohol and drug service providers to ensure a whole of community perspective is maintained. For example the SDERA consultant is a contributor to the Kimberley Alcohol and Drug Management Plan which is coordinated by the Drug and Alcohol Office and also works with the Community Drug Service Team on timely and appropriate community prevention initiatives.