

Chapter 6

Meeting the national goals for schooling: Equity

Schooling for students with disabilities

Schools in all States and Territories continued to make special provision for students with disabilities during 1999. The trend towards the inclusion of these students into mainstream schools was again apparent and a number of jurisdictions reported decreased enrolments in special schools and corresponding increases in mainstream schools. This section of the report looks at progress made in each State and Territory.

New South Wales

The Board of Studies released a Kindergarten to year 6 support document to assist teachers in catering for students with special education needs in the Human Society and its Environment key learning area.

The Board continued to coordinate a Stage 6 curriculum project to enhance access to vocational Content Endorsed Courses by students with special education needs. Twenty-seven schools were involved in trialling access to Hospitality, Rural Industries, Office Skills and Retail Content Endorsed Courses through a process of reasonable adjustment to curriculum delivery and assessment procedures.

Major work was undertaken to develop Stage 6 Life Skills courses in fulfilment of a specific commitment made in the White Paper *Securing Their Future*. The courses will be available to students with special education needs from 2000 as part of a special program of study. Students completing a special program of study will be eligible to receive the Higher School Certificate.

In government schools, students with disabilities received specialised educational support programs in:

- specific-purpose schools for (3,351 students)

- support classes in regular schools (primary 5,517; secondary 4,451; total 9,968 students)
- regular classes through the State integration program (13,500 students)
- itinerant support services, including:
 - vision: 753 students supported by 115 itinerant teachers
 - hearing: 1,165 students supported by 228 itinerant teachers
 - behaviour: students supported by 292 support teachers.

Specialised support for students with disabilities included:

- additional teachers and teachers aides (special) support for students in regular classes
- itinerant support teaching services for students with vision and hearing impairment and emotional disturbance, some of whom also received funding support from the State integration program
- early intervention support for children with disabilities prior to school enrolment in early intervention classes
- school transition initiatives and TAFE transition courses to support transition from school to post-school provision
- training of teachers aides (special) working with students who have high-support needs in health-care procedures
- provision of specialist equipment and technology.

During 1999, the department also developed disability awareness training modules in conjunction with the Sydney Organising Committee for the Olympic Games and the Sydney Paralympic Organising Committee for training staff and volunteers for the Sydney Olympics and Paralympics. These modules have been adapted for utilisation in the

training of school and TAFE staff in disability awareness training programs from 2000 and beyond.

Independent schools reported that there were students with disabilities receiving assistance in the majority of schools. About a quarter of surveyed schools had made access to the physical environment more suitable by the provision of ramps, handrails etc. Several had special education staff, with a special needs program. A few schools had fully integrated special needs students into their classes and programs.

A number of other initiatives were undertaken to cater for those with disabilities within the independent sector. These included the development of Individual Education Programs, provision of a support teacher and the provision of minor capital works. Such opportunities ensured increased access to the curriculum. Many schools reported positive integration outcomes of a social, communicative, behavioural and/or academic nature.

Many schools implemented a transition process to support students with disabilities. The transition planning process involved a range of transitions, including transition to school, between schooling levels and planning for the post-schooling years. In the vocational area, many students accessed individualised work training programs, while others undertook accredited vocational education courses. Some schools acknowledged the difficulties associated with providing appropriate job placement and work experience.

In Catholic schools, a number of strategies were initiated or maintained to support students with disabilities. One strategy was the integration of students with disabilities into mainstream classes. A modified curriculum was implemented where necessary. Teachers, teacher aides and parents were provided with training in the use of appropriate strategies to meet students' needs. In some schools, specialist support teachers worked with classroom teachers in an advisory or direct teaching capacity. Where withdrawal was necessary, teaching strategies were complementary to those being used in the classroom.

Victoria

There were 13,768 students with disabilities and impairments (2.6 per cent) receiving additional support for their education in Victorian government schools in 1999. Parents were able to choose either a regular or a specialist school for their eligible children.

The level of support schools and students received was determined by an individual assessment of educational need. This assessment was provided by external experts, to allow specialist staff to concentrate on assisting schools and teachers

in the design and delivery of a school-level program involving a partnership between parents and teachers. The level of additional resource provision to schools for each student with disabilities ranged from \$3,675 to \$28,060, depending on the assessment of their need. Commonwealth-funded special education programs continued to provide home-based educational programs for children with severe disabilities and services to government schools from non-government organisations.

Particular innovations during 1999 included establishment of the Royal Children's Hospital Education Institute to provide a new interface between education, health and university research and preparation of curriculum support materials for the education of students with disabilities within the Curriculum and Standards Framework.

Key features of the developments in Catholic schools in 1999 were:

- an increase in the number of students with disabilities seeking enrolment in Catholic schools (Table 6.1 shows a steady progression over the ten-year period 1990–99)
- professional development and training for 25 teachers at Masters level provided in conjunction with Monash University
- enhancement of options for young people with disabilities to access post-education training provided through engagement in the Futures for Young Adults program, a joint initiative of the Department of Human Services and Department of Employment, Education and Training.

Table 6.1 Students with disabilities, Victorian primary and secondary schools, 1990–99

<i>Year</i>	<i>Enrolments</i>
1990	1,087
1991	1,070
1992	1,250
1993	1,346
1994	1,570
1995	2,107
1996	2,064
1997	2,164
1998	2,478
1999	2,889

Source: Department of Employment, Education and Training, Vic

Queensland

Education Queensland continued to enhance school-based services for students with disabilities through the extension of services for the 9,000 school-age students with disabilities in Queensland government schools and the increasing numbers of students in pre-compulsory years. Forty-five new special educational programs were established throughout the State to provide greater access for students with disabilities from birth to post-compulsory schooling.

Other initiatives included:

- a trial program which focused upon early behaviour management techniques being applied to students with high support needs arising from autism when aged 3 or 4 years
- the establishment of a statewide network to support the use of adaptive technology for students with disabilities
- the creation of a website to provide advice to schools regarding access to courses of study in post-compulsory schooling and possible pathways and linkages to post-school options
- the accreditation of Certificate I courses in Work Readiness and Work Education for students with disabilities in post-compulsory schooling
- the development of sample school curriculum programs for special schools in health and physical education, and science
- the trialling of enrolment guidelines to provide special education programs and services to students with disabilities
- the development of a process for prioritisation of students' needs to access occupational therapy and physiotherapy services
- the implementation of the state-wide Educational Provisions for Students with Disabilities Action Plan. The plan demonstrates Education Queensland's commitment to addressing the educational needs of all students, in particular those with low-incidence disabilities. Key features are school-based management, the application of information technology to education programs, and the recognition of strong community expectations for high standards in addressing the educational support needs of students with low-incidence disabilities.

In 1999, there were 1,681 students at levels five and six (highest levels of support need) enrolled in Queensland Catholic schools. Students with disabilities were enrolled in mainstream classrooms for the most part, but some Catholic schools had attached support units that withdrew some

students with disabilities for a part of the timetabled activities of the school. Students with disabilities were offered additional support from Learning Support teachers and teacher aides.

There were 518 students with disabilities in Queensland independent schools in 1999. Forty-five schools had integrated one or more low-incidence impaired students. Some schools had made physical adaptations to the school environment and all had well-developed individual education programs in operation for these students. Schools had committees to participate in the formal ascertainment process and also to monitor and review incidences.

South Australia

Equity Standards personnel were actively involved in the development of the South Australian Curriculum Standards and Accountability (SACSA) Framework in 1999, especially as it relates to children and students experiencing educational disadvantage. Specific advice was provided through the Children and Students with Disabilities and the Equity Experts Working Group. Information/consultation sessions were provided to ensure inclusive curriculum for children and students with disabilities. A support document for the curriculum accountability component of the framework was written to inform teachers and schools about demonstrating learning progress and development for children and students with disabilities.

Approximately \$40,000 was made available in 1998–99 to support educators who wished to retrain in the area of special education. Priority was given to applicants who were working in the field but who had no formal special education qualifications. All applications received could not be met within the Retraining Support Scheme allocation. However, it was decided that because the calibre of applications was so high, additional resourcing could be made available from savings made elsewhere in special education budgets in 1998.

Consequently, other retraining projects were also supported in the identified areas of behaviour management and students with disabilities, teaching and learning for students with autism spectrum disorders, teaching and learning considerations for students with severe multiple disabilities, and monitoring achievement of students with disabilities.

The Disability Discrimination Act Implementation Kit, *Fair and Reasonable*, was developed to provide consistent information and resources to enable all site leaders to plan effectively for the education and care of all children and students, thereby complying with the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. The Implementation Kit will

assist leaders to manage whole-site change, improve service provision and respond to parent issues. Specific outcomes will include the documentation of an individual site Disability Action Plan.

In conjunction with an Assessment Field Officer from Senior Secondary Assessment Board of South Australia, ten sessions across the State to over 200 teachers were presented on the flexibility of the South Australian Certificate of Education (SACE) for students with disabilities. In addition, sessions were held during 1999 to obtain feedback from the field regarding the SACS Framework to inform the curriculum writers. This was done to ensure inclusion in the curriculum for students with disabilities.

During 1999, vocational education and training (VET) personnel collaborated with special education and equity personnel to provide current VET information to school personnel. Similar sessions will take place in 2000.

Through the Enterprise Agreement, funding has been made available for professional development for staff in aspects of special education. The 1996 Special Schools Review identified as priorities managing challenging behaviours, teaching and learning practices for students who have autism or associated disorders and the use of alternative, augmentative communication devices.

Graduate Certificates in Disability Studies (Positive Behavioural Support and Autism Spectrum Disorders) commenced in Semester 2, 1998 and a Graduate Certificate in Disability Studies (Augmentative Communication) began in Semester 1, 1999. By the end of the year, a total of 64 people had participated in the courses.

As part of the ongoing review of programs and services that support children and students with disabilities in South Australia, research was conducted in allocative mechanisms for the financial and human resource allocation of funds. Trials were conducted on one special school and built upon two groups of districts and schools and specialist sites.

The special education program offered by South Australian Catholic schools in 1999, was structured to accommodate both regular and specialised services to students with disabilities, their families and schools. This included all mainstream schools, five integration units and two special schools. A core component of support for these services was the special education consultancy structure, which gave statewide coverage. In 1999, accountability with respect to this consultancy service was further extended to include:

- area input from teachers, principals and parents

- the progressing of initiatives which were generated within these local reference groups including parent perspectives on effective consultancy for families and skilling of school staff in specific disability areas
- Special Education Advisory Committee initiatives, including expansion of outsourced speech pathology and social skilling for students within the Autism Spectrum
- the expansion of country area support to address the complex issues of providing specialised input for students in more isolated settings
- the development of specialised programs to map the support process required for effective transition for students with autism into secondary settings
- the development of primary and secondary curriculum initiatives for students with an intellectual disability participating in religious education and pastoral care programs in regular school settings.

The two special schools, St Ann's and St Patrick's, were supported in developing training programs for:

- toileting programs for severely disabled students
- new behavioural skilling programs for individuals for students with multiple disabilities, including autism
- audiovisual speech/ language programs for severely delayed students.

Capital grant expenditure of \$60,000 was allocated for modifications to sites so physically disabled students can access sites and services, augmentative devices and equipment to access curriculum. Funding support (\$390,000) was allocated to integration units in support of students with an intellectual disability in developing skills in literacy and numeracy, life and social skills, integration across regular curriculum areas, community initiatives and planning post-school pathways.

In independent schools, the number of students with disabilities, as defined by the Commonwealth, has increased rapidly. There were over 900 students in independent schools who received special education support during 1999. This increase in numbers reflects improved identification and assessment of students by the schools and the Independent Schools Targeted Programs Special Education Team, in part due to:

- the funding of psychological and speech pathology assessments

- an increased awareness in schools of the need to identify and cater for students with disabilities
- the significant number of professional development activities available to schools, particularly in disability awareness and the legal and enrolment issues surrounding students with disabilities.

Schools were directly supported with:

- the management of enrolments, including legal advice
- data collection for the Commonwealth and State governments
- professional development activities in disability awareness, curriculum development and legal and industrial issues
- direct grants for essential items of capital equipment and major building modifications; speech and language assessments; psychological assessments; and attendance at professional development activities.

Each year professional development is organised in response to the expressed needs of schools. The particular focus for 1999 was on behaviour management and students with disabilities; social and emotional disabilities; and issues around the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. During 1999, 753 teachers, principals and other members of their school communities participated in professional development activities related to students with disabilities and students with learning difficulties.

Initiatives were put in place to ensure collaboration between the Special Education School Support Program and the Commonwealth vocational education, literacy and numeracy programs to ensure that students with disabilities in the independent sector could effectively access all areas of the curriculum. The Workplace Learning Program for Students with Disabilities was piloted in the northern and central areas of Adelaide. The specific aim of this accredited program, organised jointly with the Vocational Education Program, was to offer 16 students with disabilities the opportunity to prepare for transition to the workplace.

Students attended TAFE for one day a week for two terms to complete units towards the Certificate in Preparatory Education Stage I. Materials were developed to support students at school and, in the final term, students were involved in work placements, including work experience and work shadowing. Outcomes for students were accreditation in VET and the SACE subjects, entry into TAFE and placement in traineeships.

Joint projects with the Commonwealth Literacy Programme focused on supporting students to access the Early Entry Assessment Program. The Independent Schools Targeted Program Literacy Team developed a School Entry Assessment folder to assist schools. The Special Education Team provided strategies and resources to ensure that all students with disabilities had equitable access to early entry tests and assessments and appropriate interventions to support their learning.

A similar process was begun to ensure that students with disabilities are not disadvantaged in the literacy and numeracy benchmarking process. In particular, test items have been evaluated to ensure that they are inclusive and a process established whereby students with disabilities who require accommodations in the testing situation have their needs met.

Western Australia

Education support schools generally provide for students whose level of disability and associated needs are such that they can be met only by intensive physical, medical, paramedical and therapy services. Thirteen such schools provided individualised programs for 691 students.

In 1999, 43 education support centres, which were generally co-located with primary and secondary schools, catered for 1,253 students, mostly with mild to moderate disabilities, while 251 education support units, which are classes within mainstream schools, provided for 1,771 students with mild to moderate intellectual disabilities. Education support centres tended to concentrate on the development of students' skills in literacy and numeracy, social interaction, independent living, leisure and recreation and vocational education. Partner schools provided opportunities for integration within mainstream classes wherever appropriate.

Priorities in 1999 included the extension of the use of individual education plans and preparations for the phased introduction of the Curriculum Framework and the Student Outcome Statements, with a particular emphasis on students' achievement of foundation outcomes. In addition, the more effective and efficient provision of education support services through greater intra-district coordination is one of the objectives of the local area education planning process.

In 1999, 99.5 per cent of students in education support schools and centres were learning through individual education plans and were being prepared for post-school destinations that would maximise their opportunities for participation in work and social life.

During 1999, there was a significant increase in the numbers of students with disabilities enrolled in Catholic schools, particularly in mainstream classes.

Initiatives during the year included:

- establishment of two High Support Needs Centres for students of low incidence disability with high support needs
- mandatory provision of detailed, collaborative end-dated individual education programs for all students defined as “students with disabilities” funded through Commonwealth Targeted Programs: Special Learning Needs – Special Education, and the Western Australian State Government High Support Needs Programs
- inclusion of students with disabilities in the Associated and Catholic Colleges (ACC) athletics and swimming carnivals
- intensive staff development training for teachers of students with disabilities
- a particular emphasis on inclusivity of students with disabilities within the Curriculum Framework
- professional development for teaching staff in outcomes-focused learning for students with disabilities
- in-service training for teachers in the use of Foundation Outcomes Statements for students with significant educational disabilities.

Approximately half of the surveyed independent schools indicated that they had students with disabilities enrolled. A large percentage of schools undertook specialised initiatives in support of these students, including:

- making increased use of Association of Independent Schools assistance
- seeking special education and other funding
- providing easier assistance and access to school facilities
- expanding staff resources (special education teachers and aides).

Educational support, modified learning programs and specialised VET programs were developed for special needs students. At the request of schools, the Association of Independent Schools introduced a series of professional development activities to support teacher assistants working with students with disabilities.

Tasmania

A major review of the inclusion of students with disabilities in regular schools was undertaken in 1999. The results and

recommendations will be published in 2000. In 1999, 508.3 FTE students with disabilities were being supported, of whom 337.6 (63.5 per cent) were in regular schools. Since 1984 the number of students in special schools has fallen by 54 per cent from 913 to 590.

In a survey conducted as part of the review, respondents generally rated physical access to schools as good, but there was seen to be a need for improved access to specialist support staff such as physiotherapists. Participation in the curriculum was the most problematic area while, socially, students with disabilities were generally well accepted by other students. There was a serious lack of post-school options for students with disabilities, both in work and further study.

Northern Territory

The educational needs of students with disabilities and impairments in Northern Territory schools continued to be addressed through the development of Negotiated Inclusion Plans and Individual Education Programs. For students with high support needs, supplementary funding was provided to support a whole-school approach to cater for diverse needs. Professional development activities and support and advice to teachers, teacher assistants, Inclusion Support Assistants and families were provided through both formal and informal programs. The need for specialist equipment and materials was identified as part of the development of the Individual Education Program.

In 1999, for the first time, therapy services were provided through Territory Health Services. A Service Level Agreement was developed between the Northern Territory Department of Education and Territory Health Services to ensure that the level of service was maintained and increased needs for services were monitored.

Commonwealth funding was distributed to schools and regions on a submission basis on the recommendations of an ascertainment committee, to support the needs of eligible students. This funding provided support for specific projects such as small group programs, professional development, specialised equipment and the employment of additional human resources to assist in the implementation of the Individual Education Program.

Following the 1998 Education Review, the Northern Territory Department of Education made a commitment to review the role and functions of all student services and to identify strategies to enhance student outcomes. Planning for this review of the services provided, particularly to students with disabilities, impairments and learning difficulties in Northern

Territory schools commenced in 1999 for implementation in 2000.

All independent schools made provision for students with disabilities. Strategies included the employment of specialist teachers and student support personnel, improved physical access, the provision of sound field systems in classrooms and the arrangement of appropriate work placements for students undertaking VET programs. Commonwealth funding was used to assist schools in the implementation of individual education programs for students.

Australian Capital Territory

Government schools remained committed to improving learning outcomes for students with disabilities and ensuring that they participate fully in schooling. Integration of students into mainstream classes where this is in the educational interests of the student was supported by the provision of professional development for the schools, the allocation of supplementary resources and through the services of the Integration Support Unit.

The growing numbers of students diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder led to the establishment in 1999 of three autism-specific learning support units, two at the primary school level and one at high school level. Two more such units, both at primary school level, will be opened in 2000. It is the intention to provide a wide range of programs for these students to meet their widely differing level of needs.

Development of an alternative method of resource allocation, which builds on the existing method of resourcing student needs, commenced in 1999. The aim is to increase the focus on the needs of the individual student.

Surveys of parents of all students with disabilities indicated that 96.6 per cent of those parents who responded were satisfied with the services provided by special education programs to students in government schools. These students can be broadly grouped into five categories:

- students fully integrated into mainstream schools
- students integrated into mainstream schools who use additional transition or integration support services
- students in mainstream schools who use Learning Support Centres, Communication Disorder Centres or Hearing Impaired Units
- students in Learning Support Units located in mainstream schools who may attend specific mainstream classes
- students in special schools.

A wide range of programs was provided in mainstream and special schools to allow choice and the targeting of services to suit individual student needs. Programs were designed to enable students to have the maximum opportunity to participate in mainstream classes. Services in schools were linked to those provided in preschools to ensure continuity.

Decisions about the appropriate level of services to provide for students were made through an open process, based on individual student assessment and guided by clear and explicit criteria for entry and exit from each program.

Parents participated in assessment and educational planning and review processes. Educational plans were developed for students in all programs. The annual review of student progress in special and mainstream schools was carried out by panels, which included parents. Alternative assessment processes were adapted to individual students.

In February 1999, 3.53 per cent of the total student population received supplementary support from the department. Of these 2.24 per cent were male and 1.29 per cent female. This number grew throughout the year due to continuous enrolment into special schools of children as they turned three, and enrolments from interstate. In July, the number of students supported had increased to 3.71 per cent. Students were supported under a wide range of programs and in February, 0.82 per cent of the total student population attended four special schools.

At the same time, 1.44 per cent students with mild intellectual disabilities were in Learning Support Centres in mainstream schools. These students were integrated to a greater or lesser degree into the mainstream classes, according to the model run by the school. In 1999, 0.52 per cent of students with a borderline mild/moderate intellectual disability, and associated significant academic deficits, were in Learning Support Units established in mainstream schools.

Communication Disorder Classes were conducted for students with a communication disorder. This is a short-term placement, usually of two years' duration. In 1999, 0.49 per cent of students had a hearing impairment and were supported through a variety of programs, ranging from those with a severe hearing loss who attended Hearing Impaired Units to those receiving direct support in class from an itinerant teacher. This support ranged from one hour to seven and a half hours per week. Some students were supported indirectly by itinerant teachers liaising with their classroom teachers up to 12 times a year.

Those students who were dependent on signing received support from a special teacher's assistant. Others received

scribing support. Based on projected movement of students at the end of 1999 from Hearing Impaired Units into mainstream classes, it is anticipated that one Hearing Impaired Unit will close and there will be a subsequent increase in students receiving itinerant services. In 1999, 0.12 per cent of students had a visual impairment and were supported through the itinerant teacher program. Students received direct support in class from an itinerant teacher ranging from one hour to ten and a half hours per week. Support was provided indirectly by itinerant teachers liaising with their classroom teachers for students

with a mild impairment up to 12 times a year. Students dependent on Braille were provided with support from Braille transcribers. A typing program provided short-term support (usually six months) for those students who, because of their disability, would benefit from learning to type. In 1999, 0.28

per cent of students received varying degrees of support from a special teacher's assistant to enable them to be integrated into mainstream classes. This support ranged from full-time support to temporary transitional support as a student changed settings or entered a new school.

Most of the sampled independent schools had programs in place to assist those with disabilities. Remedial tuition was available on a one-to-one basis, while one of the sampled schools had made physical modifications to improve access and had purchased special keyboards and Braille equipment. Schools employed the services of specialist teachers with qualifications in hearing and visual impairment in order to meet the needs of some of their students. Professional development activities focused on strategies for supporting students with autism and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder in the classroom.

Provision for students in isolated areas

Schools and systems continued to make special provision for students in rural and isolated areas. This section of the report describes the major trends and initiatives that were evident in 1999.

Country Areas Program

This program is aimed at improving the educational opportunities, participation, learning outcomes and personal development of rural and isolated primary and secondary school students in both government and non-government schools. In New South Wales there were six areas involved in 1999: Batemans Bay, Broken Hill, Deniliquin, Dubbo, Moree and Wagga Wagga covering a total of 242 schools and 25,667 students.

Revised eligibility criteria for inclusion of schools in the Country Areas Program (CAP) was announced in October 1999. The revised criteria employ three factors (distance from a centre of 10,000 or more persons, size of community, school density). All 714 non-metropolitan communities were grouped using cluster analysis and the most isolated communities were included in the program.

In 1999, \$361,000 was provided to 55 Victorian Catholic primary and secondary schools located in geographically isolated areas through the CAP. The number of students to benefit under the program during the year was 6,580. The program remained critical in its ability to provide isolated students with access to social and educational opportunities, which are often denied them because of their distance from major population centres.

In 1999, it was a vital component to the educational programs offered by schools and the funds provided were essential to the maintenance of quality teaching and learning for these geographically isolated students. Given the small enrolment in many of these schools, the funds from the CAP often represented the only funds available to address the consequences of isolation.

In Education Queensland, support through the Priority Country Area Program provided rural and remote students with opportunities to participate in a range of curriculum enrichment activities which targeted improved learning outcomes. These included extension camps for gifted and talented students, instrumental music programs, technology

support, community skilling workshops, interagency projects, literacy and numeracy support and reading recovery.

Ten schools in the independent sector in South Australia were funded by the Commonwealth CAP. Grants were used to support students, teachers and other school community members to access camps and excursions, specialist teacher services, visiting artists and professional development activities.

The CAP provided funding support for 1,928 students in Western Australian Catholic schools disadvantaged by isolation in the Kimberley region and at Tardun, Southern Cross and Esperance. Also, nine remote independent Indigenous community schools, identified as being in the lowest band of socioeconomically disadvantaged schools, received targeted funding under the CAP. All utilised the funds to improve the overall educational outcomes for their students through initiatives such as the provision of specialist visiting teachers and staff professional development, the organisation of school cultural visits and the conduct of specialised workshops for students.

Students who were geographically isolated within the Northern Territory, that is attending schools outside a 75-kilometre radius of Darwin or Alice Springs, or who were enrolled in open learning, attracted funding through the Commonwealth CAP. The Griffith Service Access Frame determined the amount of funding for each student/school to be utilised for projects which specifically addressed disadvantage through geographic isolation.

Use of on-line resources

In New South Wales in 1999, the new CAP website (www.cap.nsw.edu.au) was established as a dynamic resource for teachers, students, parents and the community. The website contains a range of information and resources developed by the CAP consultancy team and schools. In particular, the Research Modules were enthusiastically received by CAP schools. The modules were developed by teachers with CAP support and provide isolated students with a range of curriculum-based research tasks. The number, range and content of the modules will continue to be expanded and developed.

Maths on the Net is a CAP initiative which enables students in isolated schools to form virtual teams using the Internet to solve mathematics problems collaboratively. The problems are developed by the teachers of the schools involved in conjunction with the CAP consultants and district numeracy consultants. They are posted on a specific-purpose website that is linked to the CAP website.

This initiative was originally developed for small schools but is now being adopted by larger rural schools.

In 1999, the NSW Board of Studies trialled a new web-based service that will particularly benefit schools in isolated and remote parts of New South Wales. Participating principals were able to access on-line services such as entering student grade, assessment and vocational course module information as well as notifying changes to school contact details and basic student information. Principals could also download important documents relating to their school, such as Supervisors of Marking reports, school group statistics and School Certificate grade pattern comparisons.

In Victoria's Catholic sector, computer technology was an important medium in overcoming, in part, the rural isolation of schools and ensuring that their students had the opportunity to be members of the global community. Funds were used to purchase hardware and software to complement the Technology in Catholic Schools Program, introduced in 1999, and to provide access to the internet.

The Virtual Schooling Service Pilot in Queensland involved teachers in government schools delivering lessons and providing follow-up support via technology in both synchronous and asynchronous modes. Asynchronous activities included email, discussion lists and chat rooms.

Discretionary grants were allocated to all South Australian schools in the CAP for items of technology designed to overcome distance barriers. As a result, all schools were online and connected to the Internet by the end of 1999. A number of school staff received extensive training in the use of information technology to improve student learning outcomes across the curriculum. This focus has had various teaching and learning outcomes for schools particularly:

- improved access to the Internet for staff and students
- access to email for students and staff to make links with other schools
- enhanced teaching of information technology skills
- on-line access for school administrations to comply with Department of Education Training and Youth Affairs requirements, including the Commonwealth Census Online.

The Western Australia School of Isolated and Distance Education undertook some research and development on materials presented in Portable Document Format (PDF). The trialling of a small sample of PDF materials showed that there is great potential for stimulating material to be effectively transmitted and returned. The reduction in turnaround time is seen as a significant improvement.

Although this material is still only in the early stages of development, it offers some interesting directions in the delivery of distance learning.

Technology remained a difficulty for independent schools in rural and remote communities of Western Australia. Many had interrupted on-line time, limiting access to Internet service providers. The capital costs that some communities and schools needed to meet also limited access and availability.

Collaboration, excursions and special events

During 1999, many schools and systems attempted to overcome the educational disadvantage of isolation by providing opportunities for students to become involved with communities other than their own. For example, in the Victorian Catholic sector, schools placed a high priority on providing activities which assisted students to overcome restricted access to social, cultural and educational experiences. These activities included excursions to capital cities, regional centres, coastal towns and historical towns, which provided insight into differing lifestyles and cultures.

Such visits broadened students' life experiences, enhanced their personal development and reinforced curriculum outcomes in history, civics, geography, physical education, outdoor education, earth education and science. They also increased their knowledge and appreciation of dance, art and music. Many of the initiatives were conducted in partnership with nearby schools. Joint camps, sports days and professional development were common and parents and teachers were encouraged to participate to assist in the improvement of the learning outcomes of the students.

In the Alice Springs and Tennant Creek regions of the Northern Territory, funding was provided to enable students to attend a highly successful Remote Area Literacy Festival conducted at Harts Range. Approximately 400 students from a range of remote locations participated. Another successful regional project was undertaken in East Arnhem to support teachers and students in the use of technology in the classroom.

Provision of additional resources

A number of systems made additional resources available for schools and students in isolated areas. For example, in Victoria, additional resources were provided to small schools in non-metropolitan, non-provincial locations as

well as schools of any size that were furthest from large population centres, in order to compensate for the additional costs of providing education and support services to these communities. A service agreement between the department and CEP Inc. (Computer Extension Professionals Incorporated) ensured that students in geographically isolated schools had access to programs and support that met their particular needs. These included curriculum support, access to cultural and curriculum enrichment and cluster-based activities around the Curriculum and Standards Framework and Victorian Certificate of Education.

In remote Catholic schools in Victoria, Funds were provided to employ skilled personnel to broaden the provision and the quality of teaching. Teachers were employed to provide a wide range of programs including Reading Recovery, languages other than English, music, metalwork, computing, literacy and numeracy and art through the engagement of artists-in-residence.

For students attending remote schools, the provision of equal access to curriculum is an essential element of Education Department policy in Western Australia. Alternative learning experiences and/or additional support were provided in 1999, in recognition of the disadvantage faced by these students. Students were assisted through Commonwealth programs and by the payment of allowances to those having to leave home and obtain boarding accommodation in order to attend schools in larger centres. The Boarding Away From Home Allowance was available to parents whose children were eligible for the Commonwealth Assistance for Isolated Children (AIC) scheme, while a special boarding allowance of \$1,000 was paid to students at residential agricultural colleges who were ineligible for the AIC.

A number of systems provided for isolated students through schools of distance education. For example, distance education was provided from seven schools located throughout Queensland. These schools provided education to students who were unable to access face-to-face teaching. Education Queensland supported these students and their home tutors or supervisors by providing professional staff support and resources through mail, telephone, radio, video, facsimiles and computers. The schools offered a range of support activities that were conducted at the school or closer to client groups and families. These included instructional materials, support programs for home tutors or supervisors and resource loans.

For individual isolated Western Australian students, such as those on station properties or those whose parents are

engaged in itinerant employment, correspondence learning has been available for over 80 years and, by 1999, was heavily supplemented by computer-based communications technology.

Access was provided by the Schools of Isolated and Distance Education (SIDE). SIDE consists of six schools – the P-12 Leederville campus (composed of three sub-schools, P-5, 6-10 and 11-12) and the five K-7 Schools of the Air. In 1999, SIDE offered the same subject choices as most primary and secondary schools, with a comprehensive range of Tertiary Entrance, wholly school-assessed and VET courses. SIDE also supplied learning materials for students studying years 11 and 12 courses in district high schools and years 8-10 courses in primary schools. SIDE transmitted voice, data and images using satellite, microwave and terrestrial systems. Other forms of information delivery included CD-ROM, videocassette and narrowcast (Westlink).

In 1999, SIDE linked its planning to the Rural and Remote Education Advisory Council's plan *Country Roads*, which describes targets that various rural agencies may aim for. This assisted in creating a coordinated approach between agencies' previously separate plans and facilities.

Professional development and research

Throughout 1999, there was considerable activity aimed at improving outcomes for isolated students by providing appropriate professional development for teachers and research projects. In Victorian Catholic schools, the professional development programs offered included Literacy (the West Australian First Steps and Children's Literacy Success Strategy), Religious Education, Physical Education (AUSTSWIM), Information Technology, The Arts (Zart Art), Classroom Helpers, Mathematics, Education of Boys, Middle Years Schooling, Peer Mediation and Healthy Families.

In Queensland government schools, the Bid O'Sullivan Scholarships provided assistance to year 12 students from rural and remote areas to undertake primary teacher training. The scholarships provided financial assistance for four years to students studying a Bachelor of Education – Primary course at a Queensland university. Each scholarship was valued at \$20,000 in total, with \$2,500 grants made at the beginning of each semester of study.

Also in Queensland, an extensive research project culminated in *The Rural Strategies Report*, which provided a number of recommendations for attracting and retaining teachers in rural and remote areas. Recommendations

focused on partnerships and strategies that could be implemented by schools and their communities to support improved learning outcomes for students.

The Queensland School Curriculum Council undertook extensive research to identify the particular curriculum needs of rural and remote students. Implementation of the recommendations in the curriculum will provide further support for students. The fourth annual Positive Rural Futures Conference focused on issues that have an impact on living and learning in geographically isolated areas. The most successful feature of the conference continued to be the promotion of positive rural and regional economic development with a particular focus on youth. Emphasis on the importance of education in the strengthening of rural communities was also an integral part of the conference. Government and community agencies, and state and non-government education systems cooperated to identify strategies to respond to needs.

The conference provided significant opportunities for skilling rural communities; establishing contacts and sources of support in other communities; sharing information, ideas and skills; developing action plans and identifying strategies to strengthen social, cultural and educational infrastructure and well-being of small communities.

The Pre-service Teacher Preparation Project was a collaborative partnership between Education Queensland, the Association of Independent Schools of Queensland Inc., the Queensland Catholic Education Commission, the Isolated Children's Parents' Association and the deans of faculties in tertiary institutions or their nominees. The goal of the project was to ensure that teachers had appropriate preparation to enable them to be placed in rural and remote areas.

Educational outcomes for rural students

Information became available in 1999 concerning the levels of achievement of rural and isolated students in Queensland.

- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved a Sound Achievement (SA) or higher in English and who were located in 'Rural' areas increased from 78.3 per cent in 1998 to 81.1 per cent in 1999. The percentage in 'Urban' areas also increased from 78.8 per cent to 79.7 per cent over the same period.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in English and who were located in 'Rural' areas increased from 80.5 per cent in 1998 to 81.7 per cent in 1999. The percentage in

'Urban' areas increased from 78.7 per cent to 79.9 per cent over the same period.

- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved an SA or higher in Mathematics and who were located in 'Rural' areas increased from 77.5 per cent in 1998 to 79.1 per cent in 1999. The percentage in 'Urban' areas also increased from 76.4 per cent to 78.8 per cent over the same period.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Mathematics 'A' and who were located in 'Rural' areas, increased from 63.6 per cent in 1998 to 65.6 per cent in 1999. The percentage in 'Urban' areas increased from 61.2 per cent to 62.7 per cent between 1998 and 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved an SA or higher in Health and Physical Education and who were located in 'Rural' areas increased from 83.7 per cent in 1998 to 86.6 per cent in 1999. The percentage in 'Urban' areas also increased between 1998 and 1999 (84.6 per cent to 86.2 per cent).
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Health and Physical Education and who were located in 'Rural' areas increased from 72.2 per cent in 1998 to 73.5 per cent in 1999. The percentage in 'Urban' areas increased from 68.4 per cent to 70.4 per cent over the same period.
- The percentage of year 10 and year 12 students studying English, Mathematics and Health and Physical Education who achieved an 'SA' or higher, increased in both 'Rural' and 'Urban' areas over the period 1998-99.

Evaluation of the program for isolated students in the Northern Territory revealed that there was:

- increased student self-esteem and confidence
- improved literacy skills both in first and second languages
- improved numeracy skills particularly in the early childhood area
- improved curriculum and information technology resources
- clusters of schools networking with each other
- targeted assistance to students accessing distance education
- increased parent and community participation in the learning process
- increased teacher confidence in using information technology.

Students from language backgrounds other than English

Level and nature of special provision

In 1999, 176,462 students from language backgrounds other than English (LBOTE) were enrolled in government schools in New South Wales, representing 22.8 per cent of total school enrolment.

A total of 6,998 newly arrived students K–12 from LBOTE received intensive ESL support under the ESL New Arrivals Program. This included 2,602 students in 15 Intensive English Centres, 554 students in secondary schools and 3,842 students in primary schools.

Over 121,000 students received post-intensive ESL support in 760 schools from 1,500 specialist teachers in 876 FTE positions.

In the New South Wales Catholic sector, access and participation for students of language backgrounds other than English was provided and promoted through support to schools from Commonwealth Literacy Programme funding. Two-thirds of diocesan funds from the Commonwealth grant were allocated to support the needs of students from a language background other than English. Programs were designed to reduce the gap with the whole school population in achievement levels in as short a time as possible. Strategies included the engagement of specialist teachers, in-service activities for specialist and classroom teachers and the development of K–12 teaching and learning materials.

In independent schools in New South Wales, around half of surveyed schools made provision for students with language backgrounds other than English. In most of these schools, a special teacher was employed either full- or part-time. Other initiatives in independent schools to assist students from a language background other than English included the in-servicing of whole schools in ESL, the employment of specialist teachers and the planning and programming of units for the Preliminary ESL course for the new HSC.

In 1999, in excess of 132,000 students in Victorian government schools (25 per cent) were from language backgrounds other than English. These were students who were either born in a non-English-speaking country or had

at least one parent who was born in a non-English-speaking country. The majority of such students lived in the metropolitan regions. Nearly half of these students spoke English as their main language at home. Other commonly spoken languages were Vietnamese, Turkish, Arabic, Chinese (Cantonese), Chinese (Mandarin), Greek, Macedonian (Slavonic), Serbian, Spanish and Italian. There were 3,359 new arrivals from non-English-speaking countries in Victorian government schools in 1999.

The support provided in Victoria during 1999 covered:

- intensive programs for newly arrived students, through 12 English language schools and centres, including outposting and writing outposting programs, in the metropolitan area, New Arrivals Programs in Geelong and Shepparton and the Isolated ESL Students Program in regional Victoria
- ESL funding to 468 schools with students from language backgrounds other than English, for ongoing ESL support (a funding threshold applied)
- course advice, curriculum and resources
- professional development for teachers
- interpreting and translation services.

The department also provided education programs for school-aged students in the Victorian Safe Havens for Kosovar refugees at Bandiana, Portsea and Puckapunyal.

Victorian Catholic schools made provision through the English as a Second Language – New Arrivals Program, whereby newly arrived students assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria of the program were supported to develop their competence in the English language. In 1999, 169 primary students received intensive tuition over a minimum six-month period to improve their proficiency in English and to assist their settlement needs.

The 19 newly arrived students at secondary level were enrolled in an intensive English language program at a Department of Employment, Education and Training Education Language Centre/School through a fee-for-service agreement between the department and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria. Under this arrangement, these students were able to access a sustained intensive language program, which was not possible with visiting teacher support.

In Education Queensland schools, ESL programs were provided for those students whose first language was not English and who required specialist support as they developed English language competence.

The program was funded jointly by the State and Commonwealth. In 1999, Commonwealth funds amounted to \$5.33 million and State funds approximately \$1.8 million.

In 1999, a new allocative model was introduced after extensive consultation with school and district personnel and other peak bodies. This was in response to a realignment of Commonwealth-funded programs and the development of school-based management processes in Queensland schools. The new formula 'weighted' eligible students according to their time in Australia and current year level. It was used to distribute ESL resources to districts.

One hundred and twenty-eight FTE specialist ESL teachers worked across schools to support ESL students. In 1999, 6,225 students with second language needs were supported. Of these, 720 were permanent new arrivals. Changing immigration trends meant that there was an increased proportion of students on temporary visas. These students were included in the new allocative formula for the first time in 1999.

In 1999, the ESL program in South Australia provided specialist teaching programs and teacher support to more than 12,000 students who required English language support in order to access and participate successfully in the school curriculum. Historically the South Australian ESL program has targeted migrants and refugees. Increasingly, Indigenous students are identified as ESL students and schools with Indigenous students seek ESL funds.

In the Catholic sector in South Australia, students from language backgrounds other than English who are identified as requiring specific assistance in developing English language proficiency are supported through the ESL program. Significant achievements in 1999 included the professional development work with specialist and mainstream teachers on the identification of ESL learner needs in the early years, and assessment and reporting at all year levels using the ESL Bandscales. A review of all aspects of the ESL support was conducted by the University of South Australia, and the report is due early in 2000.

In Western Australia, an estimated 22 per cent of the government school population were students from a language background other than English. In 1999, new arrivals were mainly from Bosnia, Serbia, Croatia, Indonesia, Iran and countries of the eastern Horn of Africa. Other students came from families in which English was rarely spoken in the home, or were Indigenous students for whom English was a second language or second dialect (ESD).

Table 6.2 LBOTE students provided for, WA government schools, 1995–99

	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999
<i>New arrival</i>					
Female	456	365	293	293	290
Male	514	471	403	367	354
All	970	836	696	660	664
<i>General Support</i>					
Female	683	756	472	(a)1,153	(a)1,352
Male	771	914	578	(a)1,472	(a)1,617
All	1,454	1,670	1,050	(a)2,625	(a)2,969
Total (both programs)	2,424	2,506	1,746	3,285	3,613

(a) Includes both eligible and ineligible students.

Source: Education Department of WA

ESL students are classified into two stages of English language development in Western Australia and different programs provide support accordingly. Stage 1 students have been in Australia for less than a year and have enrolled within six months of their arrival date or have commenced school with no (or limited) English language skills. Stage 2 students have had no more than two years of primary or three years of secondary education in an Australian school, or are from a limited or disrupted schooling background and have had no more than four years of education in an Australian secondary school.

In Table 6.2 the large increase in the number of students receiving general support in 1998–99 is a result of the growth in the number of first-generation students with ESL needs entering pre-primary and year 1 with no or little proficiency in Standard Australian English. As well a greater number of schools identified students with ESL needs and more students entered the schools system with ESL needs that did not meet the eligibility criteria.

A visiting teacher service provided language support for 241 Stage 1 and 293 Stage 2 students in mainstream primary classes unable to access ESL programs, and the ESL/ESD program provided cultural and linguistic support for 4,450 Indigenous students for whom English was a second language or a second dialect.

In 1999, the Catholic Education Office in Western Australia collected information on LBOTE students, using the following criteria:

- 1 Those students born in a non-English-speaking country who were now permanent residents of Australia and for

whom Standard Australian English was not the main language spoken in the home

- 2 Those students born in Australia or another English-speaking country who were now permanent residents of Australia, with one or more parent/guardian born in a non-English-speaking country, and for whom Standard Australian English was not the main language spoken in the home
- 3 Indigenous students who spoke an Indigenous language (traditional language, Kriol or Aboriginal English) or had one or more parent/guardian who spoke an Indigenous language and for whom Standard English Australian English was not the main language spoken in the home.

The students in categories 1 and 2 were largely in the Perth metropolitan region, with only a small number being located outside Perth in the larger country centres such as Albany, Bunbury and Geraldton. Conversely, the students in category 3 were mainly located in Kimberley schools, with only a small number in Perth or other rural or remote towns and centres.

Several metropolitan primary and secondary schools had numerous cultural groups represented within their school communities but many schools had strong representation of only one or two cultural groups. In all, there were 2,613 LBOTE students, of whom 1,735 were primary and 878 secondary.

ESL programs were offered by a quarter of surveyed independent schools. One school had a designated literacy coordinator for two students, who also received two hours a week of separate tutoring.

The Northern Territory Department of Education continued to provide a diverse and responsive ESL support program. Intensive English Centres provided English language tuition for newly arrived migrants and refugees and some Indigenous students moving into major centres from more remote communities.

Specialist ESL staff were provided to urban schools with significant enrolments of students with a language background other than English who require support to access mainstream programs. In communities where all students speak an Indigenous language, whole-school programs focused on the development of ESL across the curriculum. Additional support was provided to these schools through visiting advisory staff, additional ESL specialist staff in some schools and the provision of ESL professional development for teachers and assistant teachers.

Two major trends were identified in 1999. One was a decrease in the numbers of refugees and migrants arriving in Darwin and choosing it as their place of settlement as a result of changes to immigration legislation and a drop in the number of Community Refugee Settlement Scheme groups available to sponsor refugee families. At the same time there was an increase in the number of Indigenous families moving from remote communities into urban centres to improve their access to work, housing and education. ESL resources were redistributed to reflect this change in client focus.

The ESL program in Australian Capital Territory government schools has as its major focus the support of students who speak and understand a language other than English in the home. The program aims to foster the development of literacy skills in English in order to promote equity in schooling.

ESL programs in government schools are provided through a combination of Commonwealth funding (through the ESL New Arrival Programme and the ESL General Support Component of the Literacy and Numeracy Programme) and ACT government funding. ESL program expenditure in government schools in 1999 was \$4.48 million, of which \$3.24 million was provided by the ACT government. Thus in 1999, 72 per cent of ESL resources were from the ACT and 28 per cent from the Commonwealth.

Assessment and monitoring of the English language performance levels of all ESL students is conducted annually by both ESL and classroom teachers as part of the student identification process. Students identified as being most in need are then targeted for ESL resourcing.

Four Introductory English Centres provided assistance to 314 (to 6 December 1999) newly arrived and kindergarten students with minimal English skills. An additional 1,748 students received ESL assistance in mainstream schools.

Through the Language for Understanding Across the Curriculum (LUAC) program a specialist ESL field officer worked with mainstream teachers to develop strategies to promote learning outcomes of a further 820 ESL students. Also through the program, mainstream teachers received professional development in strategies to assist the learning outcomes of all students from language backgrounds other than English.

ESL programs in schools for students from language backgrounds other than English who need English language support continue to be informed by the department's ESL Curriculum Statement and by the school Literacy Plans in all Kindergarten to year 10 settings.

In government schools the ESL program provides services across all levels of schooling from preschool to college. The Early Entry Preschool program offers part-time places to children with limited English for the semester prior to normal entry. Specialist ESL preschool teachers work in government preschools with identified students and their teachers to improve learning outcomes for students in the year before formal schooling.

Newly arrived students and students in their first year of schooling who have minimal English attend an Introductory English Centre. These centres provide intensive English programs for students to learn basic English skills prior to continuing their education in local schools, where specialist ESL teachers support them. Indigenous students are also eligible to receive ESL assistance.

ESL students in mainstream schools are taught and supported by ESL teachers. A team of ESL teachers also provides classroom teachers with inclusive strategies through the LUAC training package. Sixteen teachers trained as facilitators in the Early Literacy and the ESL Learner training package. Six of these trainers delivered training to teachers in schools. Sixteen teachers also undertook professional development in Time for Talk, an oral language resource package.

Curriculum development

A key element of the Higher School Certificate reforms in New South Wales was the development of a new English curriculum aimed at raising standards and challenging all students. This new curriculum, developed during 1999, provides a comprehensive range of courses to suit the needs and interests of all students.

Two of the courses are of particular benefit to students from language backgrounds other than English. The 2-Unit Fundamentals of English course, available as a Preliminary course, assists students needing additional support to reach the level of literacy in English required for the HSC. The 2-Unit ESL course, available in years 11 and 12, has strict entry criteria for students recently arrived in Australia and satisfies HSC requirements for the study of English.

An interactive CD-ROM program, Computer Assisted Language Learning, was developed and piloted in schools and IECs to assist newly arrived students receiving intensive ESL tuition to further develop their English language competence through self-paced learning.

Professional development

The ESL in the Mainstream program, conducted by the Catholic sector in Victoria, was designed to develop teachers' understanding of the language-related needs of LOTE background students and ways of meeting these needs. The program explored teaching approaches that take account of the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of students at all year levels. In 1999, two courses, each of ten days' duration, were undertaken by 49 teachers.

ESL teachers across Education Queensland were involved in a series of two-day workshops to introduce the ESL Bandscales developed by the National Languages and Literacy Institute of Australia. With an increased emphasis on student outcomes and the difficulty of mapping ESL learners appropriately on mainstream scales, the ESL Bandscales were used to report on ESL student outcomes in a way that takes their second language development into account.

Multiculturalism

Multicultural education projects to develop teaching units with multicultural perspectives within the school curriculum were implemented in New South Wales in the key learning areas of Human Society and Its Environment; creative arts; and personal development, health and physical education. Teaching units developed by the schools will be published to be available for other schools to use.

Victoria remained committed to an education system in which awareness and appreciation of cultural and linguistic pluralism are mainstream aspects of schooling. In order to encourage a whole-school approach permeating all aspects of the curriculum and school practices:

- professional development activities were offered to teachers and other school staff
- a range of curriculum resources were made available
- the resources and support available to schools through the Languages and Multicultural Education Resource Centre were upgraded.

Community Language Programs

In New South Wales, Community Language Programs operated in 175 primary schools, including initial or increased programs in 35 schools with new programs established in nine schools. A total of 46,000 students studied a community language. The Saturday School of Community Languages provided instruction in 24 community languages

to over 6,200 secondary school students from language backgrounds other than English. Syllabus frameworks for years 7–10 languages taught only at Saturday School of Community Languages were developed and implemented.

Implementing the National Gender Equity Strategy

In 1997, the MCEETYA Gender Equity Taskforce produced *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*, which set out five strategic directions for action on gender equity. The five directions are:

- understanding the process of construction of gender
- curriculum, teaching and learning
- violence and school culture
- post-school pathways
- supporting change.

Education authorities agreed to report annually on their progress in each of the directions and this section presents a distillation of these reports.

Understanding the process of construction of gender

In New South Wales during 1999, a range of training and development workshops investigating the construction of gender was conducted for teachers, principals, parents and district office personnel. The workshops explored issues such as gender and literacy, gender as an educational issue and embedding gender into whole-school planning approaches. A project was commenced in eleven government, metropolitan and rural schools to investigate the interplay between the construction of gender, low socioeconomic status and literacy learning.

The majority of independent schools developed policies with regard to the understanding of the concept of gender construction. Gender equity principles to address the needs of both boys and girls were being developed in over half of the schools surveyed in order to ensure equal access to all school curricula. Provision was made also for different gender-related learning styles and a few schools placed extra emphasis on education for boys.

In Education Queensland, the Boys, Gender and Schooling Project addressed each of the five strategic directions of the framework. Seven professional development modules were developed and published on the department's website for the use of school communities. The modules dealt with key issues in boys' education: literacy, participation and retention, achievement, behaviour management, and

leadership. The modules proved to be successful in meeting the needs of diverse school communities, as they take into account the intersection of gender with issues of race, rurality and socioeconomic disadvantage.

Many teachers throughout the State were able to utilise the research and practical strategies offered by the modules. The project involved the professional development of teams in ten schools across the State. These school teams embarked on an action research process in order to meet the needs of diverse groups of students in their schools. Teachers, parents, students and administrators worked collaboratively to develop a whole-school approach to the issues.

In South Australia, over 1,000 school-based personnel attended Gender Equity Framework professional development sessions presented by the Gender Equity team, in partnership with school personnel. Professional development materials distributed included the Equity Perspectives on Student Achievement series; No 1, *Who wins at school?* Executive Summary (Teese et al), No 2, *Gender and School Education* Executive Summary and No 3 *Everything is Dangerous – Working with the 'Boys and literacy' Agenda* (Alloway and Gilbert). Curriculum materials and school-based research have also been implemented to assist teachers and students to understand and work with gender as a social construct.

During 1999, significant change affecting school practice occurred within Catholic schools in South Australia in relation to the process of construction of gender. Most crucial was the critical analysis of structures and processes that occurred and the consultative manner in which fundamental change in practice was consequently addressed and achieved. This was accomplished by inviting Gender Equity personnel to symposia once a term and following up with a newsletter. Personnel were invited to raise awareness of staff to the issues involved in the process of constructing gender.

One secondary coeducational school examined the system of academic awards used in their school and discovered that girls took 75 per cent of the various subject awards, while boys took only approximately 25 per cent of awards. As a result, the Gender Equity Committee proposed a change to the system of award giving.

A primary school examined issues relating to Reception boys and their development of masculinity. The initial impetus for this research was based on teacher concerns about the behaviours of a group of children at the beginning of their Reception year. Twenty-five per cent of the boys

positioned themselves outside the cohesion and sociability of the rest of the class. Their actions were characterised by limited interactive and communication skills, non-compliant behaviour and violence when attempting to communicate with other children.

Information collection methods included survey, questionnaire, discussion, video recording, observation and the compilation of a book of pictures of their own choosing. Boys tended to look for pictures of things that were useful, active, combative, mechanical and electronic. Girls predominantly chose flowers, Disney representations of fairytale and storybook characters, stuffed toys, beautiful women and cartoon brides. Animals formed the next largest category.

There were qualitative differences between boys and girls in the ways they constructed their relationships and the influences on the choices that they made. Both boys and girls were almost equally active and passive with their mothers, but with their fathers both boys and girls were over twice as likely to be involved in active pursuits. Overall the survey study was inconclusive. However, it did provide substance to the teacher's suspicions that the boys were heavily involved in play with electronic equipment and that this extensive exposure may influence how boys construct relationships.

By the end of 1999, understanding the process of gender construction had become an essential aspect of policy and support material development in Tasmanian schools. For example, the impact of gender construction was an important aspect of the review of the department's Supportive School Environment Policy, which commenced in 1999. Behaviour Management Competencies were developed for teachers, and these include an understanding of the process of construction of gender.

As a member of a national Committee on Gender Equity, the Australian Capital Territory contributed to the paper *Issues in the Education of Boys* for presentation to the Conference of Education Systems Chief Executive Officers. The paper outlined various options for strategies aimed at improving the performance of boys in schools.

Several significant staff development opportunities contributed to teachers' understanding of gender-related issues as well as to the development of school-based programs which linked across all of the MCEETYA Gender Equity Framework, Strategic Directions. These included presentations by Dr Wayne Martino (Murdoch University) on Masculinity and Learning in Schools, and Associate

Professors Rob and Pam Gilbert on Boys and Schooling. A presentation by Dr John Howard on Youth Suicide Relating to Sexuality and Homophobia helped focus teacher and community consideration specifically on the Violence and School Culture strategic direction. All presentations were well attended by teachers from all sectors.

Curriculum teaching and learning

A curriculum resource entitled *Civics and Citizenship, We Will Take Part* was purchased for New South Wales schools. It challenges cultural, racist and gender discrimination and assisted students to develop an understanding of their current and future roles as active citizens. In addition, the *Gender Issues and Physical Activity Project Report* completed in 1999 outlines ten guiding principles which will inform gender-inclusive practices in physical activity and PDHPE.

Gender issues were incorporated into the mandatory *Crossroads: A Personal Development and Health Education Course for Stage 6* introduced in 1999. It supports years 11 and 12 students in NSW schools to address personal and social issues for young people and includes activities designed to promote positive gender relationships. Introductory training to support teachers implement this new course was provided to targeted staff at all secondary and central schools. Materials from the Exploring Gender parent package were used in this training, to highlight the role gender plays in developing and maintaining relationships.

Several dioceses in the Catholic school sector reported initiatives in the area of early learning and gender through the analysis of year one literacy data. Data gathered from Basic Skills Testing 1999 was also used in planning and developing teacher professional development in gender-related issues.

Initiatives in Victorian government schools were directed towards the achievement of gender equity in terms of educational outcomes for students. Strategies and new approaches were developed and fostered for the education of boys and improved educational outcomes and opportunities for girls. Particular attention was paid to the needs of students in the middle years of schooling, and activities included:

- gender equity networks in all nine education regions
- statewide professional development training in programs that support boys

- professional development materials on boys and literacy
- contribution to the development of the Middle Years of Schooling strategy, particularly as it affects boys' educational outcomes
- assistance to schools in developing sexual harassment policies and procedures.

The majority of Victorian independent schools took action to ensure that the concept of gender construction was understood. Half the schools developed policies designed to ensure gender equity, or stated that the matter was an integral part of their school ethos. Others tried to ensure equal opportunities for all, and introduced affirmative action policies. Most schools addressed the concept of gender equity principles for both girls and boys. They made all subjects equally accessible to both sexes, discouraged any form of stereotyping, and replaced unsuitable materials, books etc.

Education Queensland developed *Risky Business*, an innovative professional development package about body image, gender, eating and exercising issues for school communities. The package, available on CD-ROM, contains a comprehensive set of professional development activities for school staff, curriculum ideas and strategies, a resource list and two brochures, one for staff (*Eating Disorders What Schools Can Do*) and one for students (*Worried About Your Weight, Size, Shape or Looks ... or is your friend?*).

A new policy to identify and address aspects of schooling which lead to different outcomes for school-aged pregnant and parenting students was endorsed in September 1999. The Pregnant and Parenting Students Policy was the result of wide consultations with schools and their communities, including government and non-government agencies. School communities began implementing flexible school policies and practices to meet the needs of pregnant and parenting students to enable them to complete a full secondary education.

The South Australian Gender Equity Team finished an extensive period of writing and development of curriculum material. Two curriculum development projects were completed and material was distributed to schools with middle school populations in 1999:

- *Home and Away in Space: Integrated Science and Mathematics Units for the Middle Years* and *House and Garden Chemicals: Integrated Science and Mathematics Units for the Middle Years*.

- *Australia Fair: Teaching and Learning for a More Socially Just Australia*.

Professional development sessions were conducted for over 1,000 teachers. The sessions included work with the following curriculum materials produced by the department:

- *Gender Perspectives: How the Individual, School and Society Shape Status and Identity Based on Sex* (in Studies in Society and the Environment (SOSE) for years 8–10)
- *Girls and Boys Come Out to Play* (in English and SOSE for reception to year 3)
- *Breaking the Silence: Teaching and Learning about Domestic Violence* (in English and health and physical education for years 8–10).

The Gender, Literacy and Disadvantage project continued to analyse information on gender and literacy learning and to work closely with six schools to identify and trial effective ways to address the impact of gender and socioeconomic status on student learning outcomes.

During 1999, a total of seven R–12 Catholic schools, representing both coeducational and single-sex schools, were involved in gender equity projects. One such project combined a strong curriculum base to explore a bullying and harassment focus. The overall aim of the project was to promote gender equity within the school and to incorporate gender equity in the curriculum.

Another project, entitled Girls and Technology, examined the use of computer software in the school and discovered that 99 per cent of all software available on the market was male-oriented. Men's voices, and men's images predominated. The conclusion drawn supported the assumption that many technological tools are designed to be used by males. This led to a further set of questions, including 'Are males creating these software packages?' The various research tools employed included general surveys of staff and students, group discussion, and recording, observation and individual student interviews. In addition, the staff kept a record of the software choices girls made when they used the computer room.

As a result of targets set in School Partnership agreements, several Tasmanian schools addressed issues in the education of boys, particularly literacy. The resource *Boys and Literacy Professional Development and Teaching Units* was used. The schools participated in professional development on issues in the education of boys and began to trial strategies.

In the Northern Territory, the document *Challenging the Boys* was an outcome of the Boys in Literacy in the Middle Years of Schooling project. It focuses on the participation and achievement of boys in schooling generally and in literacy tasks in particular. The project was designed to unravel some of the complex issues that have an impact on boys' engagement and achievement in literacy tasks. The ideas and units of work contained in the document were developed by teachers in both government and non-government schools and reflect a diversity of innovative thinking and practice.

Violence and school culture

In New South Wales, a *Countering Discrimination* package was made available to schools. It considers the nature and impact of all forms of discrimination covered by Commonwealth and State anti-discrimination legislation on students' participation and success at school. A gender equity training and development workshop for trainee school counsellors was conducted to assist them in their work in schools. The workshop provided participants with opportunities to identify links between gender, violence and school culture.

Most Catholic dioceses reported establishment of structures at diocesan and school levels which were designed to address gender equity issues. Strategies focused on development of anti-discrimination policies; procedures for dealing with harassment and bullying, and for resolution of disputes; and inclusion of gender issues in curriculum documentation (including text selection) across all learning areas.

There was a good deal of innovative curriculum and policy development work in Victorian Catholic schools. The Catholic Education Commission of Victoria developed policy and guidelines to assist each school create its own pastoral care policy to ensure that the physical and moral development of each student is nurtured in a non-threatening environment. The aim of the policy is to acknowledge and act upon the relationship of faith, care and support which characterise each school's vision, ethos and practice.

A CD resource, *To Bully or Not to Bully*, was developed out of discipline policy work with one school. This creative work included original songs and was launched with a hypothetical, attended by over 200 parents and teachers. There were also related professional development courses provided during 1999, which were attended by 250 teachers.

By the end of 1999, nearly all Victorian independent schools had taken action to eliminate gendered violence, mostly through the development of policies that do not tolerate violence, bullying, or harassment. Behaviour modification and self-esteem programs were operating in a very few schools, as was an anti-bullying program involving parents.

South Australia's Curriculum, Behaviour Management and Gender Project was conducted across six schools and from Reception to year 12. A project officer worked with schools to support teachers to examine, analyse and explore the links between curriculum and behaviour management as well as the gender issues in the management of students' behaviour. A project summary was completed and will be distributed to schools in 2000. The publication will also become part of professional development materials to support this strategic direction of the Gender Equity Framework.

David Shores presented a workshop for Gender Equity personnel from South Australian Catholic schools on boys and masculinity. The workshop encouraged in teachers an awareness that boys often hurt themselves and people they love and was supplemented with activities to explore alternative options to destructive and limiting behaviour.

Barbara Leckie from the University of South Australia presented a paper on Girls and Bullying. Teachers were invited to have direct contact and participate in the ongoing research into girls and bullying.

In Tasmania, anti-discrimination and anti-harassment support materials were published. These included information for schools and model lessons to challenge racism, homophobia, sexism, disability discrimination and physical stereotypes. These were distributed to schools and will be available on the Web in early 2000.

Post-school pathways

Student participation in school and TAFE-delivered VET courses in New South Wales increased in 1999, with more girls than boys enrolled. Many courses remain gender-segregated, with girls continuing to be over-represented in Hospitality, Travel and Tourism, Business and Clerical and Community Service, Health and Education. Boys remain over-represented in Automotive Workers and Salespersons, Building Trades and Construction Workers and Engineering and Mining Workers.

Training and development workshops for careers advisers and teachers were conducted, and explored issues such as

gendered patterns in subject selection at senior secondary level, gender equity principles in careers counselling and strategies to broaden students' post-school pathways. The department's Equity and VET in Schools Working Group identified gender issues as part of a broad range of equity issues that need to be addressed in the implementation of VET in schools.

The issue of post-school pathways based on gender was addressed by the majority of Victorian independent schools. Students were encouraged to pursue interests without regard to traditional gender stereotypes, through careers education, vocational education training and workplace experience.

A joint research project into the participation of groups of girls and boys enrolled in VET in South Australian schools during 1998 was completed through the VET Access and Equity and the Enterprise and Vocational Education Unit. The research analysed State data about groups of girls and boys who participated in VET modules and revealed the different participation rates of girls and boys, which continue to reflect traditional sex-segregation. The report recommendations were presented at workshops, and complement the work that school-based personnel undertook in planning and monitoring VET in schools to improve outcomes for all students.

In Tasmania, schools and colleges collected data on participation in VET courses according to gender and other categories. Marketing and course delivery was aimed at countering sex-stereotyped course selection.

Supporting change

A three-part *Exploring Gender* parent package was distributed to New South Wales schools to assist parents, caregivers and teachers consider the ways in which gender affects the educational and social experiences of students.

A booklet entitled *Gender Equity: Effective Practice in Primary Schools* was developed and distributed to all primary and central schools.

In July 1999, the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria published *A Gender Equity Framework for Victorian Catholic Schools*. This document was distributed to all schools and covers all five strategic directions. The document was designed to be accessible and easy to implement in schools, regardless of a school's entry point into the issues. The four focus areas of the document are

structured under the headings of Discussion, Expectation, Questions for Schools and Possible Achievements. The structure is designed to encourage schools to map their own journey through the issues.

In South Australia, all system, school and central initiatives in curriculum, professional development and research are undertaken in the context of whole-school change models. During 1999, professional development activities and school-based research continued to be enacted to support the implementation of *Gender Equity: A Framework for Australian Schools*. The findings of the national surveys, *Gender and School Education* (1996) and *Schools and the Social Development of Young Australians* (1998), were used to address gender discrimination and improve social and academic outcomes of schooling.

Significant work was carried out in supporting change and understanding the process of construction of gender with reference to women in leadership. A major conference, *Leadership: Women Participating in the Profession* was held in April. The conference worked with a broad definition of leadership within the curriculum. A Women in Leadership committee also researched the area and developed a pro-active intervention strategy to assist women with potential to aspire to positions of leadership. This strategy comprised:

- a range of professional development modules
- the development of guidelines to assist interview panels in the selection, appointment and inducting to principalship
- the establishment of support networks
- extension of a database to assist planning and to measure progress.

During 1999, Catholic Education (South Australia) had gender equity in the workplace as a significant focus, through identifying key issues in the area and establishing initiatives to address them. One such initiative was job sharing and a pilot project of a flexible work practice trialled two people sharing a deputy principal position in an R-7 primary school.

The Assisted School Self Review process was completed by all Tasmanian schools by the end of 1999. Gender issues were reviewed in this process and many schools developed targets to improve gender relations, school culture and educational outcomes for both boys and girls.

Provision for socioeconomically disadvantaged students

This was a major focus area for 1998 and was reported on in some detail in the 1998 National Report on Schooling.

This section of the current report provides an update of some of that information as well as details of some elements of the continuing provision for socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

During 1999, there was an emphasis on:

- improving achievement in literacy and numeracy
- increasing retention into the senior years of schooling.

Literacy and Numeracy

New South Wales designates schools as socioeconomically disadvantaged through an index used for identifying schools for the Disadvantaged Schools Program (DSP). These schools serve communities with the highest concentrations of low socioeconomic status families. Approximately 20 per cent of NSW government schools containing about 20 per cent of the students are designated as DSP schools.

In these schools the focus is on literacy improvement as the key to higher levels of attainment across the whole curriculum. A particular emphasis in 1999 was on increasing the expectations of achieving quality outcomes among principals, teachers, students and parents. Some of the outcomes achieved by DSP schools were as follows:

- Nine-eight per cent of DSP schools reported improvement in literacy outcomes for 1998–99 against a range of measures, including teachers' professional judgement and external State tests.
- Eighty per cent of DSP high schools reported improvement in literacy outcomes from year 7 to year 8 using the results from the English Language and Literacy Assessment test.
- Eighty-five per cent of the primary schools participating in the DSP provided evidence of whole-school comprehensive and coordinated literacy assessment policies and procedures.
- Thirty-seven per cent of DSP primary schools reported improving Basic Skills Test results in literacy. Half of these schools specified above State average improvement in students' year 5 results compared to their year 3 results.

- DSP high schools reported that of the DSP students sitting for the HSC in 1999, 53 per cent were the first in their immediate families to sit for the HSC or its equivalent.

In New South Wales Catholic schools, access and participation for socioeconomically disadvantaged students were enabled and promoted through support to schools from Commonwealth Literacy Programme funding. One-third of diocesan funds from the Commonwealth grant were allocated towards improvement of literacy and numeracy skills of socioeconomically disadvantaged students.

The Literacy Enhancement for Special Program Schools Scheme in Education Queensland was a targeted equity program that focused on improving literacy and numeracy outcomes among students who experience educational disadvantage because of their low socioeconomic status. Funds provided through the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Programme were directed to government schools with the highest concentration of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. Schools were required to develop initiatives that formed part of longer term literacy and numeracy plans.

The following types of projects were implemented at primary, secondary and special schools:

- basic skills and intervention programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy
- literacy and/or numeracy programs across the curriculum
- screening strategies
- reporting strategies
- innovative classroom and whole-school organisational arrangements
- in-service programs for teachers and staff
- involvement of communities in literacy and numeracy development activities.

The following significant improvements were recorded:

- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved an SA or higher in English and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 71.6 per cent in 1998 to 74.0 per cent in 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in English and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 66.0 per cent in 1998 to 69.6 per cent in 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 10 students who achieved an SA or higher in Mathematics

and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 72.4 per cent in 1998 to 74.2 per cent in 1999.

- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Mathematics 'A' and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 49.7 per cent in 1998 to 58.2 per cent in 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Biological Science and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping decreased from 71.1 per cent in 1998 to 66.5 per cent in 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Art and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 53.6 per cent in 1998 to 56.6 per cent in 1999.
- The percentage of all Education Queensland year 12 students who achieved an SA or higher in Accounting and who were in the 'Lower' Broad Socioeconomic Grouping increased from 61.7 per cent in 1998 to 71.9 per cent in 1999.

In South Australia, a number of programs were funded under the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Programme and carried out in schools in low socioeconomic areas.

The Gender, Literacy and Disadvantage Project was established in six schools over the period 1999–2000 to provide system leadership in the area of gender, literacy and educational disadvantage. As a result of the project it is intended to provide teachers across the system with access to effective teaching approaches and materials. The project focuses on critical literacy and the construction of gender. A series of regular workshops is being held to support project teachers in the development of new approaches.

In the Information Technology, Literacy and Disadvantage Project, the University of South Australia carried out research in six primary and secondary schools over the period 1998–99 to develop new knowledge about how information and communication technologies can be used to enhance the literacy learning of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds. A report of the results of the project is being published.

The Acquisition of School Literacies Project is a three-year longitudinal study of how a group of students in three primary schools acquire literacy skills over the period from year 3 to year 5. The project will be completed in 2000. At this point, some materials arising from the project are

being produced for teachers. These cover the topics Gender and Writing, Reporting to Parents, Literacy as Performance, English as a Second Language and Social Action Through Literacy.

The Numeracy and School Entry Project was a small-scale action research project in six schools to provide more information about numeracy development of young children around the time of school entry. The School Entry Assessment resource developed by the Department of Education, Training and Employment was used as the basis for evidence of numeracy development. Findings of the project will be used in the development of a larger research project for 2000.

The Northern Territory Department of Education programs for socioeconomically disadvantaged students were supplemented with funding from the Commonwealth Literacy and Numeracy Programme. On the recommendation of regional committees and the Education Advisory Council, this funding was distributed on a submission basis for school-based, regional or system-wide projects which aimed to improve outcomes in literacy and numeracy for educationally disadvantaged students.

The majority of projects purchased personnel to assist in specific school programs, information technology, library resources, curriculum materials and/or expertise such as specialists, and professional development programs.

Reading Towards 2000 – Strengthening S.E. Arnhem Reading programs targeted the teachers, parents and students of four Indigenous remote schools. The main focus was to have consistency of reading resources and strategies that could be used across the schools in response to high student and teacher mobility. Achievements included:

- the establishment of school networks
- the purchasing, levelling and shelving of suitable materials
- training and employment of community people as reading tutors
- a higher profile for reading within the school and at home.

The Hear Well Program addressed the desperate need to improve hearing problems in Indigenous children, parental knowledge of ear disease and care and the retention rate of these children. This project involved teachers, students, parents, the community health clinic, the local doctor and Aboriginal Hearing Service staff. Achievements included:

- improved listening habits and oral language

- increased awareness of ear disease
- community and inter-agency involvement.

Literacy and Numeracy through Information Technology enabled a remote Indigenous school to set up a computing area which was ergonomically appropriate for its students. Achievements included:

- purchase of suitable hardware and software
- provision of work stations at which students could work independently
- increased enthusiasm for reading and numeracy activities.

The Learning Numeracy by Doing project targeted teachers to better inform them of numeracy assessment initiatives (eg benchmarking and profiling) and how these could be incorporated into the everyday teaching-learning program. Specific intervention programs for students 'at risk' also resulted.

The Literacy Through Libraries project provided opportunities to improve literacy and numeracy outcomes through upgrading library resources in remote schools. This involved consultation between Library Services and relevant schools and regional staff.

The Literacy and Numeracy Secondary Intervention Program was a pilot project which entailed trialling an intensive intervention program aimed at improving literacy and numeracy in years 8–9 at two separate high schools.

The ACT Schools Equity Fund (SEF), first introduced in 1997, assisted 13 government primary and one government high school. The Australian Bureau of Statistics index of relative socioeconomic disadvantage was used to identify eligible schools or students.

The SEF provided \$145,000 to assist students from socioeconomically disadvantaged backgrounds in 14 priority schools. These schools comprise primary and high schools with 25 per cent or more of their student populations from socioeconomically disadvantaged districts. Territory funds were added to Commonwealth funds with the ACT Government providing \$55,000 of this amount.

Approximately 1,100 students were assisted under the SEF in 1999. The process for identifying socioeconomically disadvantaged students was refined in 1998 and the program was changed to a three-year fund: 1998 to 2000.

The funding was used in 1999 to improve learning outcomes of relatively disadvantaged students, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy. In addition to literacy and

numeracy based programs, initiatives included support for camps, excursions and breakfast programs to support students. The projects have led to improved self-esteem and learning outcomes.

Increasing retention

The New South Wales Full Service Schools Program for Students at Risk targets 15- to 19-year-old students identified as being at risk of not completing their schooling to year 12 to a satisfactory level. The program assists students by providing accredited training through TAFE, private providers and community organisations; specialised curriculum and counselling services; off-school site delivery; in-school alternative pathways; and individual education and training plans. In 1999, the program operated in Campbelltown, the Central Coast, Dubbo and isolated areas, the Far North Coast, the Hunter, the Illawarra, South Western Sydney and Western Sydney.

Of the 2,200 students who participated in this program in 1999, 89 per cent stayed in education and training or successfully moved into employment. Twelve per cent of the participants gained traineeships, apprenticeships and full- or part-time work. Many participants also accessed additional services and resources that were available in TAFE NSW, community-based training and Links to Learning programs.

In South Australia, 1999 was the final year of a three-year collaborative Australian Research Council research project about retention and students at risk of not completing schooling. This qualitative study was based on the use of student voice and involved interviews of 209 students. A report of the research is being prepared, together with professional development materials for teachers.

Apparent retention rates of socioeconomically disadvantaged students have been monitored carefully in the Northern Territory and the results for 1999 are set out in Table 6.3.

Table 6.3 Apparent retention rates, socioeconomically disadvantaged students, Northern Territory, 1999

<i>Sector</i>	<i>Number of students</i>	<i>Apparent retention rate (%)</i>		
		<i>8–10</i>	<i>8–11</i>	<i>8–12</i>
Government	16,566	79	54	19
Catholic	3,044	100	N/a	24
Independent	760	N/a	N/a	N/a
<i>Source:</i>		NT Department of Education		