

# WESTERN AUSTRALIA

## Objectives for schooling

The fundamental objective of the Education Department—to ensure that all students developed the knowledge, skills and confidence to achieve their individual potential and contribute to society—was pursued through a partially devolved system of 767 schools and 226,075 students. Each school had significant decision-making responsibilities, was partially self-managing, was accountable for student outcomes, exhibited responsiveness to community needs and government policies, and was encouraged to explore flexible approaches and structures for the delivery of schooling.

Systemic priorities were grouped under five major objectives in the current (1996–1998) strategic plan: curriculum responsiveness; flexibility in schooling; staff professionalism and working relationships; resource management; and quality assurance.

Initiatives included participation in the development, in cooperation with the non-government schools sectors, of the Statewide Curriculum Framework of the new Curriculum Council; refinement of student outcome statements; programs to improve specific learning outcomes in science, primary mathematics, health and physical education, and languages other than English (LOTE), and learning outcomes in general for students at educational risk; the wider application of technology to teaching and learning; and the continuing reform of early childhood and post-compulsory education. Flexibility in schooling was encouraged by increased school level autonomy in curriculum development and delivery, resource management and staffing decisions and the promotion of diversity in school and work organisation. Strategies supporting staff professionalism and working relationships included development of the new Teacher Level 3 classification to encourage the retention of teachers in the classroom.

Each of 151 Catholic schools addressed the development of the whole person and the appreciation of his or her ‘uniqueness’ and ‘giftedness’ within Gospel values. A commitment to equity and social justice principles involved the provision of learning environments that were inclusive of all learners.

The major priority objectives were the professional development of teachers; provision of a comprehensive curriculum catering for all students; values education; community participation; provisions for students disadvantaged by ethnicity, isolation or disability; wider participation by Indigenous students; and the consolidation of kindergarten education.

Middle schooling received special attention as a strategic priority. Research was commissioned and the findings discussed with groups of schools interested in pursuing the delivery of appropriate curriculum experiences to young adolescents.

The draft Curriculum Framework was examined by all schools, many of which provided responses to the Curriculum Council, and the implications of implementation of the Framework were considered in detail.

A learning difficulties consultant was employed to assist with examination of the National Literacy and Numeracy Plan. Professional development was offered to all Catholic schools to assist them in establishing a whole-school approach to providing for students with literacy or numeracy problems.

Collaborative learning remained an important focus in primary schools and was extended to secondary schools. It is expected that the initiative will be expanded in 1998.

Eighteen surveyed independent schools expressed a wide range of objectives for schooling, with no dominant theme apparent except, perhaps, that of improving their use of information technology. Objectives included many that related to preparing students for later life and enhancing their individual growth, or improving school resources,

environments and teaching capabilities. Most schools' objectives featured curriculum related themes, particularly those associated with literacy and numeracy. General objectives for the sector as a whole included:

- preparation for the introduction of the Curriculum Framework: the extensive consultation phase in 1997 took a great deal of teachers' and schools' time;
- addressing the implications of outcomes-based education, including the choice of appropriate assessment models;
- provision for the professional development of staff, with the major shift in the delivery of curriculum to student-centred learning, cooperative learning, lifelong learning, skills-based learning and outcomes-based education, for which extensive in-service training will be required;
- consideration of the ramifications of the School Education Bill: for example, new registration procedures;
- addressing the effects of the abolition of the New Schools Policy. The impact of the growth of small, low-fee schools on the enrolments of neighbouring schools and the inequitable funding being provided to them is a concern; and
- providing adequate access to technology (including communications) for all students in remote areas and for particular student groups throughout the independent schools sector.

## Important initiatives

The year was characterised by several significant events affecting the provision of schooling:

- the Curriculum Council was established by statute and developed the Curriculum Framework, which sets out, for the first time, what all K–12 students in the State should know, value and be able to do;
- the Education Department's central and district offices were restructured to move to the local level much of the routine provision, management and delivery of services to schools and students;
- the concept of local area education planning (LAEP) was adopted to improve responsiveness and flexibility in the delivery of government schooling. LAEP considers the needs of groups of schools rather than individual schools;

- rapid progress was made toward the provision in 1998 of optional schooling to all five-year-olds; and
- the Minister for Education introduced the second reading of the School Education Bill to Parliament.

## Curriculum Council

The Curriculum Council, was established under the *Curriculum Council Act 1997* to coordinate K–12 curriculum development for all schools and home tutors. The Curriculum Council also took over the functions of the Secondary Education Authority (SEA) in relation to the preparation of years 11 and 12 courses, assessment of years 11 and 12 student performance (especially in the year 12 external examinations) and the expression of the schools sectors' views on admission processes for further education and training.

The Council consists of 13 members: a chairperson appointed by the Minister for Education; the chief executive officer of the Council; two Education Department nominees; one nominee from each of the Catholic Education Office of WA (CEOWA), the Association of Independent Schools of WA (AISWA) and the WA Department of Training (WADOT); one teacher representative; one parent representative; one representative of the State's universities; and three people with experience and expertise in industry, education or community affairs.

During 1996–1997, the Council developed the Curriculum Framework, which describes the major outcomes of learning for all students and the scope of the curriculum in terms of teaching and learning. It is to be mandatory for all students and will provide schools with clear directions on what is to be achieved by students, while allowing maximum flexibility in the process. It also includes a minimum core of shared values. The Framework comprises an overarching curriculum statement and eight learning area statements. Each of the latter provides a definition of the learning area and the rationale for its inclusion in the Framework; a description of between ten and 30 major outcomes of study (not necessarily outcomes for the end of year 12, but major overarching outcomes evident throughout K–12); an outline of essential content that maximises students' performance in terms of the major outcomes; links with specific years 11 and 12 courses and programs and links with other learning areas; and an outline of recommended teaching/learning processes, including assessment practices, that contribute to students' achievement.

Using the Framework, schools will be able to build their own curriculum and syllabuses to meet the specific needs of

their students. It will replace Unit Curriculum for years 8 to 10 in those schools where the latter is currently being used and some schools will adapt units by varying the length and type of courses.

Three months of community consultation began in July 1997; during 1998, all schools will prepare for the introduction of the Framework, including undertaking professional development, for full implementation beginning in 1999.

The Education Department, CEOWA and AISWA each played an active part in the work of the Curriculum Council during 1997, through representation on the overarching statement committee, learning area committees and community reference groups, and participation in consultation in relating to the enabling legislation.

## **Education Department restructuring**

In October 1996, the draft *Plan for Government School Education 1998–2000* was released for consultation, before being finalised in 1997. The main objectives of the Plan are the establishment of a standards-based approach to curriculum in all government schools; enhancement of teaching as a profession; greater scope for decision making at the school level; and more efficient and effective use of resources.

Implementation of the Program of Improvement for the Government School System, through which the Education Department proposes to achieve these objectives during the 1998–2000 triennium, began with the revision of district boundaries and the appointment of 21 district directors of schools in place of 29 district superintendents as the Department's senior representatives in the field.

Realignment of district boundaries created 16 instead of 29 districts: four metropolitan, with 361 government schools and 138,000 students; two outer metropolitan (81 schools and 39,000 students); and ten country districts (331 schools and 76,000 students).

Each district is of sufficient size and has sufficient resources to deliver quality services. The district directors are responsible for ensuring the quality of schooling, coordinating local area education planning, managing significant resources to support schools and leading schools to enhanced performance.

Major initiatives included:

- a curriculum improvement program based on the Curriculum Framework and an Outcomes and Standards

Framework, which structures the process of assessing and describing student achievement in government schools;

- improved communication through technology;
- universal access to early childhood education and reduction of class sizes in the early years of schooling;
- special strategies for students at educational risk;
- expansion of vocational education;
- participation in the development of a centre for professional excellence;
- strengthening of quality assurance at all levels, including reporting of standards in student achievement against national benchmarks;
- staff performance management;
- preparation for the new School Education Act which will replace the Education Act 1928 and provide a modern legislative framework affording the community a considerably wider role in the governance of schools;
- staffing reforms to assist teachers to develop their skills and implement best practice in classrooms; and
- local area education planning.

The central office will become smaller and more focussed on strategic planning; the development of policy, guidelines and standards; resource deployment; the provision of professional leadership to districts; and strategic initiatives and projects. Some central functions will cease and others will be transferred to district offices. This will encourage the local solution of local problems and strengthen the movement toward self-managing schools within an overall framework of goals, policies, standards and accountability. Staff reductions will be achieved through voluntary redundancies.

Above all, the reforms will achieve a balance between systemic requirements that apply to all government schools and flexibility that allows local decision making and problem solving. It is considered that government schools are best served by having the support that comes from being part of a system but being sufficiently autonomous to exercise local initiative in meeting community needs.

## **Local area education planning (LAEP)**

The framework for LAEP was released for public comment by the Minister for Education in June 1997. It is intended to allow local communities a greater say on issues such as the

location of schools and variations to traditional schooling structures. This may lead to some reorganisation of the provision of secondary schools and the traditional multipurpose nature of primary schools. Closures and excisions will be determined locally, not centrally. In the case of excisions, individual schools will receive a third of proceeds, the local area a third and central systemic funding a third. LAEP for metropolitan secondary schools and some non-metropolitan districts commenced in third term 1997.

## Early childhood education

In the government schools system, 'early childhood education' involves the provision of schooling for children aged from three to eight years through kindergarten (K), pre-primary (P) and years 1, 2 and 3. K and P schooling are optional and are available on a part-time basis, ranging from two half-days to eight half-days per week, depending on the age of the student.

The State Government places a high priority on early childhood education, and the Education Department is expanding provision for it, in terms of both access and instructional time. In 1997, some 94,000 children were enrolled in K–3 at primary schools and district high schools.

The focus of programs is on the provision of education appropriate to the students' needs, interests and developmental levels, with pathways in knowledge and skills that they may follow, with growing competence and confidence, as they move through the early years of schooling. Outcomes are viewed as benchmarks to be achieved over time, with each child's progress being individually monitored.

Current initiatives build on both existing good practice and on innovation, encouraging schools to explore new structures and approaches to teaching that creates better learning environments for children and working conditions for teachers. They acknowledge both the vital role that parents play in the early education of young children and the need to identify and address learning problems as early as possible.

During 1997, provisions for four- and five-year-old students were organised in the following ways:

- The Education Department provided 9,600 kindergarten places (two half-day sessions per week) for four-year-old children at district high schools, primary schools and community preschools. Family and Children's Services provided 7,500 kindergarten places in its family centres and supplementary programs. In addition, 87 community

preschools, staffed by the Education Department, provided programs mainly for four-year-old children. From 1997 to 1999, the responsibility for kindergarten programs operated by Family and Children's Services is being progressively transferred to the Education Department. About 1,600 supplementary program kindergarten places were transferred in 1997 and by 1999 all children will have access in the year they turn four to two half-day sessions of kindergarten per week in an Education Department program in a variety of settings.

- Some 515 government schools provided 17,000 five-year-old students with optional full-time pre-primary programs, i.e. the equivalent of four full days per week. Students at these schools were also able to attend pre-primary programs on a part-time basis. A further 90 government schools offered pre-primary schooling on a part-time basis for 3,500 five-year-old students.

## National Literacy and Numeracy Cross-sectoral Project

In Western Australia, the National Literacy and Numeracy Cross-sectoral Project focussed on the provision of professional development to support P–3 teachers in early identification and intervention in order to address national and State goals relating to improved literacy and numeracy outcomes for students.

### Literacy Net

The Education Department has a commitment through its students at educational risk and literacy strategies to develop a coordinated approach to improving literacy outcomes for all students. A key activity is the Literacy Net, which is designed to enhance literacy programs and strategies already in place.

The Literacy Net is an assessment tool that assists teachers to focus on critical aspects of literacy learning that students can be expected to achieve at designated times. Judgements will be made against a set of literacy behaviours called checkpoints that will enable teachers to identify a focus for planning and support for students experiencing difficulties.

The Literacy Net is being developed and implemented in stages aligned to the phases of schooling:

Stage One (K–3)	Developed and trialled 1997–1998
Stage Two (4–7)	Developed and trialled 1998–1999
Stage Three (8–10)	Developed and trialled 1999–2000

During 1997, sets of checkpoints were developed to describe expected literacy achievements for students at the middle and end of P, 1 and 2. Two hundred P–2 teachers participated in a trial of the checkpoints and provided information on the range of assessment techniques used in their classrooms. Based on teacher feedback, the checkpoints were refined and incorporated into a Literacy Net planning cycle.

## **Early Literacy Project**

The Early Literacy Project (ELP) is a school-based program to assist teachers to support children disadvantaged by low socioeconomic circumstances.

In 1997, the project involved 78 priority schools across Western Australia and used a train-the-trainer model in the form of a literacy coordinator who attended to ongoing ELP professional development, assisted teachers to identify students experiencing difficulties with literacy learning and monitored and reported on the implementation of literacy intervention plans.

Each school received support through professional development, teacher relief for collaborative planning, a part-time teacher component, a literacy contingency grant and a home–school research grant.

The outcomes of the project were measured through semester reports provided by each school. These provided a review of ELP action plans, the level of ongoing professional development provided by literacy coordinators, the implementation of intervention plans for ‘at risk’ students and evidence of strategies introduced to establish effective home–school relationships.

The aim is to establish successful literacy intervention processes that will continue in schools beyond the life of ELP. Reports from schools at the end of 1997 indicated that these processes had been incorporated into their policies and development plans that will direct key literacy planning in 1998.

## **First Steps in Mathematics**

First Steps in Mathematics provides teachers with a means of linking the number, measurement and space strands in the student outcome statements with curriculum content in each phase of schooling.

The materials are designed to assist early childhood and primary teachers to translate their beliefs about learning

mathematics into practical classroom experiences and improve their understanding of developmental learning.

The materials focus on how children learn, so students can engage in open-ended mathematics activities; problem-solving within a meaningful context; reflecting, recording and representing mathematical understanding in their own way; and self-evaluation.

The materials provide the general outcomes for each strand, and then a specific outcome with pointers, that teachers can use as guiding evidence of a child’s progress. Each specific outcome statement reflects on four levels of development.

## **Focus Schools**

To enhance the quality of early childhood education programs, existing provisions are being reviewed to ensure they meet the developmental needs of all children.

During 1997, through the cross-sectoral Focus Schools project, new programs and teacher resources were developed in nine schools, including six government schools, one community preschool, one Catholic school and one independent school. The project commenced in 1996 and will be completed by the end of 1998.

The Focus Schools emphasise best practice, develop new teaching strategies, trial innovations in curriculum and delivery and monitor their application in the classroom. They also develop resource materials to support teachers and provide opportunities for other schools to observe exemplary practice.

Priorities include the development of programs for Indigenous students, further implementation of multi-age grouping, identification of and intervention for children at risk, the use of information and communications technology, techniques for evaluation and reporting and the establishment of procedures for strengthening parent and community participation.

## **Aboriginal preschools**

Over the 1997–2000 period, the Education Department is progressively transferring the management of the 26 community-based Aboriginal preschools to government schools where there is agreement with the local Indigenous communities.

During 1997, eight preschools were transferred. The transferred preschools conduct specific-purpose programs for four-year-old Indigenous children. The change is intended to improve the provision of management and support to the

preschools and provide Indigenous children with access to well-resourced programs in purpose-built facilities.

## School Education Bill

The School Education Bill legislation will replace the Education Act 1928 and reflect the profound changes that have occurred in the provision of government and non-government schooling over the past 70 years.

In June 1997, the draft Bill was opened to 12 weeks of community consideration and reaction. Thirty-one meetings were held at 16 locations around the State with about 1,200 members of the public, principals and teachers. Two interactive videoconferences were provided for people in country areas who could not attend the public meetings and the 'green Bill' was published both in hard copy and on the Internet. By the end of the consultation period, 322 written submissions had been received and considered in the drafting of the final Bill.

The Bill emphasises both the right of parents to choose the form of schooling that best suit their children's needs and their responsibility to work together with schools for successful outcomes of that schooling.

It maintains the commitment to compulsory education for children aged between six and 15 years, although adjustments to these ages are provided for as changes to the school entry age take effect from 2001.

Attendance provisions are more flexible than those of the 1928 legislation, because many students now spend part of their school time off-campus in settings such as work experience, TAFE, enrichment activities or other special educational programs.

The Curriculum Framework will allow considerable freedom of choice for non-government schools and home educators in the philosophy, content and methodology of their educational programs, and, while the chief executive officer of the Education Department will be ultimately responsible for ensuring government schools' compliance with the Curriculum Council Act, they will also have considerable autonomy in meeting the requirements of the Framework.

To allow for changes in the ways in which they are managed and curriculum is delivered, the Minister for Education will be able to exempt schools, such as senior colleges, the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education, community high schools or the planned Perth school for Aboriginal children, from certain regulations.

To acknowledge that many parents would prefer to be able to choose between government schools according to the

programs they offer, flexibility is proposed in the setting of intake boundaries.

Closure of a government school will require 12 months notice to be given and in the process the community will be consulted on such matters as the relocation of students affected and the continuity of their schooling.

Since 1987, the Education Act 1928 has provided for school-based decision-making groups, through which parents and community members are involved in the management of their local government schools. Under the Bill, they will become school councils, with a role in school development planning, student behaviour codes and dress codes and the endorsement of school charges. With the agreement of individual school communities, their role may be widened to include participation in the selection of the school principal and other functions to be specified in regulations.

The Bill recognises the responsibility of government for ensuring that certain standards are maintained in the delivery of schooling to children who attend non-government schools and provides for a comprehensive scheme of registration that will require the governing bodies to account for the quality of their educational programs at least every seven years.

The Minister will be able to enter into agreements with non-government schools systems to enable some registration and financial accountability functions to be devolved to the systems themselves.

A growing number of parents provide home-based education for their children, and the Bill allows the compulsory schooling requirement to be met in this way, if evidence is provided that such a program delivers student outcomes of a comparable standard to those of other students of similar age and ability in regular schools.

A partnership between school and family is crucial to ensuring students' full involvement in schooling and, to complement the compulsory education requirement, the Bill proposes penalties for prolonged truancy. Panels will examine the reasons given, and provide appropriate advice to students, their parents and schools, with the aim of securing regular attendance and participation. The general provisions of the 1928 Act authorising the suspension and/or exclusion of students whose behaviour is inappropriate are to be continued.

Government school principals will be able to determine a charge to parents for the materials and services which are directly used by students in educational programs, within

limits to be set in the regulations, but no child will be refused access to a program if the charges are not paid.

Government schools will be able to establish special funds for building or library purposes or foundation funds intended to benefit the school as a whole. This will assist them to qualify for tax-deductible donations. Further, many government schools are developing alumni or corporate sponsors, and an ability to attract bequests and donations will be of benefit. However, sponsorship and advertising support will be regulated to ensure that schools are not exploited.

The Bill requires that complaints and dispute resolution processes be available for all parents, as well as review mechanisms to ensure that administrative decisions are made in ways that are open and accountable. It provides for six review panels with community participation:

- to consider matters related to absenteeism and to facilitate the return of children to normal attendance;
- for parents seeking review of a home education evaluation report or a decision to cancel home education registration;
- for parents seeking review of an enrolment decision concerning a child with a disability;
- to consider the case of any child for whom exclusion is recommended;
- to review decisions by the Minister to refuse to register or re-register non-government schools; and
- to review decisions by the Minister to refuse to register community kindergartens.

Stakeholders will be consulted in the development of the regulations, which will also be made available for public comment. The legislation will be reviewed in 2004.

## Focus areas

### School-industry links

To maximise the total potential for structured work-based learning (SWL) placements in government schools, three initiatives were pursued in 1997: simplifying large business placements through a single contact point; creating coordinated databases that identified placements across schools and clusters; and providing courses for coordinators of SWL.

In some cases, schools attended to their own SWL coordination needs and in others SWL was coordinated across schools. A third option was for schools to outsource

SWL to private providers. Some schools will use all three models in 1998, tailoring the type of coordination to meet particular program needs.

The success of vocational education and training (VET) in schools hinges to a large degree on the capacity of industry to provide SWL placements for students. In addition to the above strategies, it is critical to retain the goodwill of employers so that existing SWL placements can be retained and new placements found.

VET costs are greater than costs of those for general education. When there is more precision about the various VET costs, schools will be able to plan new programs more effectively. Also, the costs of entering into partnerships with TAFE or other providers for off-the-job learning vary markedly among industries and providers: in some cases, the costs are beyond the capacity of schools to pay.

A few VET students took Tertiary Entrance Examinations (TEE) courses in 1997, but the potential for this group to expand is limited by restrictions that currently require some additional sacrifice by TEE students if they do VET courses. It is desirable that all students have ready access to VET courses and gain credit for their achievements.

Various forms of delivery are currently in place for VET in isolated areas. In some cases, district high schools and remote community schools are delivering their own programs. In others, the Schools of Isolation and Distance Education (SIDE) are undertaking delivery.

Needs identified so far in relation to VET students include support for schools where there is only a recent history of providing for post-compulsory students; continuity of staffing for programs established in schools; consistent and cost-effective funding arrangements; and determination of SIDE's ongoing role.

Accreditation and certification issues to be addressed include the development of a process that complies with the new ARF and ensuring that schools have access to appropriate student training and teacher train-the-trainer programs.

Independent schools' VET programs seek to convey to students the message that learning is a lifelong process and that they need to be prepared to adapt to the changing needs of the workplace. All students benefit from a curriculum that emphasises teamwork, problem-solving and hands-on learning in the context of the 'real world'.

The challenges involved in the implementation of VET programs include working with parents to set realistic goals and making the choice of TAFE study or workplace training more acceptable to them.

Other significant issues include the need for flexible programs, which means that administrators and teachers have to modify their approach to school timetabling; provision of professional development for school staff and workplace coordinators; parent education, which is vital if they are to understand how VET programs work and be encouraged to participate and cooperate; and funding—students in some schools may be denied access to very successful programs if adequate funding is not available.

## Indigenous students

In government schools, Indigenous students' attendance records are generally poorer than those of non-Indigenous students: current data suggest that Indigenous students attend preschool 70 per cent of the time (non-Indigenous 85 per cent), primary 84 per cent (93 per cent) and secondary 81 per cent (92 per cent).

In relation to truancy rates, up to 30 per cent of Indigenous students are reputedly not in regular school attendance: accurate baseline data will be collected during 1998.

Secondary progression rates also show significant differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in government schools. Two-thirds of Indigenous students beginning year 10 in 1997 completed the year, compared with 88 per cent of non-Indigenous students; for year 12, the rates were 72 per cent and 85 per cent. Of Indigenous year 10 students in 1995, 20 per cent were retained to year 12 in 1997, compared with 63 per cent of non-Indigenous students. Of Indigenous year 8 students in 1995, 82 per cent were retained to year 10 in 1997, compared with 99 per cent of non-Indigenous students. Less than five per cent of the year 8 Indigenous cohort obtained secondary graduation in 1997.

In 1997, testing of reading at entry to government primary schooling, 485 out of 1,515 Indigenous students (32 per cent) met most checkpoints in the Literacy Net, compared with 61 per cent of non-Indigenous students. In oral language, the respective figures were 22 and 53 per cent and in writing 25 and 56 per cent.

In relation to mathematics, no baseline data have yet been established for the proportion of Indigenous students who satisfy education providers' numeracy expectations for entry to primary school compared with non-Indigenous students, although a checklist is under development.

Participation and achievement remained unsatisfactory, and until teaching strategies and forms of assessment fully acknowledge the learning styles and needs of Indigenous

students, further significant improvement is unlikely, despite the range of initiatives mounted to address the educational recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody and the Task Force on Aboriginal Social Justice.

In Catholic schools, major initiatives included:

- maintaining and supporting the Catholic Education Aboriginal Committee;
- strengthening involvement and support for the education of Indigenous students;
- teaching the history of Indigenous cultures to all students, with the acknowledgment that these cultures are unique, dynamic and alive;
- supporting the teaching of traditional Indigenous languages;
- widening the range of educational opportunities for Indigenous students;
- funding appropriate training courses for teachers and teacher assistants working with Indigenous students;
- providing relevant curriculum to meet the diverse needs of Indigenous students;
- promoting a greater involvement of Indigenous parents in educational decision-making;
- cooperating with other providers to improve the quality and suitability of educational programs for Indigenous students;
- upgrading Indigenous early childhood education services;
- working toward greater outreach into the wider community to encourage more Indigenous parents to enrol their children in Catholic schools;
- affirming the spirituality and Catholic faith of Indigenous children; and
- addressing the recommendations of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody.

Independent schools reported difficulties in retaining Indigenous students to years 10, 11 and 12 and identified lack of motivation, limited parental/community support and inadequate school resources as factors. These schools are implementing a range of initiatives to address these problems, including programs specifically devised for remote communities, incorporating music, sport and cooking into the curriculum and by working with parents and the community to change attitudes and perceptions.



## Languages other than English (LOTE)

About 500 government primary schools have introduced programs as a result of the LOTE 2000 policy and more than 700 government schools now offer LOTE studies.

In 1997, enrolments in National Asian Languages and Studies in Australian Schools (NALSAS) and other languages totalled 77,678, representing over 30 per cent of the government schools population.

At 48 rural or remote primary and secondary schools, 470 students received LOTE instruction through telematics.

District level planning for LOTE continued, with all but one education district having completed plans by the end of 1997. Three LOTE district resource centres were established to enable teachers throughout the State to access up-to-date resources.

Provisions for learning Indonesian and Japanese expanded at a very satisfactory rate, but less progress was made with Chinese. This situation is being addressed through the conduct of a research project into take-up rates for Chinese and the formation of a Chinese strategy group composed of representatives from the LOTE professional organisation, universities, business groups and the Education Department. The results will be used to assist planning to increase the provision of Chinese in 1998. No government schools currently teach Korean. Aboriginal language programs continued to expand, with more than 40 primary schools being involved in 1997.

Some 700 teachers have undertaken training in both language and language teaching methodology since 1994 and it is intended that this process will continue until 2000.

The number of Asian language programs in Catholic primary schools continued to grow as a result of NALSAS funding, with CEOWA supporting schools through consultancy and seminars as they took on LOTE programs with Commonwealth funds. Later, schools are expected to assume financial responsibility themselves. Five secondary schools received initial funding to implement Asian language programs, while grants were made to others to support the continuation of programs. Japanese and Indonesian remained popular languages, although the demand for Chinese fell.

Virtually all independent secondary and combined primary-secondary schools provided opportunities for LOTE studies, most frequently in French, Japanese and Indonesian, which is becoming popular at the expense of Japanese and

German. Some Indigenous schools provide courses in their local languages.

Other features of LOTE provision included:

- increases in the number of student and teacher exchanges and sister-school relationships and the use of on-line technology to establish links with target language schools and students;
- wider reliance on information technology, including the Internet;
- the representation of LOTE in the draft Curriculum Framework as a key learning area and consideration of the extent to which LOTE studies should be compulsory (some independent schools would prefer them to be optional after year 8);
- the use of 'assistants' in Indonesian and Japanese language classes to provide the opportunity for the participation of parents and other community members who have the appropriate skills;
- the appointment of a 0.5 LOTE program officer at AISWA for 1998, who will support teachers and schools;
- a major focus on the funding of professional development for teachers; and
- a decline in the number of students learning German and, to a lesser extent, Japanese.

## Technology

While progress with the application of technology to learning during 1997 proceeded at an even faster pace than in preceding years—with virtually all WA schools being connected to the Internet and e-mail, many developing their own Web sites, and additional funding from internal and external sources being applied to reducing the ratio of students to computers in classrooms—only in years 11 and 12 was there evidence of substantial progress in the introduction of the technology learning area.

In the post-compulsory years, development continued of new technology units applying a common assessment framework, an outcomes orientation and key competencies, with 16 being trialled during 1997. The number of schools interested in trialling reflected the generally positive perception of the directions being taken by these new courses, which are sufficiently flexible to allow schools to tailor curriculum to student needs. All courses will be fully implemented by 2000.

The progress being made at the post-compulsory level is due in part to the fact that the separate elements of the learning area have been present in secondary schools for many years and are therefore familiar to most teachers. New courses are associated with one or more of these elements: for example, animal production and marketing, business information technology, interactive media, food technology, information systems, management and marketing, fabric design and technology, plant production and marketing, small business management and enterprise, furniture design and technology, building and construction, photography and metals technology.

While some teachers in government primary schools demonstrated very successful student outcomes in 1997 by utilising the DMMA (design, make, market and appraise) approach, the learning area has not yet been formally introduced to primary schools and no syllabus currently exists.

Across all sectors, however, many creative primary teachers already incorporated the principles of DMMA into other curriculum areas as the arts and science and activities such as cookery. Students were able to enhance their efforts through the use of computers, which are becoming progressively more accessible in both individual classrooms and computer laboratories.

To support teachers K–10, an action research project will be undertaken in 1998 to examine possible models for school implementation and identify issues that require

consideration at the system level. A related concern is the need to develop among younger students the concept of ‘enterprising’ behaviour.

## Retention

Retention rates in 1997 followed much the same pattern as in recent years, with metropolitan females at independent schools being the most likely to be retained until year 12 and Indigenous students the least. There was some slight upward movement in overall retention to year 12.

## Commonwealth capital grants

In 1996–1997 the Commonwealth provided \$21.505 million toward capital works in government schools against total capital expenditure of \$87.292 million.

Thirty-two projects, including new schools and improvements to existing schools, benefited from Commonwealth funding. The most common types of improvements were the provision of administration areas, library resource centres, design and technology centres, specialist teaching areas and general teaching areas.

In 1997, the Commonwealth provided \$4.4m toward the cost of capital projects in Catholic schools worth a total of \$9.2m.

**Table 1. Apparent retention rates from year 8, Western Australia, second semester, 1997**

<i>Students</i>	<i>Government</i>			<i>Catholic</i>			<i>Other non-government</i>		
	<i>year 10</i>	<i>year 11</i>	<i>year 12</i>	<i>year 10</i>	<i>year 11</i>	<i>year 12</i>	<i>year 10</i>	<i>year 11</i>	<i>year 12</i>
Metropolitan female	101.5	92.4	72.4	101.3	97.1	85.8	106.1	100.4	96.5
Metropolitan male	100.3	86.3	58.5	99.0	86.9	73.4	102.7	93.9	85.6
All metropolitan	100.9	89.2	65.3	100.2	92.1	79.8	104.4	97.2	90.9
Country female	93.3	66.9	48.5	91.7	68.3	56.0	94.3	82.0	70.6
Country male	91.9	69.1	39.5	90.0	56.3	36.5	88.8	73.5	54.5
All country	92.6	68.0	43.8	90.8	62.1	45.1	91.3	77.2	62.6
Indigenous female	83.7	41.8	21.0	75.3	60.3	43.4	81.8	67.6	15.8
Indigenous male	80.2	38.2	12.4	85.1	58.8	42.9	72.5	81.8	27.3
All Indigenous	81.9	39.9	16.4	80.0	59.6	43.1	76.7	74.6	21.1
All female	98.8	84.0	64.7	99.2	91.2	80.7	105.0	98.9	94.0
All male	97.5	80.8	52.2	97.0	80.2	65.5	101.2	91.8	82.8
All students	98.1	82.3	58.3	98.1	85.7	73.1	103.1	95.3	88.3

*Source:* Education Department of WA

Seventeen projects were completed physically and financially during the year. The most common involved the construction or upgrading of general purpose learning areas, administration and student facilities in primary schools, and specialist areas and student facilities in secondary schools.

Of the projects completed physically and financially, capital grants for metropolitan primary schools totalled \$1.1m, against total expenditure of \$2.4m on grant projects for the construction or upgrading of learning areas, administrative and other facilities intended to improve student outcomes in key learning areas, broaden girls' educational experiences by increasing their

participation and achievement in mathematics, science and technology and enhance teachers' efficiency and confidence.

The Commonwealth provided \$2.1m against an estimated total cost of \$9.9m for capital projects in independent schools. These funds supported 22 new projects in 1997. Fifty-eight projects were physically and financially completed during the 1997 program year. The most common types of work undertaken were the construction of general learning areas for primary and secondary students, pre-primary centres, specialist secondary classrooms and staff and student amenities, as well as the refurbishment of class and administration areas.